



**"Chalermchai" Showcases Thailand's Herbal Policy:
300,000 Organic Herb Farmers to Enter the 50 billion Market**



On 20 December 2021, Mr. Alongkorn Ponlabut, Advisor to Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives said that Dr. Chalermchai Sri-on, Agriculture Minister, has formulated a policy to promote medicinal plants or herbs as a future food crop (Future Food Future Crop) for farmers to have alternative careers and increased incomes. Value-added processing is promoted by cooperating with the Federation of Thai Industries and all relevant parties. It is considered one of the high-value agriculture. Research and development (R&D) is supported starting from upstream towards downstream marketing.

The strategy on promoting cultivation of medicinal plants has made significant progress. There are currently 369,353 farmers registered with the Department of Agricultural Extension. Herbs, spices and medicinal plants that are food plants (a total of 82 varieties) are grown in a total area of 1.15

million rai (455 thousand acres). Over 64 thousand rai (25 thousand acres) of medicinal plant cultivation are to be certified for GAP (Good Agricultural Practice) and other product standards. There are a total of 37 plots, 1,565 farmers and 7,913 rai (approx. 3 thousand acres) in 22 provinces between 2016 – 2021 participating in the Medicinal Plant Combined Large Plot Project. In 2022, 15 farmer groups are in the process of applying for approval. Also in 2022, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC) will implement the Project on Increasing the Efficiency of Herbal Production targeting 1,110 farmers in 37 provinces. It plans to set up plots for expanding and collecting herbal varieties in 16 operating centers. The aims are to improve quality and standards as well as promote herbal production for use as raw materials. The herbal products will be produced in accordance with safe agriculture principles. It is expected to increase farmers' income and export value in a stable and sustainable manner. The herbal product market has returned to expand again from 2021 onwards with an average growth rate of 4%, close to the pre-Covid-19 period. The market value is estimated at 54.5 billion baht.

MOAC in cooperation with Ministry of Public Health drafted the National Herbs Action Plan, No. 2, 2023-2027, to jointly develop medicinal plants in accordance with the health and economy systems throughout the supply chain. MOAC fully supports research and development of herbs for full utilization in all dimensions. Market demands are the main driver for production. Private sector is prompt to participate starting from identifying research and development that truly meet the market needs. There are 10 main missions in the development of the National Herbal Products Plan during 2020–2022 which consist of:

1. Growing herbs that meet the specified quality standards, which operates in 64,225 rai (approx. 25 thousand acres) of 82 plant varieties.
2. Encouraging farmer groups, cooperatives and community enterprises to conduct post-harvest processing at the planting areas, making products and simple extracts at community level in 92 sites.
3. Establishing 5 GAP standards or standards for medicinal plants according to plant groups.
4. Preparing land suitability maps for planting 24 types of medicinal plants.
5. Developing a database of medicinal plant growing areas (Land Use).

6. Assigning 8 laboratories accredited for ISO 17025 to provide quality inspection services on raw materials.

7. Developing a central market system and an electronic market (E-Market).

8. Establishing herbal standards of 109 items in the Thai Herbal Standards (Thai Herbal Pharmacopoeia, THP).

9. Developing the National Database on Thai Medicinal Plants and Traditional Knowledge.

10. Supporting 57 research projects on development of medicinal plant varieties and technologies to produce raw materials.

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