

Rice Department asked to speed up development of new varieties

Deputy Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister Prapat Potasuthon urged the Rice Department to speed up seed production, aiming to export soft rice to better compete in global markets in the next two years.



He said farmers would benefit during the present Covid-19 situation as people are hoarding food, causing rice demand to increase, while the drought would affect some production areas, also leading to a price rise.

“Therefore, we ordered the Rice Department to increase the potential of seed production, such as producing seeds to meet demand, developing a community rice centre and finding groundwater resources for farming,” Prapat said.

“Also, we implemented guidelines for research and development of rice varieties to align with the demand of the market and rice exporters who require soft rice, such as RD79 and PTT03019-18-2-7-4-1.”

Prapat said at least 3,000 to 4,000 tonnes of these two rice varieties will be produced in the 2020-2021 production season.

“We will divide the planting zone in the central region, which will then be expanded for commercial planting,” he said.

“We expect exports can be carried out in the next two years, when demand for soft rice is about 10 million tonnes per year – 5 million tonnes for the domestic market and 5 million for exports.”

He said dividing the planting zone to align with areas and market demand is important.

“There are five types of rice – Thai Hom Mali rice, Thai aromatic rice, white rice, coloured rice, and sticky rice. For white rice, we will focus on growing the soft variety mainly in the central region,” Prapat said.

“The Rice Department must educate farmers to recognise and accept new rice varieties to speed up production and promote Thai rice to compete in world markets.”

He said the department is speeding up rice research to make the country more competitive and is developing the Pathum Thani 1 rice variety to increase yield per rai. The new rice varieties are being developed to have high yields able to withstand the changing environment, diseases and rice pests, he added.

“Research and development must also pay attention to reducing production costs to motivate farmers,” Prapat said.

“With an export goal of the next 2-3 years, Thailand will have rice varieties that can compete and meet the needs of the world market,” he added.

Source: The Nation Thailand on 17 March 2020 [https:// www.nationthailand.com/news/30384267](https://www.nationthailand.com/news/30384267)