



Thailand Agricultural Reform by setting Agritech and Innovation Centers (AIC)

On 5 March 2020, Mr. Chalermchai Srion, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), revealed after the signing ceremony for the establishment of the Agritech and Innovation Centers (AIC) at the Prince Palace Hotel, Mahanak, Bangkok, Thailand, that AIC is established under the 20-Year National Strategy plan. Agriculture is a production sector which is very important to the country's economy. Currently, Thailand is the 12th largest food exporting country in the world. The goal is to make Thailand become the top 10 in the world. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020 is expected to grow by 2-3%.

MOAC prioritizes the expansion of target agricultural commodities. During the first 10 months of 2019, Thailand exported agricultural products valued at 1,091,510 million baht to the world market. The export value can be divided into 9 ASEAN countries, 266,758.87 million baht, China 227,486.22 million baht, Japan 129,883.14 million baht, United States 105,150.19 million baht, European Union of 27 countries 91,377.70 million baht and others 270,853.96 million baht. The products with increased exports were fruits, rubber, rice, seafood, chicken, sugar and cassava products. Another important thing is that Thailand still has a trade surplus with other countries from the Free Trade Agreement. Thailand has a trade surplus value of 144,838 million baht with ASEAN commodities 112,843 million baht with China, 5,207 million baht with Australia.

Mr Chalermchai said from the operation of MOAC, the development of the agricultural sector has faced many challenges. There included improving production potential price stabilization, improving quality standard and quality of farmers. AIC is established over implemented under the policy “the agricultural technology policy 4.0”, which is chaired by Mr. Alongkorn Ponlabut, advisor to the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives.

AIC is established aiming at increasing agricultural competitiveness with technology and innovation. The objective also included technological extension and innovation of agricultural machinery. It also serves on a training center for farmers (Smart Farmers and Young Smart Farmers) in each province and promoting technology and innovation through research, development, investment, processing and commercial management.

According to the report of the Agricultural Technology Policy Steering Committee 4.0, the target has been achieved 9 months earlier than scheduled. This 2nd signing of cooperation has covered 70 provinces and will cover 77 provinces by mid-March from the plan of the end of target.

The signing ceremony is considered a success resulted from the integration of 4 main alliances, consisting of government, farmers, academics and private sectors to establish the AIC within a university. This will lead to the establishment of AIC network within a province. The center will consist of 1) Center of Excellence in Agricultural Technology and Innovation and 2) Research and testing center for agricultural technology and innovation.

AIC will focus on the promotion of agricultural technology, inventions and innovations in various forms by using the existing database combined with local knowledge and technology. Agriculturist and local wisdom farmer, who are prototype farmers will be gathered to utilize their local knowledge and modern technology, focusing on large scale management, bring Young Smart Farmers will be drawn to enhance their knowledge in e-commerce, story creation and packaging, including measures and related regulations. This is to educate farmers and farming better networking ready to approach agricultural era 4.0 policy, said Mr. Chalermchai

The signing ceremony of the MOU to establish and operate the AIC was a joint signing between Dr. Chalermchai Srion, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Chairman of the Agricultural Technology Policy Steering Committee 4.0 (Mr. Alongkorn Ponlabut), Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and representatives from universities and academic institutions from 77 provinces all over the country.

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