THAILAND



Source: esri

Climate and geography

General

Thailand - officially the Kingdom of Thailand - is located at the centre of the Indochinese peninsula in Southeast Asia. It is bordered in the North by Myanmar and Laos, in the East by Laos and Cambodia, in the South by the Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia, and in the West by the Andaman Sea and the southern extremity of Myanmar. Its maritime boundaries include Vietnam in the Gulf of Thailand in the Southeast, and Indonesia and India on the Andaman Sea in the Southwest. The area of the country is 51.3 Mha (million hectares) with, in 2022, a population of 71.7 million, or 1.4 persons per ha (Wikipedia and United Nations, 2022).

Thailand's climate is influenced by monsoon winds that have a seasonal character (the southwest and northeast monsoon). Most of Thailand (North, Northeast, Central and East) has a tropical wet and dry or savanna climate that is characterized by abundant rainfall during the southwest monsoon and dry weather during the northeast monsoon. The southwest monsoon, which starts from May until October is characterized by movement of warm, moist air from the Indian Ocean to Thailand. The northeast monsoon, starting from October until February brings cold and dry air from China over most of Thailand. The South and the eastern tip of the East have a tropical monsoon climate. Three seasons are distinguished. The first is the rainy or southwest monsoon season, which prevails over most of the country. This season is characterized by abundant rain with August and September being the wettest period of the year. This can occasionally lead to floods. In addition to rainfall caused by the southwest monsoon, the Intertropical Convergence Zone and tropical cyclones also contribute to producing heavy rainfall during the rainy season. Nonetheless, dry spells commonly occur for 1 to 2 weeks from June to early July. This is due to the northward movement of the Intertropical Convergence Zone to southern China. Winter or the northeast monsoon starts from mid-October until mid-February. Most of Thailand experiences dry weather during this season with mild temperatures. The exception are the southern parts of Thailand that receive abundant rainfall, particularly during October to November. Summer or the pre-monsoon season runs from mid-February until mid-May and is characterized by warmer weather. Due to its inland nature and latitude, the North, Northeast, Central and Eastern parts of Thailand experience a long period of warm weather. During the hottest time of the year (March to May), temperatures usually reach up to 40 °C or more with the exception of coastal areas where sea breezes moderate afternoon temperatures. In contrast, outbreaks of cold air from China can bring colder temperatures; in some cases (particularly the North and Northeast) close to or below 0 °C. Southern Thailand is characterized by mild weather year-round with less diurnal and seasonal variations in temperatures due to maritime influences (source: Wikipedia).

Most of the country receives a mean annual rainfall of 1,200 to 1,600 mm. However, certain areas on the windward sides of mountains, such as Ranong Province in the west coast of southern Thailand and eastern parts of Trat Province receive more than 4,500 mm of rainfall per year. The driest areas are on the leeward side in the central valleys and northernmost portion of South Thailand where mean annual rainfall is less than 1,200 mm. In the southern parts of Thailand, abundant rainfall occurs in both the northeast and southwest monsoon seasons with a peak in September for the western coast and a peak in November–January on the eastern coast (source: Wikipedia).

In order to understand the history of water management and land reclamation in Thailand, it may be divided into 5 topographical regions as shown in Figure 1. Three types of plateau lands can be distinguished: constricted river channels, hilly and level. Topographically, the constricted river channel type is identical with the region of the same name in the Chao Phraya basin. The hilly type is intermediate between the fan-terrace complex area and the mountainous basin, and finally the level type is similar to the fan-terrace complex area but, smaller river basins to the area ratio, which means that the water conditions are poorer. Considering the conditions in Thailand, it reveals that the climate is not the only factor for cultivation, but also the topography of the land. Under the humid tropics, weathering and erosion are continually in the flood-free upland that comprises the arable land of the humid tropics. Under flat topographic conditions where erosion is negligible, weathering progresses steadily and eventually produces laterite (source: Wikipedia).



Figure 1. Location of regions in the Chao Phraya basin (Yoneo Ishii, 1975)

Due to the topographical conditions the soil in Thailand can be divided into three types, namely groundwater soil, intermediate soil and upland soil (Yoneo Ishii, 1975). The groundwater soil is at least part of the year strongly influenced by groundwater. This soil is found in the topographically low place, namely the young delta and constricted river channel area (source: Wikipedia). Water collects here from surrounding regions bringing silt and nutrients and the soil is generally wet and fertile. Upland soil is found on higher grounds, where drainage is good but the water tends to carry soil particles and nutrient elements away to lower grounds. That is why this soil is highly susceptible to weathering and erosion. It is found mainly in the higher parts of the fan-terrace complexes and mountainous basins and tends to be dry and infertile. The intermediate soil lies between the two extreme soils: the land is intermediate in both topography and degree of fertility. Its distribution coincides with the old delta and the lower parts of the fan-terrace complexes. In the higher parts of this region upland soil prevails and in the lower parts semi groundwater and groundwater soils are predominant. The groundwater soil region, with exception of vegetable and fruit gardens on polder land around Bangkok, is used exclusively for lowland rice cultivation, whereas the upland soil region has occasional dry fields, mainly maize and cassava. In the intermediate soil region, flood paddy fields occupy the lower parts and dry fields in the higher parts and besides maize, cassava, and sugarcane are sometimes grown (source: Wikipedia).

