

## PM visits Chanthaburi, meets fruit growers to address agricultural challenges

PM Paetongtarn visits Chanthaburi, pledges support for fruit exports, R&D, and labour issues, while vowing to address wild elephant conflicts and trade delays.



Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra visited Chanthaburi province on Saturday, May 17, 2025, as part of her official inspection tour to listen to local concerns and explore solutions related to production costs and crop yields in Thailand's eastern fruit belt.

The session, held at Suan Rak Tawan Farm in Song Phi Nong subdistrict, Tha Mai district, brought together fruit farmers and wholesale buyers from across the region.

During the meeting, durian growers urged the government to support both Thai and foreign traders to maintain a stable export base and avoid price suppression as fruit production is expected to increase in the coming years.

Farmers called for the establishment of laboratories in major fruit-growing provinces—particularly for durian—to allow faster quality inspection and export processing.

They also requested financial support and working capital to stabilise market supply and demand, and proposed easing trade access for Chinese merchants to prevent foreign investment from shifting to neighbouring countries.

Additionally, they encouraged the promotion of soft power and influencers to boost the image and global appeal of Thai fruits, ensuring long-term sustainability for durian and other produce.

Another key demand was for the government to enforce quality control regulations for durians, especially moisture content and prevention of premature harvesting. Farmers asked for bilateral trade negotiations to expedite Thai fruit exports, emphasising that delays in transportation lead to spoilage. They expressed confidence that with full government support, Thailand's fruit exports could generate over 500 billion baht annually, compared to the current 200–300 billion baht.

The delegation also thanked the government for its recent negotiations with Chinese authorities, which have eased export procedures through various border checkpoints.

Meanwhile, Yanthicha Buaphuean, a Chanthaburi MP from the People's Party, raised additional concerns about a labour shortage in the region, especially the lack of migrant labour.

She proposed extending the work permit period from 3 months to 6 months and allowing migrant workers to travel across provinces to better support the agricultural sector.

She also urged the Prime Minister to address the rising conflict between humans and wild elephants, which have increasingly damaged crops and, in some cases, caused fatalities. To support affected communities, she requested that the government allocate 100 million baht from the central budget to compensate victims' families and provide relief for farmers suffering agricultural losses.

Prime Minister Paetongtarn affirmed the government's commitment to tackling falling crop prices and enhancing the competitiveness of Thai agricultural products. She stated that the government will consult with the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives to find sustainable solutions, and will actively promote research and development (R&D) to strengthen Thai produce against increasing competition from neighbouring countries.

Addressing concerns about delays at Chinese border checkpoints, especially Youyiguan and Mohan, where Thai fruit exports reportedly face customs clearance times of 8–12 days, the Prime Minister noted that prior efforts had already led to the formation of a Thailand-China joint working group aimed at shortening these delays. She assured stakeholders that the government will work to further reduce wait times by simplifying procedures and ensuring that Thai exports meet China's import standards to minimise disruptions.

The Prime Minister also acknowledged the escalating human-elephant conflict in the area, which has resulted in fatalities and crop destruction. She pledged to personally monitor the issue, promising direct coordination with the Chanthaburi governor should any administrative bottlenecks arise.

In a symbolic gesture of bilateral friendship, the Prime Minister planted a durian tree next to one previously planted by Han Zhiqiang, the Chinese Ambassador to Thailand, during his official visit to Chanthaburi on June 10, 2022. The tree-planting ceremony was held as a mark of continued Thailand-China agricultural cooperation.

Later, the Prime Minister observed a traditional durian harvesting demonstration, where she also participated in cutting and catching the fruit using the traditional sack technique. The visit concluded with informal discussions with local farmers, giving her further insight into the pressing challenges facing Thailand's fruit industry.

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