



People & Forest

- Doi Tung Reforest
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"How people and forests live together"



A major cause of deforestation on Doi Tung was the slash and burn methods of traditional agriculture and the opium production of hill tribe communities who moved to the area over the past half century. The people of Doi Tung had become dependent on the cultivation of opium as their main stream of income. Not only were they selling the opium, but they had become addicted to the drug as well. And so began the vicious cycle that pulled them deeper into destitution. Soon, young girls were driven into the city to take on prostitution. There seemed to be no legitimate means to sustain their livelihood. The forest was left barren and deserted, while the people of Doi Tung struggled to survive.

Her Royal Highness Princess Srinagarindra recognized that an effective reforestation and development program was needed to solve both the human and environmental problems of Doi Tung. She felt that reforestation of the 150 square kilometers of Doi Tung should benefit the environment by complimenting the natural forest conditions as much as possible. Reforestation should allow people and forests to co-exist, by having those who live in the Doi Tung area depend on the forests for their livelihood and so encourage them to conserve their natural environment. The land once used to grow opium is now being used for fruitful purposes such as growing commercial and economic agricultural products, such as Macadamia nuts, Arabica coffee beans, and mushrooms. Since agriculture alone could not support people adequately, alternative occupations were promoted to improve their incomes and standard of living. Many home and cottage industries now undertaken at Doi Tung depend on materials cultivated in the forests. Legitimate employment and a stable source of income brought with them new opportunities.