



# ROYAL PROJECT FOUNDATION OF THAILAND

HELP THE HILL TRIBES, HELP THE THAIS, HELP THE WORLD

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“To help the hill tribes has given direct benefits to the tribes by helping them to grow useful crops and enabling them to earn their living.

One of the reasons underlying the establishment of this project was humanitarianism; the desire that these people living in remote areas should become self-supporting and more prosperous. Another reason, and which has received support from all sides, was to solve the problem of illicit crops, that is poppy and opium cultivation.

A further reason which is very important is that, as is well known, the hill tribes are people who practice ‘slash-and-burn’ methods which are totally wrong, and could bring the country to ruin.

If we help the hill tribes to improve their living conditions, allowing them to live in the same place instead of abandon their settlement, it is tantamount to the country in general, supporting the policy to conserve the forests and soil, this will be very beneficial and sustainably.”

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej

10<sup>th</sup> January 1974

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Thailand covers the land area of about 51.31 million hectares where is characterized geographically by overlapping mountains in the north with 4.21 million hectares (8%) of high elevation land. Besides serving as the country's origin of water resources, the highland areas of the North enjoys a cold climate and high rainfall density comparing to major part of the country. There are 13 different ethnic minority groups, scattering in 20 northern provinces. Over the past 47 years, most of the hill tribes were considerably poorer than the average Thai. They survived on slash-and-burn farming, growing upland rice and corn as well as growing opium poppy in the cool climate after rainy season. In 1976, approximately 17,920 hectares of land were exploited for opium growing, with the average of 10 kilograms per hectare.



Following visits of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej to the northern hill-tribe villages, where he witnessed the plight of the people from poverty, including illegal opium activities, slash-and-burn farming, and destruction of watersheds, His Majesty the King stepped in to establish the Royal Hill Tribe Development Project.



THE ROYAL PROJECT OF THAILAND

His Majesty described in a Royal Address on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1974 :

“To help the hill tribes has given direct benefits to the tribes by helping them to grow useful crops and enabling them to earn their living. One of the reasons underlying the establishment of this Project was humanitarianism; the desire that these people living in remote areas should become self-supporting and more prosperous. Another reason, and which has received support from all sides, was to solve the problem of illicit crops, that is opium poppy cultivation. A further reason which is very important is that, as is well known, the hill tribes are people who practice ‘slash-and-burn’ methods which are totally wrong, and could bring the country to ruin. If we help the hill tribes to improve their living conditions, allowing them to live in the same place instead of abandon their settlement, it is tantamount to the country in general, supporting the policy to conserve the forests and soil, this will be very beneficial and sustainable.”

### From Research to Farm Lands

During the initial stage, H.M. the King granted his personal fund to help get the project started. Research studies were supported while local peaches with low yields were replaced by diverse temperate crops suitable for highland conditions. A pool of volunteers from universities and government agencies not only undertook research, but also visited the hill tribe farmers in the northern villages to train them on appropriate and simple farming practices.

From 1973-1986, with research funds supported by USDA/ARS, new knowledge and technologies from research studies on growing temperate crops including fruit, vegetables, cut flowers, nuts, Arabica coffee and mushroom, were introduced and transferred to poppy farmers.



10<sup>th</sup> January 1974



In 1978, the Royal Project started highland development programs following research findings on suitable alternative crops to replace opium. The early stages were operated with funding support from H.M. the King, government agencies, USDA/ARS, and friendly countries.

Research results led to replace the opium growing with the following:

- Six species of temperate fruit (peach, persimmon, plum, pear, apricot and strawberry), and Arabica coffee, grown on slope areas for long-term farming and income
- About 20 varieties of vegetables and two species of cut flowers for short-term income
- Rice and grain crops for home consumption and supplementary income

Support to carry out research studies has continued to be high on the agenda. Issues focused go beyond agricultural practices to post-harvest management and marketing as well as support establishment of farmer groups and soil conservation practices and social improvement.

In 1981, the Royal Project established its marketing program to support channels for the sale of agricultural produce, started from Chiang Mai. With the excess of the produce, its markets have then expanded to Bangkok. At the same time, efforts on post-harvest and logistics management have originated.

The strategy to use alternative crops has eventually decreased and eradicated the sense of dependence on opium growing of the hill tribe farmers.

