

# Narcotics Crops Control

Opium cultivation takes place in the northern part of Thailand by members of several ethnic minority groups. The highest cultivation areas are in the mountainous area of Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, Tak and Chiang Rai Provinces. Opium is cultivated by farmers for personal consumption, exported to other countries and sold to produce heroin.

Typically opium is cultivated in elevation exceeding 800 meters. The annual opium cultivation survey is a time sensitive operation constrained by weather and logistical demands. The cultivation survey focuses on 76 highland target areas in 17 northern provinces and one northeastern province. Data must be continually collected and analyzed, and eradication target packages prepared to allow eradication troops sufficient time to destroy the crop before it can be harvested. Information from a computerized, the Geographic Information System, is combined with other survey and statistical data to measure opium cultivation trends.

In 1998/99, the opium cultivation areas are decreased, but the opium yield remains the same with last season. The

methodology has been changed from survival of hilltribes to beneficial business. The farmers sought to avoid eradication and increase yields by planting outside of the traditional cultivation window by replanting opium poppy from two to three crops over the course of a growing season. Opium is also interspersed with legitimate crops to avoid detection of authorities and by utilizing fertilizers and water sprinkling systems. These non-traditional cultivation techniques have complicated ONCB efforts to estimate the opium crop.

A long-term solution which combines involuntary eradication with development assistance must continually be used if Thailand is to make significant progress in further reducing the opium crop.

## **The 1998/1999 Opium Survey**

ONCB's ongoing opium survey is jointly sponsored by the Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) of the US Embassy in Bangkok and the Government of France. From observations on the 1998/1999 opium survey, opium cultivation decreased 3.01% from the previous year.



This year, opium yield was high because of favorable weather conditions, particularly the seasonal rains which occurred prior to the August-September planting period. Moreover, rains continued in same areas until December. The wholesale price offered for raw opium is rising. In the beginning of the cultivation season, the price was Baht 50,000-80,000 per 1.6 kg "joi", (note: the figure of price came from retail price) which is a fivefold increase over last year. Prices can be expected to rise

In Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, Chiang Rai and Tak Provinces, drug financiers have encouraged hilltribe farmers to expand cultivation across to Thai border to avoid eradication. Furthermore, average field size increased from the previous year from 0.08-0.32 ha to 0.08-0.4 ha. however, the fields remain small.



before the next cultivation season. Thus, it is important to keep pressure on farmers by maintaining the opium eradication campaign.

## **Opium Eradication**

Opium eradication is a part of narcotics crop control measures of the Royal Thai Government, and 76 target areas of responsibility are shared by various Thai authorities as follows:

1. Royal Thai Army Region 3 29 target areas
2. Border Patrol Police Region 327 target areas
3. Provincial Police Region 5 6 target areas
4. Provincial/District unit 14 target areas

The opium eradication campaign is jointly planned through the authority of

the Royal Thai Army Region 3 and the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC). The results of the 1998/1999 eradication campaign are as follows

