

Thailand prepares farmers for climate change to protect food security

Why are goods expensive these days, vegetables easily bruised and the seasons so unpredictable?

These changes are warning signs that the “global boiling crisis” is quietly eating into household budgets and affecting the food on our plates.

It is time to recognise that this is a national challenge close to home, requiring a smart, collective response before it is too late.



Nature's bill exceeds THB100 billion

Many people remain unaware of the vast sums being lost as natural disasters take a heavy toll on Thailand's economy and society.

Phirun Saiyasitpanich, director-general of the Department of Climate Change and Environment, said Thailand faced high risks from climate change, including flooding, drought, heavy rain, storms, rising sea temperatures and El Niño-related variability.

These could have widespread effects on the economy and society.

“Thailand suffered losses of more than THB100 billion from natural disasters in 2024, equivalent to 0.57% of gross domestic product (GDP). Climate change and natural disasters are therefore no longer merely temporary crises. They have become part of everyday life, bringing unavoidable uncertainty about the future.”



Disaster preparedness is worth the investment

When nature is unpredictable, shifting from a reactive approach to preventive action offers better value than dealing with the damage afterwards.

Nicola Pollitt, the British ambassador to Thailand, said extreme weather was occurring worldwide.

Thailand was also experiencing heavy rain, with further heavy rainfall forecast over the following one to two months.

She highlighted the risks.

“El Niño-driven drought is increasing the risk of higher temperatures, which will affect water availability, agricultural production, farmers’ incomes and livelihoods, and food security.”

The United Kingdom (UK) government’s policy therefore emphasises that preparedness and preventive action offer better value and produce better results.

Key investments include climate data, early warning systems, local planning and financial tools that help communities manage risk.

Speaking about the Climate Action for a Resilient Asia (CARA) programme, Pollitt said, “The United Kingdom has supported Thailand in turning national adaptation priorities into concrete action for farmers and communities through the CARA programme since 2024. Climate adaptation involves protecting people’s lives and property, strengthening food security and reducing economic losses. National policies need to be connected effectively with action at the local level. Cooperation among government agencies, academia, the private sector and partners will also play a crucial role in driving adaptation over the long term.”

This view was shared by **Ken Shimizu**, deputy regional representative at the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

He regarded this cooperation as an important global priority and said success should be measured by positive changes in people’s lives rather than by policies.

“Climate adaptation should not be viewed merely as a ‘cost’ to be managed, but as an investment in sustainability, food security and people’s livelihoods.”

Thailand’s draft Climate Change Bill offers an opportunity to incorporate planning and budgeting into the proposed law in practical terms.

Data as a path to resilience

A national policy dialogue at Amari Watergate Bangkok in September brought together more than 150 representatives from a range of sectors.

The event was an outcome of two years of work under CARA, a partnership between FAO, the Department of Climate Change and Environment and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

The project aims to support a shift from responding after disasters to reducing risks proactively.

Its tangible results include reports assessing agricultural climate risks and vulnerabilities in Songkhla and Udon Thani; assessments of the reach and use of agricultural climate services (ACS) and early warning (EW) systems; capacity-building for provincial adaptation planning; and a handbook promoting climate adaptation in agriculture.

These technical outputs demonstrate the potential of nature-based solutions (NbS) that suit local conditions and incorporate local knowledge.

The information is to be included in the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) database, acting like a vaccine to strengthen resilience, help Thai agriculture recover and enable all sectors to respond sustainably to climate conditions over the long term.

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