



Royal Thai Embassy
Laan Copes van Cattenburch 123
2585EZ The Hague, Netherlands

PRESS RELEASE

With reference to the alleged treatment of monkeys in Thailand's coconut industry, the Royal Thai Embassy wishes to provide preliminary clarifications as follows:

1. The matter has been taken very seriously by the Thai authorities. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce, Jurin Laksanawisit, chaired a meeting with relevant stakeholders on 8 July 2020 to address the matter. In the consultation, the Thai Food Processors' Association (TFPA), in particular Thai Agri Food Public Company Limited and Theppadungporn Coconut Co., Ltd. (producers respectively of "Aroy-D" and "Chaokoh" brands of coconut milk) confirmed that monkeys are **NOT** used in the harvesting coconuts which are processed into their coconut milk production.

2. These firms stated that they have entered into MOUs with major Western retailers/ importers and with their suppliers to ensure that there is no usage of monkeys in the supply chain and to put in place an auditing process, including random inspection.

3. Nevertheless, to enhance consumer confidence, the TFPA will work with its members to implement a more stringent traceability system (with trace code on packaging) to guarantee no mistreatment of animals in the food production process.

4. Ministry of Commerce of Thailand also plans to invite foreign diplomats and relevant stakeholders to observe the complete production process from farm to table.

5. Coconut milk is an integral part of Thai cuisine, thereby coconut farming in Thailand has been constantly adjusting to improve harvesting techniques and equipment in an efficient and sustainable manner. The modern harvesting method in Thai coconut industry is to use tree-length sticks with sharp blade at the top end to cut only ripe coconut from its tree, as shown on the video clip <https://youtu.be/fZInCTVYESE>.

6. Given the importance Thailand places on wildlife conservation and animal welfare, the Royal Thai Government, NGOs, and private individuals have worked closely to strengthen animal welfare by raising public awareness and enacting relevant legislation. These include the Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act enacted in 2019, the Cruelty Prevention and Welfare of Animals Act, effective since 2014, both of which stipulate clear punishments against offenders. Specific sections under the Criminal Code (Section 381 and 382) also set responsibilities and punishments against any act of animal maltreatment.

7. The use of monkeys should also be understood in the local Thai cultural context. There are small farmers who still pursue traditional way of life in training monkeys to pick coconuts for their own livelihood, similar to other parts of the world where dogs and eagles are trained to assist in hunting or sport. And likewise, while the practice of retaining animals for traditional uses do exist in Thailand, they are **unconnected** with the modern efficient industrial manufacturing process. Acts of cruelty towards animals are individual acts, and violate the relevant legislation described above.

As one of the world's leading suppliers of coconut products of high quality, we are proudly committed to improving our businesses to enhance our market as well as to be accountable to our trade partners, consumers and producers, including both entrepreneurs and workers throughout the supply chain. As a society, Thailand is committed to promote animal protection, welfare, and rights, and it expects all parties to work together in the spirit of constructiveness and transparency.

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