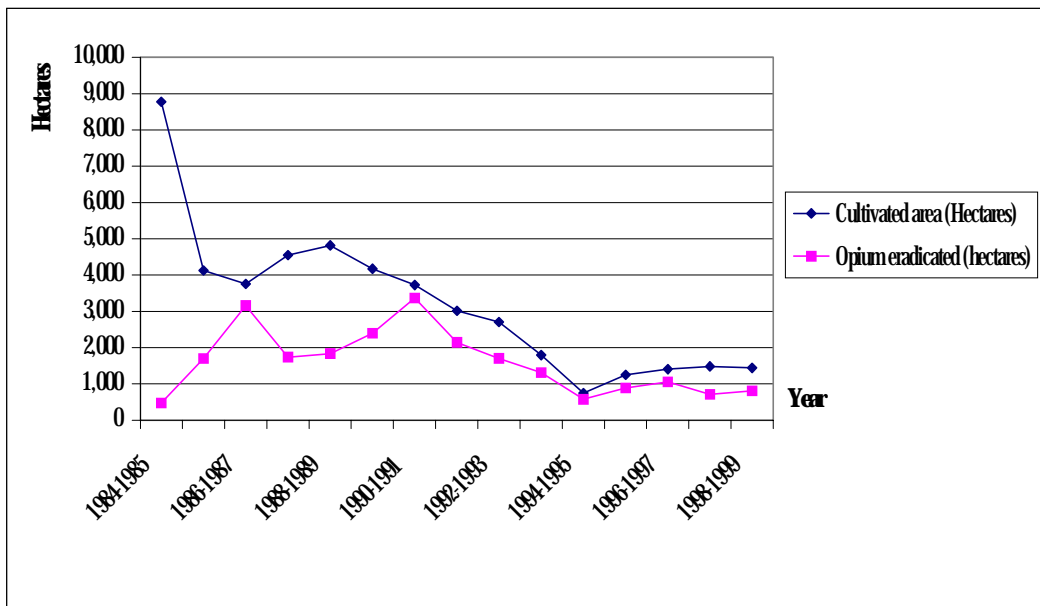


### **Result of the Opium Eradication Campaign from 1984/1985 to 1998/1999**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Cultivated area (hectares)</b>	<b>Opium eradicated (hectares)</b>	<b>Percentage of eradication</b>
1984/1985	8,777	480	5.47
1985/1986	4,126	1,698	41.15
1986/1987	3,755	3,163	84.23
1987/1988	4,551	1,740	38.24
1988/1989	4,816	1,834	38.07
1989/1990	4,177	2,395	57.34
1990/1991	3,727	3,372	90.47
1991/1992	3,017	2,148	71.19
1992/1993	2,705	1,706	63.08
1993/1994	1,792	1,313	73.31
1994/1995	749	580	77.39
1995/1996	1,254	886	70.64
1996/1997	1,405	1,053	74.93

1997/1998	1,486	716	48.15
1998/1999	1,441	808	56.08

### Comparison of the Area Cultivated in Opium with the Amount of Opium Eradicated



## **Anticipated Trends in Opium Cultivation 1999/2000**

In high-density areas such as Mae Chaem and Om Koi District of Chiang Mai Province, straggled planting will continue due to the following reason;

1. The continued high prices offered for raw opium. In the beginning of season, the price was 50,000-80,000 Baht per 1 Joi (1.6 kg). In some areas the price was as high as 100,000-120,000 Baht per 1 Joi (1.6 kg). Continued high prices will directly encourage drug financiers and farmers to continue the illicit opium trade.
2. Despite the high price and low quality of opium from neighboring countries, the demand for opium will continue.
3. Straggled planting will expand from the high-density cultivation sites to other areas.

4. The Government of Thailand and Myanmar have increased cooperation on narcotic crop control issues. This will push some opium cultivation back into Thailand
5. Some financiers will attempt to make up for poor weather by supporting increased cultivation.

## **Adjustments to the 2000 Opium Eradication Campaign**

Members of the Narcotics Crop Control Board have agreed on the following measures to improve the efficiency of the upcoming opium eradication campaign.

1. From August 1999 until May 2000, interagency opium eradication teams will concentrate activity on the high-density cultivation areas in Mae Chaem and Om Koi district in Chiang Mai province.
2. Surveillance and patrol missions, designed to meet with farmers in the

field during the opium-planting season in order to provide them with information on the illegality of opium, will be increased.

3. Law enforcement action will be taken against drug financiers and growers of opium.
4. Development assistance provide farmers with alternatives to illicit opium cultivation will be expanded.
5. Information systems used to manage and evaluate trends in opium will be updated and improved.

## **Evaluation of Annual Opium Yield and Price**

On account of high price, the average wholesale price of raw opium is 20,000 baht/kg. In addition, there are various opium crops as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> . season opium crop	=	432.32 ha.
2 <sup>nd</sup> . season opium crop	=	576.48 ha.
3 <sup>rd</sup> . season opium crop	=	432.32 ha.
Early-season opium crop	=	4.80 ha.
Late-season opium crop	=	64.00 ha.
Average price per kg.	=	20,000.00 ha.
Average yield per rai	=	11.25 kg./ha.
Eradicated opium	=	808.16 ha.