

Seminar hears four key proposals to drive circular economy for sustainability

A seminar in Bangkok highlighted four key measures to promote a circular economy for sustainability by creating a water system to deal with drought, support agriculture to add Bt25 billion value per year, raising waste management to the national agenda and make changes in the construction industry.



Sumet Tantivejkul, chairman of Utokapat Foundation under the Royal Patronage of HM the King, spoke at the SD Symposium Bangkok 2020 seminar on "Circular Economy: Actions for a Sustainable Future" organised by SCG Group.

More than 200 network partners made four proposals to drive the circular economy and create sustainability in Thai society:

1. Building a recirculating water management system to deal with the water crisis and water shortage that will occur in 2021, as current water reserves are insufficient for use during the dry season next year. Demand for water in 2021 is estimated at 1.2 to 1.5 hundred billion cubic metres but the maximum water storage will be able to reach only 80 billion cubic metres. Therefore, the government should adopt the guidelines of HM King Rama IX by allowing people to participate in water management by increasing water storage areas in communities across the country.
2. Promoting value addition in the agricultural sector. The government should focus on solving the problem of burning of farmlands to prepare for cultivation. Farmers have to embrace modern agriculture by bringing agricultural knowledge and technology into the fields, which will help solve the problem of dust and PM2.5 pollution, and also help farmers to increase income from agriculture, adding not less than Bt25 billion in value per year. In addition, a fund should be established to support agricultural innovations and tools for farmers.
3. Promoting proper waste management to be a national agenda, especially plastic waste that needs to be added to be recycled. Recycling and reuse will require tax mechanisms to incentivise investment in plastics processing and commercial development of businesses. This will create

businesses that support privatisation. At the same time, knowledge must continue to be given to the public to reduce the use of plastics, or promote a reuse model for the most benefit to reduce waste and environmental pollution.

4. Driving a circular economy in the construction industry. There are considerable residual waste and operational wastes, accounting for 25 per cent of the total waste. It is necessary to promote both the reduction of material waste from the design stage while government procurement has to support the procurement of environmentally friendly materials, using both taxes, legal and funding mechanisms.

Thossaporn Sirisamphan, former secretary-general of the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, said that on the matter of supporting a green economy, the government now focuses on the "BCG Model", which is holistic economic development.

Covid-19 will be a catalyst for Thailand to turn to internally strengthening the national economy and create more sustainability from the original focus on the external economy -- both exports and tourism -- resulting in income disappearing due to the virus. Thailand has to come back to the country's strengths in terms of agriculture and food, which has to focus on creating added value to get a higher selling price rather than the export of unprocessed products, he said.

Jacob Duer, president and chief executive of Alliance to End Plastic Waste, said plastic waste is a huge problem that would destroy the global ecosystem, with more than 11 million tonnes of plastic falling into the ocean every year. By 2040, without proper management, there will be as many as 29 million tonnes of plastic waste in the oceans and seas a year, affecting marine life and the environment as a whole. Thailand is one of the countries that generates a lot of plastic waste in the sea, hence the state should take measures seriously as well, he said.

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