

Country Statement: Thailand
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Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives

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Mister Chairman
Excellency Ministers
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, and the Thai cooperative movement, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and heartfelt gratitude to the Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam, the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance and the International Cooperative Alliance, Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific, our host and organizers of this special occasion for inviting us to this conference and extending to us warm regards, kind hospitality and friendly welcome. I am delighted to come to Hanoi, a great attraction on account of its unique culture and impressive economic growth.

Mister Chairman,

I believe we all here trust that the cooperative system has really proven itself as a key mechanism to help solve economic and social problems. The philosophy of economic self-help and mutual help has been reinforced by the Thai cooperative movement to conform to the philosophy of economic self-sufficiency, which was graciously initiated by

His Majesty King BhumibholAdulyadej. As a result, not only has the cooperative system cushioned the ill effects of economic recession, but it has also upheld the sustainability of economic and agricultural development in every aspect.

In line with the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy, high growth is not the main focus. Rather, a balanced and stable development path is more important. Growth with instability of the basic foundation can easily create high risks to the individuals, the family, the community, and the country as we can see from various crises. Growth with greater inequality in which large proportions of the people are still in poverty is likely to create social tension that may be disruptive to the political and social harmony of the country. Growth without caring for the harm done to the nature and environment can prevent us from achieving a sustainable development in the long run. Growth that damages the cultural identity of the nation is harmful to the moral fiber of our next generation.

Among the six key agricultural policies of the Royal Thai government, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives has put emphasis on increasing the role of agricultural cooperatives to be an effective market channel for agricultural products. Cooperatives must become competent and efficient. The way in which cooperatives are contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal is our target.

The Royal Thai government also realizes the importance of frequently taking cooperatives into account by carrying out consultations with the sector when developing economic policies and regulations, creating legal frameworks, and undertaking administrative practices on social and economic issues. The cooperative sector deserves equal treatment with other economic sectors, so much so as cooperatives have their distinctive structure that are member-driven and well-integrated in communities.

However, to ensure cooperatives are promoted fairly, proper and effective cooperative legislations and government policies in support of the cooperatives are absolutely essential. As for regulatory framework, the Cooperative Act needs to be reviewed from time to time. To support the strength of the cooperative movement, the amendment of the present Cooperative Act B.E.2542 has been approved by the cabinet and is being processed to the parliament.

In consideration of the role that cooperatives can take in the future, it can be said that at present, competition becomes mandatory for everybody, not only those who want to win, but also those who want just to survive. Market liberalization resulting in intense competition is remarkably putting tremendous pressure on the management practices of cooperatives, which originally were not meant to compete with others. It is unavoidable that cooperatives have over the course of time become involved in such competition where professionalism is essentially required. Therefore,

cooperatives should also focus their energy on professionalism, good governance, while keeping in the mind the goals and targets upon which the cooperatives are built.

Excellency and distinguished delegates,

The Royal Thai Government and the cooperative movement are working closely for cooperative development. With the close collaboration between the government and the movement, the enhancement of business operation efficiency together with the human resource development, cooperatives will gain advantage and achieve success in the fast-changing socio-economic conditions. The cooperatives must be ready, with competitive strengths, to face with a diversified and complex business system, be able to do business with private sector, and can render better services to members. I am confident that for those who are well prepared, success can be assured.

Thank you.

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