Good evening to you all.

Thailand is a country with an abundance of natural resources. There is fish in the water and rice in the fields. About 30 million people or 50% of the population are in the agricultural industry – crop farming, livestock raising, and fishing. All sectors are interrelated from production to processing to trade both domestic and overseas markets.

One might wonder why our farmers keep encountering the same problems especially the crop price slump, natural disasters such as flooding and drought, pests, diseases, and debt. Many have to rent land to grow crops. Some invest a lot in low-yield crops. These are risk factors that hinder the industry’s stability and the wellbeing of our fellow farmers.

Today, I want to talk to farmers, producers, and those working in and with the agricultural industry including civil servants who drive policy implementation and provide knowledge to farmers in order to invite them to join new approaches towards addressing their obstacles.

The private sector and entrepreneurs should adapt and adopt state policies in the form of “Pracharat” since you are part of the chain of production, processing, and marketing of the Thai agriculture. Agricultural scholars as source of knowledge and financial institutions as source of financial support can help lift agricultural professions, directly and indirectly.

The main agricultural policy of the Government is the “market-based production”, setting production quota based on 1) farming area, 2) water sources and irrigation, 3) the compatibility of soil, and 4) consumer demand, both domestic and oversea.

For example, areas with an abundance of water are good for rice and areas with less water are good for corn or other suitable crops. Demands are still high for corn. 4 million tons are needed. Our country can only produce 2 million tons while the rest are imported. Thailand produces 33-34 million tons of rice, 20 million tons of which are consumed domestically and the rest have to be sold overseas, meaning there is a risk of currency volatility at play.

One of the sustainable solutions is to limit the areas used for rice growing, along with the promotion of quality strains such as the popular Hom Mali rice and the Gor Kor 43 Rice which is low in sugar content and good for health enthusiasts and people with diabetes. Organic rice is also in high demand and can be sold at higher prices compared to its non-organic rice etc.

While assisting the farmers, we will no longer give only advice on farming methods, but also on soil, water, the weather, and the market. To do this more effectively, we must develop “Big Data” and Agri-Map where related information is stored and can be used to integrate cooperation from all concerned agencies including agricultural offices, commerce offices, mayors, the BAAC, and land development agencies. As for the overseas market, agricultural attache and commercial attache must work together to survey market demands and find new markets for Thai produce. Unlike rubber, we are not going to let other crops be grown without a marketing plan. What happened in the past also effecting us today.

We must use the agricultural learning centers for the enhancement of agricultural products and large-scale farming promotional system as the main tools to create smart farmers and the new generation of agriculturists. We must promote the merging of groups, cooperatives, and community enterprises.

The groups must focus on using innovation to lower production cost, increase output, and access to e-commerce. GAP certification for produce that give importance to the environment, health, safety, and farmers’ welfare with the concept of Smart & Strong together must also be in focused.

In addition, the Government also gives importance to 2 other issues that are almost "persistent" problems:

1. Risk prevention with "crop insurance" by allocating low-interest loans from the BAAC while the state subsidizes the insurance (65 baht per rai).

In times of disaster, flood, drought, disease, or insect, the state pays 1,000 baht per rai and insurance companies will jointly pay 1,500 baht per rai. Farmers can rest assured from inexpensive insurance.

and 2. Farmers' debt, which is a part of the cause of the loss of land of farmers due to illegal informal debts. Some farmers have no protection and no legal knowledge.

The Government has solved this issue sustainably by pushing for repurchase laws that helps prevent exploitation happened in the past.

In addition, mediation and measures as well as fair law enforcement were used to solve the problem of informal debts for low-income earners and farmers throughout the country.

The Government has been able to return assets to nearly 17,000 people worth a total of 19 billion baht, comprising 13,600 title deeds and a total area of ​​43,000 rai.

Fellow Thai citizens, "Trees without roots may fall easily due to the wind." Therefore, if a nation forgets and overlooks its nationality, history, cultural roots, traditions, and the occupations that built the nation, it would inevitably undermine these "abstract foundations”. Although, they are not tangible but they are very important.

Thailand is an agricultural nation. We are rich in land and natural resources. We should continue to expand on these things through proper management and use our agricultural profession to build our nation.

Some countries, such as Singapore, is at a disadvantage in space and resources, but is able to find its strengths. With the country’s strategic location and aptitude towards trade, it is able to make itself a prominent finance and banking market in the world and a leader in FINTECH with Smart City technology.

So, I would like to present projects that are important for the country which will reform our future economic structure based on our own resources and history, which are (1)the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC), which is a regional development project based on feasibility studies and cooperation in various fields to enhance the development and distribution of prosperity into various areas of the country, as well as the EEC and other 10 special economic development zones nationwide.

(2) The Food Innopolis program, which is a one-stop integrated service center in research, development, and innovation on agricultural crops that we historically had in abundance but were unable able to transform or add more value. We sold these products in the form of raw materials instead of high value innovative products.

The Government’s Thailand 4.0 policy is driving us to become a country that can export “new innovations" in the near future.

Lastly, before enjoying 9 minute video clip about these 2 projects, I would like to express my concern regarding the current PM2.5 crisis that is affecting our health, especially students, children, seniors, and people with illness and allergies. The Government never turn a blind eye on this matter.

Measures introduced will range from mild to sever while the cause must be fully uncovered so that these measures will not affect people’s life or create panic.

Today, our society begins to be aware of these problems together. The Government will have various measures that focus on solving problems at the root cause, especially strictly enforcing laws.

Image is one thing but on this matter, we are working on the problem with sincerity and we ask for cooperation from all sectors in solving this problem together sustainably.

We all must not be victims of the blame game. Everyone must help each other. I acknowledge all comments submitted which I will try to apply them in accordance with the context of Thailand. We must not forget to include people in various concerned sectors and their stake in this matter.

