

**BIOPLASTICS**

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# Samed folks asked to join green push

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**KOH SAMED, RAYONG:** Koh Samed residents will be asked to join a biodegradable plastics project to turn the tourist destination into a "green island".

The project is a cooperation of the National Innovation Agency (NIA), the Laem Ya-Mu Koh Samed National Park, the Thai Bio-plastics Industry Association (TBIA) and PTT Plc.

The first phase, which ran from May to September 2011, saw 70 business operators participating in separating garbage in biodegradable bags. One tonne of organic waste was separated per day.

In the second phase, which runs from April this year to next April, 100 businesses are joining, and participation will be extended to households where one garbage bin will be available for every five households.

Koh Samed, which welcomes over 300,000 tourists per year and is home to 560 households, generates over six tonnes of waste per day, half of which is organic waste.

Pornchai Rujiprapa, permanent secretary of the Science and Technology Ministry, said it is a government policy

to support the bioplastics industry, of which the country aims to be a regional leader.

"Countries such as Singapore and Malaysia do not have cassava or sugar cane, but they are competing to become the leader in bioplastics. When there is a significant amount of production, costs will go down," said Dr Pornchai, who also chairs the subcommittee of bioplastics industry development.

Thanapat Bualoi, an engineer and researcher at Suranaree University of Technology's Center of Excellence in Biomass, said Koh Samed has a large amount of organic waste. Plastic bottles make up only 10% of the waste sent to the waste-separation centre, which is later sold.

PTT and Mitsubishi Chemical Corporation set up PTT MCC Biochem in 2010 to operate a 4-million-baht plant to produce fertiliser from organic waste on the island.

The plant does not take much to run. Its electricity cost is 6,000 baht per month, plus 1,200 baht per day for four workers.

This translates in an average cost of 230-280 baht per tonne, said Mr Thanapat.

Its maximum capacity is five tonnes per day, which is made into 150 tonnes of fertiliser per month and sold for 2,500 per tonne.

Tapanik Sukkrachang, Koh Samed's organic waste manager, said currently around 20% of Koh Samed's population participates in the project.

But he admitted it is not easy convincing everyone to join. Most business operators hire foreign workers, not all of whom buy the idea or understand the benefits of it.

PTT MCC Biochem is also in the process of seeking a bidder for construction of its PBS factory in the Asia industrial estate. The plant is expected to be finished in the fourth quarter of 2014.