



TOWARDS THE 21st CENTURY

By Dr. Chira Hongladarom

I should say welcome to readers of the HRI/POST project in the U.S.. Last week I was over there, but not to watch the Clup as you might expect. In my capacity as a board member of the Tourism Authority of Thailand I visited the hotel school at Cornell to explore co-operation between the TAT and their Hotel and Tourism Training Institute.

As I looked for signs of globalization I noticed how many imported goods there were, especially garments from China. I wonder how powerful the Chinese economy will be ten years from now, and what we should do to prepare.

This week we take a hard look at the agricultural sector. Our theme is "high growth-high gap : solution?" One of our distinguished contributors is an academic, the other a businessman. Dr. Mongkol Dantanintr was formerly with the Ministry of Agriculture and now works for the Research and Development Institute at Khon Kaen University. His views on agriculture are very realistic and should be taken seriously. He suggests at least one way to establish a bond between the industrial and agricultural sectors.

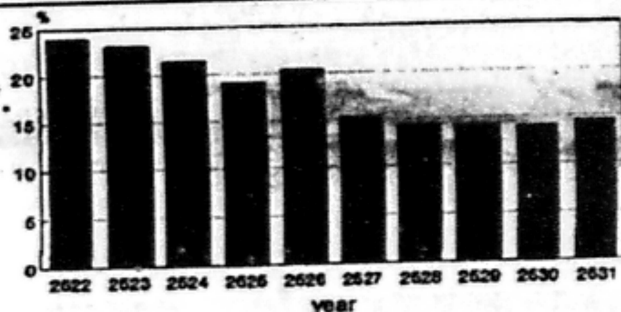
The other contributor is Mr. Abhaichon Vacharisinthu, for whom I also have a great deal of respect. He is with CP and has a profound understanding of the private sector's role in agriculture, especially in relation to human resources development and management.

These two experts present a realistic view about the future of our agricultural sector. In my view the Ministry of Agriculture is like a private company, and it is difficult to justify its existence. Let's look at some statistics.

The agricultural sector's share of total GNP-currently about 12%-is in decline. Meanwhile, the agricultural yield per rai stays much the same, and most active members of rural communities move to urban areas. And yet the budget allocated to the Ministry is increasing. Where is the justification?

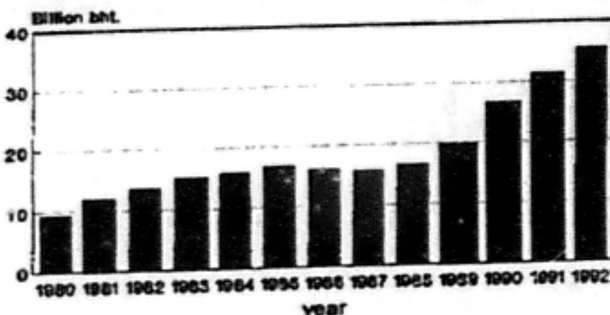
We cannot afford to have a widening gap between the urban and rural. Globalization must benefit the majority, or political stability will be impossible. Readers in urban areas should spend a few minutes each day to ponder and contribute something to your fellow Thais in agriculture, who in fact constitute the majority.

% of
Agr.GDP. / GDP.



Source: The Bureau of the Budget

AGRICULTURAL
BUDGET
1980 - 1992



Source: The Bureau of the Budget