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PUTTING ON A GOOD FACE

Thailand's cosmetics industry well positioned to source 'green' ingredients from the country's rich biodiversity. By **Somporn Thapanachai**

Thailand's cosmetics industry will enjoy 10-15% growth this year from 140 billion baht last year, supported by rising demand for natural products that are based on the country's rich biodiversity.

Panvipa Krisdaphong, the dean of Mae Fah Luang University's cosmetic science school in Chiang Rai, said Asian countries including Thailand were garnering wider attention from Western countries whose consumers are looking for more green and organic products.

The industry is moving more towards the "three Es" — effective, economical and ecological — and Thailand stands to gain with its many different varieties of indigenous plants from which ingredients can be extracted, she said.

Many global cosmetics companies have already established production bases in Thailand in order to secure

easier access to local herbs.

Some companies may be eyeing Vietnam, but that country's infrastructure does not yet support this type of investment, according to Dr Panvipa, who is also the president of the Society of Cosmetic Chemists of Thailand.

She said that while Thailand's cosmetics industry was more advanced than those in other Southeast Asian countries, Thai entrepreneurs should realise they must continue improving their production efficiency with the approach of full liberalisation under the Asean Economic Community.

Asean members are working to harmonise production standards for cosmetics such as with Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) certification.

However, Dr Panvipa said while Asean members may all use the same checklist for GMP approval, there may be different

levels of interpretation by accreditation agencies in each country.

This creates the possibility that GMP-certified products may be made in neighbouring countries and imported into Thailand.

Still, Dr Panvipa encourages Thai cosmetics makers to try to meet GMP standard requirements if for no other reason than this is what buyers want, especially in export markets.

Some 45% of Thailand's 140-billion-baht cosmetics industry produces for export. But domestic demand is also moving in the same direction as global demand for more natural products.

Theeraya Krisdaphong, the sales and marketing manager at Specialty Natural Products Co (SNP), which supplies Thai botanical and herbal extracts domestically and internationally, said sericin — which is a type of protein created by



Thailand's cosmetics industry is more advanced than those in other Asean countries, but regional integration and harmonisation of standards will challenge the industry to maintain its leadership, says Dr Panvipa Krisdaphong of Mae Fah Luang University.

silkworms in the production of silk — and the *kwao khrua* plant are two of the company's two popular extracts.

Other popular extracts include fish collagen, black ginger and paper mulberry.

SNP produces more than 300 extracts from fresh herbs supplied by local communities.

Many of the plants are seasonal, so the company tries to control costs by producing as much as possible during the harvest season.

Established 12 years ago with an 88-million-baht production facility in Chon Buri province, SNP expects 80 million baht in revenue this year, up by 20-30% from last year. About half of its business is from export markets.

The company expects similar growth next year with revenue estimated at 100 million baht.