

COMMERCE

Sister city products being developed

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Sister cities projects with Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam have been initiated to introduce new products to the market.

Aat Pisanwanich, director of the Center for International Trade Studies of the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce (UTCC), said the centre was hired by the Commerce Ministry to study ways for border provinces to formulate joint strategies with neighbouring countries to integrate value chains into the global market. Single products made by two border provinces of neighbour nations are likely to be available early next year.

Mango fruit juice under the "Lin-Chan" brand made from *kaew kamin* mangoes from Pailin province in Cambodia and *nam dok mai* mangoes in Chanthaburi province in Thailand will be the first products to market, possibly in the next three months.

The products are to be 100% natural and produced by community enterprises in Ban Mum Sa-ngop, Khao Saming district, in Trat, at a Good Agricultural Practices-certified factory.

Next in the pipeline is a soothing balm made from thanaka by Shan people in Myanmar, and cassumunar ginger (*plai*) made by a community enterprise in Chiang Rai under the brand "Tai Thai".

Pimchanok Vonkorporon, director-general of the Trade Policy and Strategy Office, said the UTCC's study focuses on product clusters from four regions. It also provides guidance for other border provinces to enhance cooperation in the sub-region.

The clusters should benefit small-scale farmers in both Thailand and neighbouring provinces through their participation in production chains and raising income for rural people in the chains.

Initially, the project has launched four pilot products: beef between Savannakhet and upper Northeastern Thailand (Sakon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, and Mukdahan); seafood between southern Myanmar (Tantharyi region) and lower Central Thailand (Phetchaburi, Prachuap Khiri Khan, and Samut Sakhon and Samut Songkhram); fruit between western Cambodia (Pailin and Battambang provinces) and eastern Thailand (Chanthaburi, Trat, Prachin

Buri, Sa Kaeo, and Nakhon Nayok); and herb between the Shan State of Myanmar and upper northern Thailand (Chiang Rai, Nan, Phrae, and Phayao).

For the beef project, there is a cooperation between Agriculture Development Center at Nong Tao at Savannakhet and Rajamangala University of Technology Isan (RMUTI) in Sakon Nakhon province, with regard to knowledge transfer on cultivation of cattle feed plants, especially Napier grass and other plants that are high-energy feeds in order to supply the increasing demand from cattle cooperatives in Thailand.

The project will also create business networking between Thai cooperatives and Laotian entrepreneurs that will lead to a future cooperation to distribute fattened beef cattle to inner Laos, Vietnam, and China through a butcher centre in Laos and a joint venture in retail.

The Commerce Ministry, through the Trade Policy and Strategy Office (TPSO), will provide information on demand and standardisation to broaden markets both regionally and globally.

For seafood cluster development, the sister-city business support unit will be established possibly at the border area or at universities (Maeik University and Rajabhat Phetchaburi University) to connect young entrepreneurs, local and Otop product design and development, and linkage of tourism destinations.

A memorandum of understanding on cooperation between Maeiklong Fishery Cooperative and Fishery Distribution Center in Maeik province in Myanmar were assigned to upgrade quality and safety management to supply seafood materials for processed food manufacturing by the Thai cooperative, aiming to supply growing demand from regional markets, China, and Middle Eastern countries.

For the fruit cluster, a business partnership between Thaweesap Community Enterprise in Trat province and fruit farmer-groups in Cambodia, together with support from many parties, especially in the Faculty of Science and Arts, Burapha University Chanthaburi Campus has been already implemented.

The mango juice under Lin-Chan brand (Pailin-Chanthaburi), which is a combination of high-quality Thai and Cambodian mangoes, will be introduced into the market over the next 2-3 months.

In the future, the partnership could extend to other co-products and marketing promotions through cooperation with the hotel association and exporters in this sub-region.

According to Ms Pimchanok, the scheme to connect value chains between herbal companies based in Taunggyi city in Shan State (YEN-D alumni) and smallholder



Ready-to-drink mango juice made under a Pailin-Chanthaburi partnership for the Lin-Chan brand.

farmer enterprises in border provinces both in Kentung (Myanmar) and Chiang Rai has already taken place.

The product was developed by blending thanaka and cassumunar ginger, using the sub-regional branding of Tai people to reflect the common culture of Tai people living in mountainous areas in Chiang Rai and Shan State.

Ms Pimchanok said future cooperation will be expanded to connect tourism routes for wellness tourism under the theme of "the magic of spa from the Mekong to the Salween."

Mae Fah Luang University, together with other stakeholders, will play an active role in fostering trust and future cooperation, she said.