

THAILAND: Floods-hit Phatthalung rubber farms plead for aid

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Rubber growers whose plantations have been damaged by the recent tropical depression are calling for government financial help.

Phatthalung was affected badly by the tropical depression that struck southern Thailand early last week, triggering severe flooding, said Suchart Salem, chief of tambon Mae Kharee in Tamot district (a local government unit is called tambon in Thailand).

All of Phatthalung's 11 districts were declared disaster zones and vast areas of rubber plantations were destroyed. The damage was particularly heavy in Pak Phayun, Bang Kaew, Khao Chaison, Khuan Khanun, Pa Bon and Tamot districts, Mr Suchart said.

"At least 10,000 rai (one rai=1,600 sq m) of rubber plantations in Phatthalung have been severely damaged, costing about 2 billion baht in losses," he said.

Based on the present price of rubber sheets, 100 baht a kilogramme, one rai of a rubber plantation could yield more than 200,000 baht a year, he said.

Before the disaster struck, some rubber farmers were earning between 5,000 and 6,000 baht a day, he said.

The actual losses could be far greater given the fact that a rubber tree can be harvested on average for between 35 and 40 years, Mr Suchart said.

There are about one million rubber tapping families in the country, most of whom are in the South, who would now be out of work, he said.

Songtham Chansap, director of the Phatthalung branch of the Office of the Rubber Replanting Aid Fund (ORRAF), said official figures were not yet available on how many rubber tappers were affected by the depressions.

The office is still completing its survey on the damage to rubber plantations, and farmers are encouraged to report their circumstances to the ORRAF offices in their districts.

The president of the Rubber Holder Cooperatives Federation of Thailand, Pherk Lertwangphong, said the government should consider urgent measures to help rubber farmers. Mr Pherk said the government could use the 15 billion to 20 billion baht it has collected per kilogramme of rubber sold this year to fund relief measures for affected growers.

(Syed Rashid Ali, Karachi, Pakistan)

Adresse:

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