Wandee (2005) and Wandee *et al.* (2006) present an optimisation model for the water management in polders in Thailand.

Existing polders

The Group Polder Development (1982) states that polders can be found especially in the Central Plain around the Gulf of Thailand, with a total area of about 88,000 ha. There are also many small polders for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables (more than 2,000, polder size 2 to 100 ha, total area 15,000 ha) near Bangkok. In addition they identified four large land reclamation projects:

- *Chiang Rak Klongdarn Irrigation/Drainage Scheme*. In this scheme there is a polder area of 24,000 ha (Ruanglek *et al.*, 1983);
- *Petchburi Scheme*, 3,200 ha;
- Pranburi Scheme, 3,200 ha;
- *Greater Meklong Scheme*, 51,000 ha.

For the construction of the Second Bangkok International Airport a separate polder has been made (Figure 2) (Stive *et al.*, 1994). For the water management of the polder there are two sub-systems: airside and landside system. At the design rainfall with a chance of occurrence of 20% per year the airside system may be bankfull and for the landside system there is a freeboard of 0.25 m. At the design rainfall with a chance of occurrence of 10% per year the airside system may be inundated, while the landside system may be bankfull.



Figure 2. Characteristics of the polder of the Second International Bangkok Airport (Stive et al., 1994)

Wikipedia mentions the Laem Chabang polder, reclaimed 1988, 1,015 ha. General characteristics of the polders in Thailand are shown in Table I. Table II shows the

characteristics of the water management and flood protection systems of the existing polders.

Proposed polders

No proposed polders have been identified.

Location of the polders in Thailand as shown on the World polder map

The location of the polders in Thailand is shown in Figure 3. The pictures by Prof. Adriaan Volker are shown in Table III.



Figure 1. Location of the polders in Thailand (source: esri – Batavialand)

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Bart Schultz Lelystad, October 2023

Name	Reclamation	Area in ha	Type *)	Latitudes	Longitudes	Elevation in m+MSL	Land use
Chiang Rak Klongdarn	1921-1931	24,000	RLL	14° 03' N	100° 33' E	0	Rural area
Irrigation/Drainage Scheme							
Greater Meklong Scheme		51,000	RLL				Rural area
Laem Chabang Polder	1988	1,015	RLL				Urban area and industry
Petchaburi Scheme		3,200	RLL				Rural area
Polders in the Central Plain		88,000	RLL	13° 55' N	100° 06' E	0	Agriculture
Pranburi Scheme		3,200	RLL				Rural area
Second Bangkok		3,200	RLL	13° 40' N	100° 45' E	1	Airport
International Airport							
Small polders near Bangkok		15,000	RLL	13° 42' N	100° 39' E	0	Multiple land use
Total		188,615					

Table I. General characteristics of existing polders in Thailand

*) RLL = reclaimed low-lying land; LGS = land gained on the sea; DL = drained lake

Table II. Characteristics of the water management and flood protection system in Thailand

	Design criteria in chance of occurrence/year								
		Flood protection							
Name	Drainage								
	Т	Design	Percentage of	Discharg	ge capacity	Irrigation	Rural	Urban	
	Гуре	criterion	open water	m ³ /s	mm/day				
Chiang Rak Klongdarn	RLL				46				
Irrigation/Drainage Scheme									
Second Bangkok International Airport	RLL			12	28.8			1/1250	



Table III. Pictures of polders and lowlands in Thailand by Prof. Adriaan Volker



Table III. Pictures of polders and lowlands in Thailand by Prof. Adriaan Volker (continued)

Table III. Pictures of polders and lowlands in Thailand by Prof. Adriaan Volker (continued)



A4 001/VI.4.1 A4 002/VI.4.2 A4 003/VI.4.3 A4 004/VI.4.4 Water in lowland area Water in lowland area Water in lowland area Water in lowland area A4 005/VI.4.5 A4 006/VI.4.6 A4 007/VI.4.7 A4 008/VI.4.8 Water in lowland area Water in lowland area Water in lowland area Water in lowland area A4 009/VI.4.9 A4 010/VI.4.10 A4 011/VI.4.11 A4 012/VI.4.12 Water in lowland area Water in lowland area Traditional boat in lowland area Weir in lowland area.









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B3 2 045/B.3.2.45	B3 2 046/B.3.2.46	B3 2 047/B.3.2.47	B3 2 048/B.3.2.48	
Lowland area	Lowland area	Lowland area	Lowland area	
B3 2 049/B.3.2.49	B3 2 050/B.3.2.50	B3 2 051/B.3.2.51	B3 2 052/B.3.2.52	
Lowland area	Lowland area	Lowland area	Lowland area	
B3 2 053/B.3.2.53	B3 2 054/B.3.2.54	B3 2 055/B.3.2.55	B3 2 056/B.3.2.56	
Lowland area	Lowland area	Lowland area	Lowland area	



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