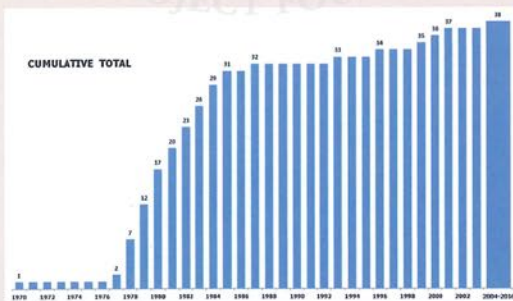
### THE ROYAL PROJECT OF THAILAND



As the farmers' adoption of alternative development approach is higher, the Royal Project has extended its scope of work to other sectors covering community and self-help programs, education, and quality of life improvement while creating the farmers' awareness on the importance of soil and water conservation and reforestation. A few development activities were established to support integrated development tasks as follows :

- **Land survey and land use planning mission** to determine appropriate land use for farming, habitations, and watersheds as well as to develop soil and water conservation systems to reduce erosion.
- **Plant protection center** to conduct research and development, transfer knowledge for highland plant protection, control/examine the use of chemicals in agricultural production.
- **Social improvement program** to start from support given to primary schools and launch of mobile libraries to promote youth's literacy. Subsequently, the program has extended to cooperate with relevant authorities, playing a role in enhancing social development, primary healthcare, and farmers' self-reliance.
- **Villager's forest project** through selection of eight fast growing types of trees from research findings for farmers to grow as woodlot for household consumption and to increase forest cover in steep slope areas.

### Establishment of Royal Project Development Centers





## The Royal Project Foundation

In 1988, the Royal Project was awarded a Magsaysay Award for International Understanding.

Subsequently, in 1992, H.M. the King graciously raised the status of the Royal Project to become the Royal Project Foundation serving as a permanent public entity to carry on the work of the Royal Project.

In the same year, the Royal Thai Cabinet resolved that the government provide financial support to the Foundation and a Committee on Coordination and Support the Royal Project Foundation be established, to be chaired by the Prime Minister with the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives as its Secretariat.

At present, the Royal Project has supported more than 183,744 people of 42,745 families, 264 villages in the highlands of 38 Development Centres, located in 5 northern provinces of Thailand; Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, Pha Yao and Lam Phun.



## Royal Project Development Model

### 1. Research

Its studies focus not only on suitable agricultural practices for highland conditions, but also on social issues, post-harvest management, marketing, and restoration and conservation of natural resources.

### 2. Land Use Planning and Soil Conservation Practice

With the cooperation of the Land Development Department, the operation aims to optimize farmland cultivation that meets with the natural context while protect the forest from encroachment. Appropriate land use is encouraged to determine land areas for agriculture, living areas and forest areas. Soil and water conservation system is in place to prevent soil erosion as well.

### 3. Promotion of Agricultural and Non-agricultural Incomes

Hill tribes are encouraged to grow various crops like temperate fruit, tea, and Arabica coffee to generate long-term income. Others such as vegetables, cut flowers, and mushroom will be for immediate income, and household consumption. Moreover, the Foundation takes a role in small food processing program and conserve traditional handicrafts of the hill tribes.

### 4. Rehabilitation of Watershed Areas

With joint participation of government agencies and farmers, various kinds of fast-growing trees, as identified by research studies, have been planted for household consumption, so-called "Villager's Forest" while motivation has been made to encourage close participation on reforestation.

### 5. Post-harvest Management and Marketing

The Royal Project works closely with the farmers to form their production plan, which include farming, post-harvest handling and distribution to targeted markets.

### 6. Integration of Government and Local Organizations

This dimension calls for active participation of key stakeholders involved including local communities participation for overall successful implementation.

Royal Project  
Development Model





## Farm Product Standardization



Since 2002, vegetable farms in the Royal Project areas have been certified with production standard. Subsequently, the whole process has been upgraded and certified, from farms to local packing units, and packing centers in Chiang Mai and in Bangkok. Currently, all food products of the Royal Project have met with the food safety standard system (Good Agriculture Practice - GAP) and organic standards.

### Achievements to Date

#### 1. Knowledge from Research

All through the 42 years, the Royal Project has conducted research on various topics from agriculture, social and environment issues to marketing. Out of all the studies, the highly beneficial results are the types of crops to be grown on highlands.

