Friends of Thai Agriculture

Reducing agricultural burning in Thailand: 2024 and 2025 in review

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Friends of Thai Agriculture - Who we are

- An international group of agricultural counsellors and attachés based in Bangkok
- Members from around the globe such as Germany (Embassy and DLG), the Netherlands, Brazil, France, the USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines
- We meet regularly to exchange on trade, sustainability topics, and developments in Thailand and the region
- Close partners: FAO, UNESCAP CSAM, GIZ, USDA/ Winrock International and GETHAC



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Why we organized conferences on agricultural burning

The problem

- Crop burning is a leading source of harmful PM2.5 pollution, causing over 2 million hospital visits a year in Thailand
- 83% of crop residue burning comes from rice, maize and sugarcane
- Rice alone produces about 20 million tons of straw a year
- The problem peaks every January to March

Our goals

- Raise awareness among government, experts and the public, including through media
- Build a network of experts and share proven solutions from around the world
- Show farmers commercially viable alternatives to burning
- Achieve fresher air all year round

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What we did: three milestones



MAY 2024

Kick-off at AGRITECHNICA ASIA

“The Burning Panel” in Bangkok (22–24 May 2024), convened by FTA.



OCTOBER 2024

Main conference

“Reduction of Air Pollution through Avoidance of Burning in Agriculture” with 250+ experts and 16 Thai media groups.



SEPTEMBER 2025

Partnership conference

“Putting Out the Fire” on post-harvest biomass utilization at AgriFuture Conference & Exhibition.

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AgriSpark Hackathon 2025: two use cases

“Hack the Hills” challenge

We looked for agricultural innovations to reduce burning in the hills. The prize: up to 20,000 THB and the chance to test the solution in the field.

Use Case 1: “From Hill to Road”

Use Case 2: “Burn No More”



AgriSpark 2025 award ceremony

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Key takeaways: solutions exist, now they must scale

01

Solutions are there

- Proven options exist for rice, maize and sugarcane
- Mechanization works best with system-wide modernization and a “residue-to-value” approach
- Access to mechanization to be improved

02

One size does not fit all

- Rice: USDA/Winrock: microbial solutions to cut composting time; GIZ: biochar; pellets, composting
- Maize: GETHAC: composting, biochar; changing to other crops in the uplands / less burning crops is one of the solutions
- Sugarcane: involvement of industry/factories for energy usage; financially attractive solutions

03

Now we scale them up

- Business models such as Harvest-as-a-Service and blended finance make solutions affordable
- Solutions must be commercially viable for farmers / market demand required
- In countries such as Brazil, government regulations have guided farmers toward non-burning practices.

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Friends of Thai Agriculture - achievements

01

A cross-embassy network

Embassies, DLG, GIZ, UNESCAP and USDA partners joined forces.

02

Practical, innovative pathways

The solutions are there. Now we scale them up, including innovations from the AgriSpark hackathon.

03

New partnerships

New partnerships developed, e.g. GETHAC and private-sector partners on biochar.



Do you want to join our network? Reach out to:

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