



Alongkorn wading the north, setting up the Longan Board to expedite reformation of Thai fruits into high-valued agriculture



Moving towards "Chalermchai's 5 Strategies" in 2022, Alongkorn visited the North of Thailand to set up the "Longan board". It aims to create cooperation between farmers and private sector and drive the new longan price insurance project. He assigned the AIC (Agritech and Innovation Center) Chiang Mai and the Northern Science Park to develop a comprehensive longan value-added plan. Lamphun Province is to be established as the capital of longan. Reformation of Thai fruits is expedited and tied with the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan to drive towards "High-Valued Agriculture".

On January 13, Mr. Alongkorn Phonlaboot, Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), visited Lamphun Province to follow up on the Ministry's policy work. He was welcomed by Mr. Vorayut Nawarat, Governor of Lamphun Province, official executives, government officials, the private sector, and all related agencies.

Mr. Alongkorn also chaired the Public and Private Farmers Network Association meeting, aiming to resolve the northern fruit management issue under the order of Mr. Chalermchai Sri-on, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, who is the chairman of the Fruit Board. The meeting was held at the Lamphun Provincial Agricultural Office in parallel with the VDO Conference, which was attended by the Lamphun Governor, Mr. Vorayut Nawarat, as well as concerned government officers and private sector. The 2022 production forecast and trend in the Northern region, as well as fruit management plans were reported in the meeting.

Mr. Alongkorn said that Mr. Chalermchai Sri-on, Minister of MOAC, has laid out guidelines for fruit management during the COVID-19 crisis under "Chalermchai's 5 Strategies" model. This will transform Thai agriculture to focus on high-valued agriculture and make Thailand become the leading country on high-valued agriculture and agricultural products. Moreover, it will emphasize creating values for agricultural commodities and processed products by using innovation and technology to increase their efficiency. To do so, he assigned the AIC Northern center and the Northern Science Park to strengthen research and development activities, expedite technology and innovation transfer, as well as processing and developing new products.

Lamphun is the center of longan in the north and the capital of longan in the world. It has more than 250,000 rai (40,000 hectares) of farming areas and is an important production site among 8 northern provinces. With the government's support, the annual production has increased from 1,200,804 tons in 2017 to 1,437,740 tons in 2021, or increased 3.12% per year. The average yield per rai has increased from 827 kilograms in 2017 to 869 kilograms in 2021.

However, the falling price of longan in some seasons is a recurring problem. The longan minimum price insurance scheme has been set up under the win-win cooperation between public and private partnerships like the shrimp board in the shrimp industry. The board will call a meeting every 2 weeks to closely monitor the situation and prepare in advance before the market starts in accordance with the 2022 longan management plan.

There is a project on Longan Distribution Outside the Production Area project has been prepared to support farmers during the oversupply and low-price period. This project is aimed at subsidizing the distribution costs of longan outside the production area by buying products at a higher price than the market and implementing a management plan from farms. Emphasis is given on the implementation of Market Leads Production concept, cost reduction, quality improvement, increased productivity, off-season production, value addition and pre-order purchasing.

Moreover, increased online and offline distribution channels, both domestic and international, will be promoted. Traceability and the use of QR codes will be established in order to

assure customers of the product's quality. In addition, the agricultural product development guidelines will be promoted to obtain the Geographical Indication (GI) certification for Lamphun golden dried longan and other processed products from farmers and community enterprises to meet the market demand.

All of these will be an important step for the Thai agricultural sector to step into a new dimension by using the Fair-Trade Longan model. These will create sustainable incomes for longan growers by integrating work in all relevant sectors such as cooperatives, farmers' groups, stores, processing plants, packing houses, and exporters."

Lastly, the Fruit Board has set up a Longan Product Working Group (Longan Board) to specifically oversee of the longan issue.

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