Decades of research studies has enabled the Royal Project to be locally recognized and accepted. Therefore, hill tribe farmers have now adopted the recommended crops and animals for their highland livelihood.

Crops/Livestock	Species	Varieties
<b>Immediate Income Crops</b>		
• Vegetables	83	149
• Cut flowers	37	185
• Field crops	10	18
• Herbs	30	33
• Mushroom	1	11
<b>Long-term Income Crops</b>		
• Temperate fruit	20	72
• Tea	2	3
• Coffee	1	1
<b>Others</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>35</b>

## Achievements to Date



### 2. Farmers' Income

#### 2.1 Agricultural Development

At present, there are 14,821 farm households in the Royal Project areas, farming altogether 206 various crops and animals. With the total growing area of 4,571 hectares, the value from the produce they have generated through the Royal Project markets and their own channels stands at 598.57 and 440.99 million baht respectively.

#### Royal Project's Farmers Income from RPF Market Channels, Year 2015

Production Groups	Quantity (kgs)	Value (million baht)
1. Vegetables	17,645,201	424.83
2. Herbs	520,631	8.33
3. Fruits	1,185,896	65.80
4. Flowers	2,842,686 units	35.26
5. Coffee	321,291	35.19
6. Field Crops	286,046	10.70
7. Tea	58,314	4.96
8. Livestock	55,472	3.40
9. Mushroom	35,405	3.31
10. Fishery	16,973	6.05
11. Other	624	0.74
Total	20,125,853 kgs 2,842,686 units	598.57 bath



## 2.2. Food Safety and Standardization

### (1) Good Agricultural Practice (GAP)

There are 10,341 farmers certified by Thailand GAP, growing 146 crop species in the area of 4,347 hectares. Main crops are vegetables, fruit, field crops, herbs, tea and coffee, etc.

### (2) Organic Standard

There are 726 farmers in 15 Royal Project Development Centres with the area of 259 hectares who have obtained the Organic Standard Certificate. Most of them are vegetables and tea.

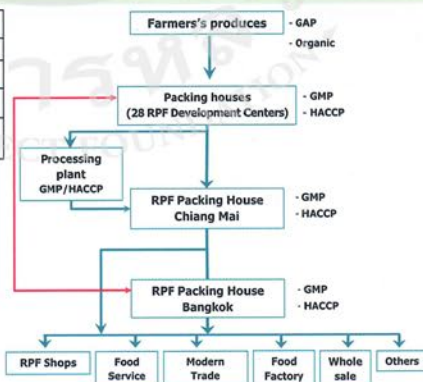
Moreover, 687 farmers in 15 Royal Project Development Centres have been certified by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) for 37 crops grown on 257 hectares of land.

### (3) Packing House Standard

Another worth mentioning success is that 28 packing houses of the Royal Project Development Centres have been certified with the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) with nine of them have been internationally accredited accordingly to Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP).

## Quality Standards and Distribution of Farmer Produces

Standards	Farmers	Areas
1. GAP	10,341	4,347 ha.
2. Organic	726	259 ha
3. Organic IFOAM Standard	687	257 ha
4. Packing House	-	- GMP 28 units - HACCP 9 units



## 2.3 Promotion on Off-farm Incomes

## (1) Handicraft

An emphasis is placed on preservation and revival of handicrafts in local communities not only for domestic use but also as a source of supplementary income from the sale of those products.

## (2) Agro-tourism

Many Royal Project Development Centres have been developed to be tourist attractions with pristine natural beauty and vibrant indigenous cultures. In 2015, 884,462 tourists visited the Royal Project Development areas.

## (3) Processed Products

Farmers are encouraged to develop processed farm products to create value addition, e.g. honey from coffee orchards, herb products, preserved fruit, avocado shampoo, herbal soap and buffalo cheese, etc. Those products are sold at local markets and the Royal Project markets.