Thank you. I wish everyone and every family good health and happiness. Sawasdee Krub.

**The Development of the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC).**

<https://youtu.be/aMlnnyS91ro>

The feasibility study on the development of Southern Economic Corridor (SEC) straddling Chumphon, Ranong, Surat Thani, and Nakhon Si Thammarat provinces.

Thailand has set a target to step out of the middle-income trap and become a developed nation. Establishing a new economic zone brings advantages to other areas of development and will be one of the most important tools to draw foreign investment, distribute wealth, and mobilise national growth.

Seeing the potential of the southern region, the Cabinet agreed to turn four southern provinces into a new economic zone and a new center for development. The area will be called the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC) and will have a space of 32,000 square kilometers, housing more than 3.3 million people of Ranong, Chumphon, Surat Thani, and Nakhon Is Thammarat. The area has a network of transportation systems and is surrounded by two seas, not to mention its natural beauty, abundant natural resources, cultures, unique wisdom, marine resources, and economic crops such as oil palm, rubber, and fruits. The SEC has great potential to become Thailand’s new economic region.

To ensure the establishment of the SEC within a 5-year timeframe, the Government sets out to achieve four development aspects. The first aspect is the development of the western gateway of Ranong province as a logistics hub of the western region for all means of transport – land, water, and air.

1) Ranong Port will be developed into a deep sea port to facilitate the transportation of goods and international marine tourism. 2) Railways and road will connect Ranong Port. 3) A dual-rail system will reach Chumphon and Ranong by 2022, and will later reach Surat Thani and Padang Besar. 4) The main road connecting Chumphon and Ranong will be expanded into a 4-lane road, along with the development of secondary roads for better connectivity and more complete transportation network, in line with the growing tourism and logistics. 5) All major airports in the four provinces will increase their capabilities to welcome no fewer than 10 million passengers a year.

All of the aforementioned undertakings will cater to the opening of the western gateway. It will make the transportation of goods cheaper and faster, without having to go through the Strait of Malacca, increasing Thailand’s competitiveness on the global platform.

The second aspect is the development of the Gulf and the Andaman Sea into tourist destinations. Chumphon and Ranong will be the center for marine tourism connecting with international waters including the “Royal Coast” from Samut Songkram, Phetchaburi, and Prachuap Khiri Khan to Chumphon and Ranong. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2024.

The Royal Coast connects with tourist destinations in Phang Nga, Phuket, and Krabi, all of whom are international recognized. Together, they make for the world’s longest marine tourism route filled with natural attractions and beauty.

The third aspect is the development of the bio-based and High valued agricultural processing industry, with a variety of farm products in the SEC zone especially Surat Thani and Nakhon Si Thammarat. The SEC will be the base for the bioindustry with the utilization of rubber and oil palm and connect with the advanced petrochemical industry in the EEC.

There will be a research facility with internationally recognized achievements that can create added value throughout the production chain and help to generate income for farmers, community, and businesses.

The fourth aspect is environmental preservation, cultural promotion, and city development. The SEC is filled with charms and interesting characteristics deriving from local cultures and traditions passed on through generations. Local wisdom and practices lead to new innovations.

This will boost community tourism to promote the co-existence between urban residents and natural resources – forests, marine animals and plants, and mangroves. These areas are world’s heritage and international learning centers. Living with nature can help local residents improve wellbeing and personal, mental value.

The SEC zone will be a model economic zone and development hub of Asia. It will upgrade the wellbeing of the southern region as Thailand strives for stability, prosperity, and sustainability.

**Food Innopolis,**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kFoQy36k5A>

Thailand is located in an area that is ripe for agriculture. It is a country that has the potential to produce food in order to meet demands from around the world.

Therefore, an important strategy for Thailand's economic development is to create additional value for agricultural products in the form of high value food products.

The Food Innopolis project was established in accordance with the Government's Super Cluster policy as a food innovation city to create research, develop, and innovative activities in order to produce prototype. Such prototype lead to further commercial expansion.

Food Innopolis is an innovative food city which serves as a center for the world's leading food companies. Large food companies in Thailand, small and medium sized food companies, including food startups that are part of the supply chain are gathered here to create more value for the Thai food value chain.

In addition, leading universities, research institutes and related agencies are part of the network to support the operation which will lead to added value for Thai agricultural products.

With the readiness of locations near educational institutions, national research institutes, industrial estates, large agricultural markets, tech centres as well as the readiness of transportation networks, being located about 20 kilometers from Don Mueang Airport and many trains and superhighway roads for an area of ​​over 200 acres, with scientific infrastructure and a usable area of ​​over 20,000 square meters for serving and supporting both domestic and international companies from large corporations, SMEs and startups, to conduct research, development and innovation to create high value-added food products that are needed by the global market.

Products include health food for target groups such as athletes and patients, food that has medicinal properties, food additives and nutritional extracts, raw materials to produce high quality food, and businesses supporting food innovation to create an environment that is suitable for innovation.

Food Innopolis will host the world's leading food companies, Thailand's leading food companies, small food companies, including food startups that invest in research and development.

There are measures to promote and facilitate leading researchers from both in and outside the country to come together to meet the needs of the food industry.

The Government will be providing tax incentive and other forms of support such as various funding sources. It has integrated with government agencies, the private sector, technology institutions both domestic and international universities and the Pracharat mechanism to support operations.

In the future, this food innovation city will enable Thailand to be the leading food innovation center of the region and the world, which would create economic value for the country's food industry and enable it to compete in the long term.

Food Innopolis generates revenue throughout the value chain, including restaurants, farmers, and entrepreneurs, respond to the demands for food security, safety, and security.

Food Innopolis, the food innovation city.