



Thailand’s Herbal Promotion Policy: ACFS Moves Forward on Herbal Standards



“Recently, herb has increasing been recognized and used as a health care alternative because of its safety.” stated Mr. Pisan Pongsapitch, Secretary-General of the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (ACFS), an agency under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC). He revealed that the Thai government currently has a policy to promote the use of herb in hospitals and clinics in order to reduce imports of conventional medicine as well as to promote the use of herb in the cosmetics, food supplements and medicines. He further stated that in 2019, domestic market value of Thai

herb products was up to 180 billion baht, while the global market value reached 3 trillion baht and the upward trend continues yearly since. Thailand has exported herbal raw materials in different forms (fresh, dry, extracts and herbal products) to international market such as Japan, China and the United States. As a result, the herbal market continues to expand.

This expansion, in return, presents us an opportunity to generate more income for herbal farmers continuously. It is important to note that, herbs produced according to accepted standards will help entrepreneurs build credibility and consumer confidence in the safety and quality of their products as well.

With this in mind, ACFS has set up standards for agricultural products and Good Agricultural Practices (GMPs) for medicinal plants. The standards will cover every stage of the production from planting to post-harvest. This is to obtain herbal raw materials that are high in quality, safe and suitable for processing herbal products. The standards will also cover the processing of herbal raw materials that will be sold in the form of fresh and dry herbs. This will include herbal plants for processing herbal products and finished herbal products.

Over the past year, the ACFS has acted under the Thai Herbal Development Master Plan, 2017-2022 to propel the government policy for promoting those involved in the herbal industry. This plan which is to bolster Thailand’s chances of becoming ASEAN’s exporter of top-quality herbs and herbal products, covers the development of Thai herbs from upstream to downstream. The ACFS believes that by increasing the competitiveness of Thai herbs continuously and systematically, building credibility of inspection and certification in every step of the production process will bring a great confidence to consumers both in domestic and international markets. As a result, the ACFS has set up several measures including:





❖ **Standardization of medicinal plants.** This is a criterion to determine the quality of medicinal plants according to the GAP product standard and the Dry Herbs Standards. According to the part of the plants that is to be used, there are 5 standards for dry herbs including (1) standards for tubers, rhizomes and roots, (2) standards for leaves and stems, (3) standard for flowers, (4) standards for fruits and seeds, and (5) standards for barks and wood. Such standards are voluntary standards and have already been published in the Government Gazette. Currently, the ACFS is conducting guidelines for compliance with GAP standards for 3 medicinal plants including Andrographis (Kariyat), turmeric and black galingale. The guidelines are expected to be completed by December 2021

❖ **Promoting the development and enhancing the inspectors to a professional level.** In order to meet the current change situation and support the transfer of inspection and certification missions based on standards, the ACFS has organized an Organizational Development Project (CB/IB) to support the certification system. The project focuses on expanding education in inspection and certification in line with the Thai Agricultural Standards on Good Agricultural Practices for Herbs (TAS 3502-2018) and The Thai Agricultural Standards of Organic Agriculture, Part 1: The Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Produce and Products from Organic Agriculture (TAS 9000, Part 1-2009).



In this regard, two virtual training programs were conducted including (1) Training on the preparation for inspectors according to agricultural standards on good agricultural practices for herbs, was held on July 8 - 9, 2021, and (2) Training of representatives from the Department of Agriculture's eight Centers for Agricultural Research and Development, was held on August 18 - 19, 2021. These will enhance knowledge, improve skills, and enrich experience gained from training with correct practices in accordance with the standards. This will result in confidence in Thai agricultural and food products and strengthen acceptance by the domestic and international markets.

Finally, more channels for commercial and public relations are formed using the online agricultural market (DGTfarm) with the aim to raise competitiveness. Currently, there are six herbal stores that participate in the DGTfarm. This is divided into two categories including GAP agricultural products markets (3 stores) and Organic agricultural markets (3 stores).

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