## Off-Farm Activities

Activities	Development Centers	Peoples	Income (mill. baht)
1. Community processed products - Honey from coffee orchards - Herb products - Preserved vegetable and fruit	20	1,026	12.67
2. Handicrafts	33	1,167	18.52
3. Tourism	27	884,462	188.23

## 2.4 RPF Farmers' Income in 2015

No	Description	Value (mill. baht)
1.	Fresh produces through RPF markets	598.57
2.	Fresh produces through local markets	440.99
3.	Preserved products through RPF and local markets	12.67
4.	Handicrafts through RPF markets and local markets	18.52
5.	Tourism	188.23
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,258.98</b>



### 3. Community Development

#### 3.1 Strengthening Local Capacity for Drug Prevention

Concerted efforts have been made with community participation and cooperation of the Office of Narcotic Control Board (ONCB) and relevant agencies under the Ministry of Interior, to create drug-free communities. Some main activities are motivating and training on drug abuse prevention, community surveillance network, and support for treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts.

#### 3.2 Promoting Small Children Education and Health

The Royal Project and Chiang Mai University join hands to provide healthcare services to the hill tribes, support educational opportunity for disadvantaged youth and small children, encourage young people to learn appropriate technologies, provide leadership training to young people, and train the hill tribes on environmental conservation issues.

#### 3.3 Encouraging Community's Self-help Groups

It is done by strengthening cooperative groups in the Royal Project Development Centres and organizing development plans for various community groups.

Activities	No	Recipients (Persons)
1. Strengthening local capacity for drug prevention	87 communities	40,772
2. Promoting primary healthcare for hill tribes	3,252 households	7,399
3. Encouraging community's self-reliance groups		
1) cooperative groups	47 coops.	7,622
2) community development plan	148 villages	567
3) promotion of primary household sanitary program	40 villages	287
4) other self-reliance groups	369 groups	27,754

### 4. Natural Resources and Watershed Conservation

Efforts center on the soil fertility and water quality by growing vetiver grass on the contour for soil conservation, planting fast-growing trees for household use while encouraging participation of locals and key stakeholders to take an active part in watershed rehabilitation. Campaigns to promote chemical reduction by using Integrated Pest Management System and organic solutions are also carried out.

## Achievements to Date

Activities	Area (hectares)	Number	No. of Farmers
1. Vetiver grass growing for soil and water conservation	460	8,790,400 plants	3,342
2. Soil and water conservation and restoration			
1) compost fertilizer	-	3,536 tons	3,925
2) liquid fertilizer / bio-fertilizer	-	113,780 litres	
3) green manure	253	-	
3. Villagers' forest			
1) new plantation	47	87,049 plants	1,246
2) forest maintenance and restoration	303	302,080 plants	
4. Watershed rehabilitation			
1) people participation on reforestation (new areas)	144	79,020 plants	17,878
2) people participation on watershed forest protection and maintenance	8,136	310,902 plants	
3) conducting firebreak lines	1,318 kms.	-	
5. Chemical reduction and motivation programs	38 centres	7 main activities	8,379

### 5. Knowledge Sharing and International Technical Cooperation

#### 5.1 Knowledge Sharing

The Royal Project has shared its research-based knowledge and experiences to highland farmers, students, academics, and other interested parties. Such resources have been developed into 26 training programs at present.

Last year, the Royal Project areas welcomed 483,318 participants to share about its work and experiences.



## Achievements to Date

Activities	Groups	Number (persons)
<b>1. Training</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>9,555</b>
1) Students	19	793
2) Farmers	26	7,958
3) International organizations	4	16
4) Other interested parties	16	788
<b>2. Study visit</b>	<b>868</b>	<b>473,763</b>
1) Students	112	9,670
2) Farmers	223	3,479
3) International organizations	25	2,200
4) Other interested parties	508	458,414
<b>Total</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>483,318</b>

### 5.2 International Technical Cooperation

The success of the Royal Project in its endeavors through alternative development approach for illicit crop replacement and sustainable development of the Thai highlanders has become known to neighbouring countries, such as Laos, Myanmar and Bhutan, and led to the joint effort in the international technical cooperation programs for sustainable development.

### 6. Changes

Decades of continued efforts on alternative development made under the Royal Project have turned the Thai highlands into an opium-free zone and the well-being of hill-tribe people has been improved. As the hill tribes have taken up sustainable agriculture as their livelihood, they are able to offer produce that has met with safety standards, earning stable income with quality of life. In addition, they are the key group to help restore the watersheds and build sustainable communities.



Our deep gratitude and respect  
to His Majesty the King and  
his benevolence to  
his people in Thailand



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