

Thailand Scales Up Farm Drones to Cut Costs and Boost Yields

Thailand is expanding agricultural drone use through learning centres and farmer training to cut costs, raise yields and build smart farming skills.

Drones are becoming one of the key technologies transforming Thai agriculture, helping farmers survey farmland, analyse data, plan cultivation and apply fertilisers and crop-protection products with greater precision.



Their growing role reflects a wider shift towards smart farming, as the technology helps reduce labour burdens, shorten working time and improve accuracy in farm management.

Data from Aeronautical Radio of Thailand (AEROTHAI)'s "Safe Agricultural Drones: Nakhon Phanom Model" shows the potential impact clearly. In a 22-rai demonstration plot growing Kor Khor 22 glutinous rice in Tha Uthen district, drone-assisted farming helped cut rice seed use by 52%, fertiliser use by 25% and labour costs by 41%.

The project also increased average yields to 1,100 kilogrammes per rai, or 250 kilogrammes more than conventional farming methods. After costs were deducted, farmers earned an average income of 5,254 baht per rai, which was 2,509 baht higher than income from traditional rice farming.

Agricultural drone use is also expanding rapidly. AEROTHAI said the use of farm drones is increasing by more than 20% a year, with more than 200,000 agricultural drones now in operation across rice fields, orchards and other crop-growing areas.

Drone Learning Centres Support Smart Farming

To promote wider use of agricultural drones, the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) has joined the Radio Control Airplane Modeler Sport Association to open drone technology learning centres at several vocational institutions.

Centres opened in 2026 include Sena Industrial and Community Education College in Ayutthaya, Chiang Rai Technical College, Srisamrong Industrial and Community Education College in Sukhothai, and Lampang Technical College.

The centres are designed as hubs for learning and training, covering everything from basic drone technology use to the development and further application of agricultural drone innovation.

They are also intended to create new career opportunities, improve the quality of life of farmers and local residents, and serve as models for expanding agricultural drone technology development at the regional level.



Agencies Step Up Farmer Training

Beyond the NRCT’s agricultural drone learning centres, several agencies are also moving to promote the use of drones as part of efforts to help Thailand’s agricultural sector thrive in the digital era.

For instance, the Department of Agricultural Extension has launched a workshop training project on “Drones for Agriculture” at Saen Palm Training Home in Kamphaeng Saen district, Nakhon Pathom province.

The programme gives farmers the opportunity to learn both theory and practice, covering drone laws and permit applications, equipment maintenance, and safe, correct and responsible drone operation in ways that take account of society and the environment.

The training is open to 120 farmers, divided into four groups of 30 participants each. Each group will attend a two-day course between 24-31 May 2026.

“We want Thai farmers to keep pace with technology and be able to build on this knowledge to create careers, generate income and become agricultural service providers in their communities,” said Anchalee Suvachittanont, director-general of the Department of Agricultural Extension.

“They can also help transfer knowledge and build strong smart farming networks in their areas,” she added.

The latest developments show that Thailand is pushing agricultural drones on three fronts at the same time: at farm level to increase yields and reduce costs, at community and education level through drone learning centres, and at workforce level through training courses for drone operators and agricultural drone pilots linked to civil aviation standards.

Together, these efforts could help turn drones from a specialised tool into a practical engine of Thailand’s next generation of farming.

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