

## Thailand's coconut yield drops below average due to drought, pests

The country's mature coconut yield is projected at 0.86 million tonnes, as the Commerce Ministry orders close monitoring of coconut and coconut milk prices.



The Agriculture and Cooperatives Ministry expects Thailand's yield of mature coconuts to come in at 0.86 million tonnes, far lower than last year's 0.94 million tonnes.

This drop is attributed to prolonged drought and a pest infestation affecting coconut trees.

Commerce Minister Pichai Nariphaphan has assigned the Department of Internal Trade to closely monitor the prices of mature coconuts and fresh coconut milk to avoid affecting consumers.

Provincial commerce offices have also been directed to inspect essential consumer goods prices in the field, while patrol officers will conduct random checks at retail stores continuously.

Though mature coconuts are available all year, the peak season is from April to July, when farmers typically sell them at low prices like 5 to 9 baht per coconut. However, prices rise during the low season from August to March, when coconuts go for 18 to 28 baht.

As of now, the price of mature coconuts has risen to an average of 19.08 baht per coconut due to reduced market supply. Demand for mature coconuts stands at 1.19 million tonnes, with 35% going to wholesale and fresh markets and 65% to processed coconut milk factories.

To alleviate domestic shortage, factories have been importing coconuts during low production periods. The Subcommittee on Coconut Production Management, under the Oilseeds and Vegetable Oil Committee, is overseeing efforts to balance supply and demand in the supply chain. This group includes representatives from government agencies, the private sector and farmers.

Commerce Ministry spokesman Witthayakorn Maneenet said: "The Department of Internal Trade and provincial commerce offices will continue to monitor the coconut situation and key consumer goods prices. If any business is found inflating prices excessively or disrupting the market, legal action will be taken, with penalties of up to seven years in prison and/or fines of up to 140,000 baht."

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