On January 19, 2001, ICDF Chairman Tien Hung-mao visited Thailand, a country with which the ICDF has had a long and productive relationship to review ICDF work and negotiate the ICDF Agricultural Technical Cooperation Agreement in Thailand. Prince Bhisatej Rajani, the chairman of the executive committee of Thailand’s Royal Project Foundation, welcomed Dr. Tien at the Royal Project Foundation headquarters in Chiang Mai. The Royal Project Foundation is a Thai development organization that has worked closely with the ICDF Royal Northern Thailand Agricultural Development Project on various projects for many years.

Through its development projects in Thailand over the decades, Taiwan has made lasting contributions to Thai society. The Royal Northern Thailand Agricultural Development Project, launched in 1972, has been of particular importance. The project and associated groups and activities have trained farmers in modern agricultural techniques, developed production of a range of new fruits and vegetables in Northern Thailand, contributed to the country’s policy of weaning farmers away from opium poppy cultivation, and restored damaged land and water resources. In its initial stage, the project oversaw farmer training, the planting of fruit trees and the reforestation of denuded highland areas. Later, efforts moved to the planting of vegetables, tea and flowers, and additional technology transfer. In 1993, after almost 20 years of successful work, a group of royal technical personnel who had been trained by the project founded the Royal Project Foundation, to cooperate with and extend the results of the ICDF work.

The ICDF and The Royal Project Foundation have now achieved excellent agricultural and environmental results, improving northern Thai society. Opium poppy cultivation has almost disappeared among the groups
the two organizations have aided, farmer income has risen (the sale of the agricultural products in the region yielded US$3.5 million in 1999), and farmers who have cooperated have attained leadership positions in their communities. The Foundation and the ICDF mission have now become indivisible, amplifying each other’s results, and reciprocal knowledge sharing and technology transfer are common. Many professors and experts who have volunteered for the Foundation have later cooperated with the ICDF technical mission, and more than 200 technical personnel who were trained by the ICDF have volunteered with the Royal Project Foundation.

Chairman Tien, who has been Taiwan Minister of Foreign Affairs and ICDF Chairman since May 2000, visited Thailand to negotiate with Prince Rajani the ICDF Agricultural Technical Cooperation Agreement, which is renewed every three years. Many personnel in charge of ICDF technical cooperation projects in Thailand were present, including scientists, technicians, project leaders and academics. After the Prince’s welcome speech, Chairman Tien questioned the Prince and other personnel about the current constitution of the Royal Project Foundation and its areas of development, the conditions of the northern Thailand mountain people, and the Foundation’s requirements for future development. Prince Rajani invited Dr. Tien to visit the Foundation’s working areas, where he could view firsthand the successful results of ROC assistance.

Later, at a banquet marking Chairman Tien’s visit, Prince Rajani thanked the ROC for its many years of support to Thailand. Without Taiwan, there would be no Royal Project Foundation, and there may never have been any improvement and progress in these areas in Thailand, said the Prince. Then Chairman Tien spoke, his voice filled with emotion. Taiwan will never neglect humanitarian assistance. Our people are full of enthusiasm to contribute to world progress. As long as I am the chairman of the ICDF, I will support technical collaboration with Thailand, and hope that we can cooperate to make a positive contribution to the world. With his visit, Dr. Tien strengthened the ROC and Thailand’s already strong relationship, and ensured continued fruitful interaction between the two countries in the future.