

**Keynote Address**  
**on**  
**His Majesty the King and Vetiver Work for the Environment**  
**by**  
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It is my great honor and privilege to have the opportunity to address the topic of "His Majesty the King and Vetiver Work for the Environment". Since the day of His Majesty's accession to the throne in 1946, which was more than 50 years ago, Thai people realize that, apart from his role as a king, His Majesty has also devoted himself to working hard to ease the people's hardship. He has initiated various development projects on water source, agriculture, health, career opportunity promotion, communication and the environment. "Soil conservation and development" is one of the environmental issues on which His Majesty places great emphasis, particularly in the use of vetiver, a kind of vegetation, for this particular purpose.

His Majesty early recognized the problem of soil resource deterioration which worsened, rapidly day by day, and regularly conducted studies to find ways to prevent the problem. It was in 1991 that His Majesty recommended carrying out an experiment on using vetiver for soil conservation. He kept track of the results, and periodically added more suggestions. This allowed vetiver work to develop progressively and led the World Bank, one of the outstanding supporting agencies for vetiver utilization, to be Thailand's prominent supporter in organizing the First International Conference on Vetiver (ICV-1) entitled: "Vetiver Grass: A Miracle Grass" during February 4-8, 1996 at Chiang Rai Province. The main objective of the First Conference was to commemorate the 50th Anniversary (Golden Jubilee) Celebrations of His Majesty the King of Thailand's Accession to the Throne; and the other objective was to publicize the use of vetiver for soil and water conservation among people around the world.

On that occasion there were altogether 400 participants from 44 countries. The Conference concluded that vetiver grass is a tropical plant which has a bright potential since it renews the environment. As far as Thailand was concerned, there was a commitment to plant more vetiver which bring benefits to the world's environment, and would help to conserve soil and water as well as absorb the carbondioxide and pollutants in the air.

As the First Conference was quite successful, the Second International Conference on Vetiver (ICV-2) was proposed to be held once again in Thailand in the year 2000 under the theme of "Vetiver and the Environment". Later on, the Interim Committee for the International Conference on Vetiver concurred that Thailand would be the host for the Second International Conference on Vetiver to Commemorate the Sixth Cycle Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty the King on 5th of December 1999. The Conference would also

serves as a forum for participants to exchange ideas on vetiver at an international level, thus leading to the same direction for vetiver usage in the future.

As stated before, His Majesty's guidelines have strongly focused on development work in every field and subject. The ultimate objective is to care for the environment, especially in the conservation and development of natural resources in order to achieve sustainability and yield the most benefits. Loss of topsoil occurs in every region of Thailand, especially in the northern region. His Majesty gave the ideas for starting projects to conserve the topsoil using various methods; for example, planting big trees on the steep slopes and also ground cover crop. However, the loss of topsoil still occurs because of deforestation which can very quickly create environmental problems.

There is a wide range of usages of vetiver under the Royal initiative in Thailand. His Majesty continuously adds different uses of vetiver to benefit and improve the environment, including soil, water and forests etc.

On the day of the traditional Ploughing Ceremony, 9th of May 1997, for example, His Majesty observed the demonstration farm within the Chitralada Palace and graciously granted a Royal initiative concerning the environment to high-ranking officials of Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and here I quote his speech as follows:

***"Soil conservation should be done simultaneously with forest conservation and rehabilitation. Soil conservation by using vetiver must be expanded widely in order to conserve and prevent the loss of topsoil. Thus the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives should take charge in conserving soil and water as well as rehabilitating the various deteriorated areas".***

On 24th of July 1997, during the graduation exercise at Kasetsart University, His Majesty granted the Royal advice as quoted below:

***"...Things that are good should be applied technically correctly and suitably to the relevant conditions in order to give us successful results. Vetiver, for example, should be planted in a dense row, lined appropriately with the topographical conditions of the area. For instance, on slopy land, it should be planted along the contours across the slope and in gullies. For the flat land, vetiver should be planted along the farm-plot boundary or along furrows between rows of field crops, whereas around the catchment areas, it should be planted in rows above the water source. Growing vetiver grass in such manners will help to prevent topsoil erosion, maintain soil moisture, and trap sediment and pollutants from flowing into the water source. These qualities ultimately contribute to soil and water conservation, and also soil and forest rehabilitation. Graduates who will start working should realize that it is necessary to take into account correctness and appropriateness in their actions. It should come automatically when you do all your business that, apart from having the right knowledge and positive thinking, you must apply your knowledge and thinking correctly, as well as suitably to your work, situation, people and community. Then, you can hope for a complete success..."***

On 14th of July 1998 when His Majesty paid a Royal visit to Huai Sai Royal Development Study Centre to follow up the progress of the Royal initiatives on using vetiver for environmental purposes, he graciously presented a Royal Speech as follows:

*"...The area with productive soil in Thailand is diminishing, that is why we have to look for areas having bad soil and improve them to become productive. This project is important, and various agencies, including Land Development Department and the Royal Forest Department, should jointly conduct serious studies. If we can do that, we will never be deprived..."*

*... Vetiver will detain water and nutrients coming from the mountain. Mountains are the source of water and plant nutrients; there is no need to bring in nutrients from elsewhere. Land development is then easy, with the help from irrigation and forest..."*

His Majesty not only focused on the importance of vetiver by continually granting Royal initiatives and advice, but also granted the King of Thailand Vetiver Awards worth US\$ 10,000. These awards were first bestowed in 1992, followed by second awards of the same amount on this occasion of the Second International Conference on Vetiver. These awards are for the outstanding works in two categories; one is for research, and the other for dissemination of vetiver technology. In this instance, after having reviewed a total of 120 papers from various countries, the Committee on Development and Promotion of the Utilization of Vetiver Grass According to His Majesty the King's Royal Initiative selected six papers, three from each category, to be eligible for winning the awards.

The use of vetiver grass which was introduced by His Majesty the King for conserving the environment exemplifies His Majesty's great concern for his subjects, as well as his remarkable recognition of the importance of protecting and solving the soil deterioration problem by applying the concept of *"using nature to solve nature"*. This method is an economical means because vetiver is cheap and easily planted and farmers can apply it on their own, using local wisdom. His Majesty also advocates the principle of *"Sufficiency Economy"* for his people to adapt to their daily life. This will lead to an effective and sustainable management of natural resources and the environment, rendering benefits not only to Thailand, but also to the entire world.