

Thai Coup Ushers in Organic Farming Initiative

June 2, 2014 (Tony Cartalucci - NEO) - After [the May 22 coup in Southeast Asia's Thailand](#), the new military-led government has revealed agricultural reforms based on sustainable, organic agriculture - an unprecedented and progressive departure from [the unsustainable populist subsidies that preceded it in Thailand](#), and that can be found in various degrees of failure around the world. The Royal Thai Army's General Prayuth Chan-ocha gave a basic summary of the reforms [in a speech made before the nation late May](#), stating:

We are trying to find measures to fix the prices of agricultural products without bringing more problems like those that happened in the past. Some of these measures include cost reduction such as costs of fertilizers and seedlings, increase productivity while reducing areas being used, employ natural fertilizer and reduce chemical fertilizers, use of local raw materials, and increase product cost and quality in order to compete with other countries. At present, NCPO has giving priority to paying the rice farmers. The Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives owes the rice farmers a large sum of money. BAAC is now in the process of trying to solve this problem.

The plan seeks to [immediately relieve farmers](#) cheated by the ousted regime's failed subsidy program that left nearly a million farmers unpaid for rice they had long-ago turned in to government warehouses. To replace the subsidies, General Prayuth intends to implement a version of self-sufficient, localized agriculture that replaces big-agri with local and sustainable solutions.

A New Way For Farmers

[A more detailed framework of the reforms](#) ([original Thai version here](#)) has been outlined by former anti-regime protester, Buddha Issara, who helped lead 6 months of protests against the regime of Thaksin Shinawatra before the May 22 coup. He had become famous among Thailand's farmers [when he purchased rice mills with donation money and began running them](#) at his protest site in northern Bangkok to help struggling farmers sell their harvests directly to consumers.

The points outlined in his plan include investment in national infrastructure, including irrigation systems, education programs, as well as media channels made available to broadcast issues pertinent and useful to farmers. It also focuses on land reform and in particular, the enforcement of land renting schemes designed to prevent exploitation and debt, as well as heavier taxes for land left unused by wealthy speculators.

There are also provisions for improving the quality of agricultural products - producing products that are healthier and of higher quality for consumers. This comes after subsidy programs encouraged farmers to grow crops that produced higher yields rather than crops consumers actually wanted to buy, skewing the markets and leaving warehouses overflowing with unwanted, unsold produce.

The plan also calls the localization of agricultural processing, including warehouses, marketing centers, distribution and even fertilizer production to be done within villages to cut out middlemen who have traditionally sought to purchase produce from farmers for the cheapest price possible and sell it to consumers for the highest price possible, making themselves incredibly wealthy at everyone else's expense.



Cost cutting is where organic agriculture comes in. Both the production of fertilizers locally and the control of weeds and pests will be accomplished by training farmers through national programs focusing on organic methods. Already in Thailand there exists several examples of schools successfully implementing and training farmers in the use of organic agriculture such as the [Khao Kwan Foundation](#) and [Ploen Khao Baan](#). Expanding their efforts and duplicating their methods across the country would be a necessary step in implementing meaningful reforms.

Localization, Organic Farming & Self-Sufficiency

This framework is based on [the Thai King's "New Theory" or "self-sufficiency economy"](#) and mirrors [similar efforts](#) found throughout the world attempting to break the back of the oppression and exploitation that results from dependence on a globalized system dominated by multinational corporate monopolies.

The self-sufficiency economy hinges on the precepts that families should farm first to sustain themselves through organic polyculture - rather than the dangerous and dependency-inducing monoculture championed by big-agri suppliers and big-retail distributors. Extra land and resources they will have should then be used to produce a variety of crops to hedge against market fluctuations and natural disasters. The income should be used to sustainably expand a family's operation, including through investment in technology to improve efficiency, process crops for sale, and even diversify economic activity away from strictly agricultural pursuits.

The King of Thailand [maintains a network of projects throughout the country](#) where demonstration fields and processing centers showcase the self-sufficiency economy and assist farmers in expanding their knowledge and economic prospects. With this apparently being the underpinning of upcoming reforms, these networks will most likely be expanded and made more accessible to the farmers who can benefit from them the most.

[Coupled with disruptive technology](#), the self-sufficiency economy, if implemented on a national scale, could accelerate economic development driven from within Thailand, rather than through a dependency on foreign investment. While Thailand possesses immense natural resources, its greatest asset is its human resources. Rather than exploiting this resource to propel corrupt political machines forward, it can be turned instead into an engine of immense economic growth, socioeconomic development, and progress all strata of Thai society will benefit from - if not only from the stability it will create from turning political rivalries into constructive, pragmatic progress.

With a vast percentage of Thailand's population engaged in the agricultural industry, the new agricultural reforms will serve as the foundation upon which post-Thaksin Thailand will be built. Making sure this foundation is strong, sustainable, and more importantly, designed to improve both the livelihood of farmers, and the nation they feed, is essential and will require more than just vote-buying subsidies and populist gimmicks to accomplish. It appears that while the ousted regime of Thaksin Shinawatra failed to understand this, the new military-led government does and is laying the groundwork to make it happen.



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