

2

Occupational health

Occupational diseases are a major threat to Thai workers, particularly agricultural workers, who are exposed to dangerous levels of pesticides.

Prepared by The Thai Health Team

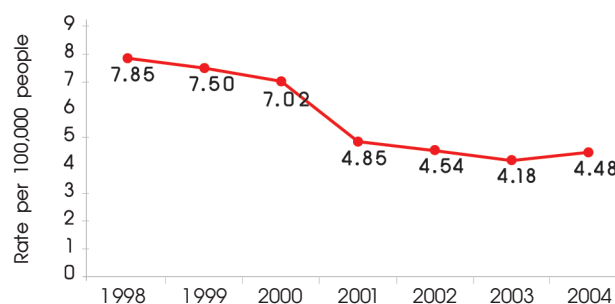
Half of all Thais who have occupational diseases work in agriculture.
A further one in five is a non-agricultural laborer.

In mid-2005, Thailand had a population of 64.8 million, of whom 36.4 were employees aged 15 and over. Of these, 43% work in agriculture. When Thai workers are unhealthy, they cannot perform their work effectively and efficiently. This can lead to dismissal, which has a severe effect on the worker's family, and on economic production.

Occupational diseases are not yet a major cause of illness and death among Thais. According to the epidemiological surveillance reports produced by the Office of Epidemiology, Ministry of Public Health occupation diseases are the 22nd most important cause of illness and the 15th most important cause of death in Thailand. Encouragingly, the measured incidence of occupation diseases fell from 7.85 per 100,000 people in 1998 to 4.48 per 100,000 people in 2004. These figures are consistent with those from the Social Security Office, showing that the proportion of workers suffering accidents, mainly in the industrial sector, fell from 4.4% in 1995 to 2.8% in 2005.

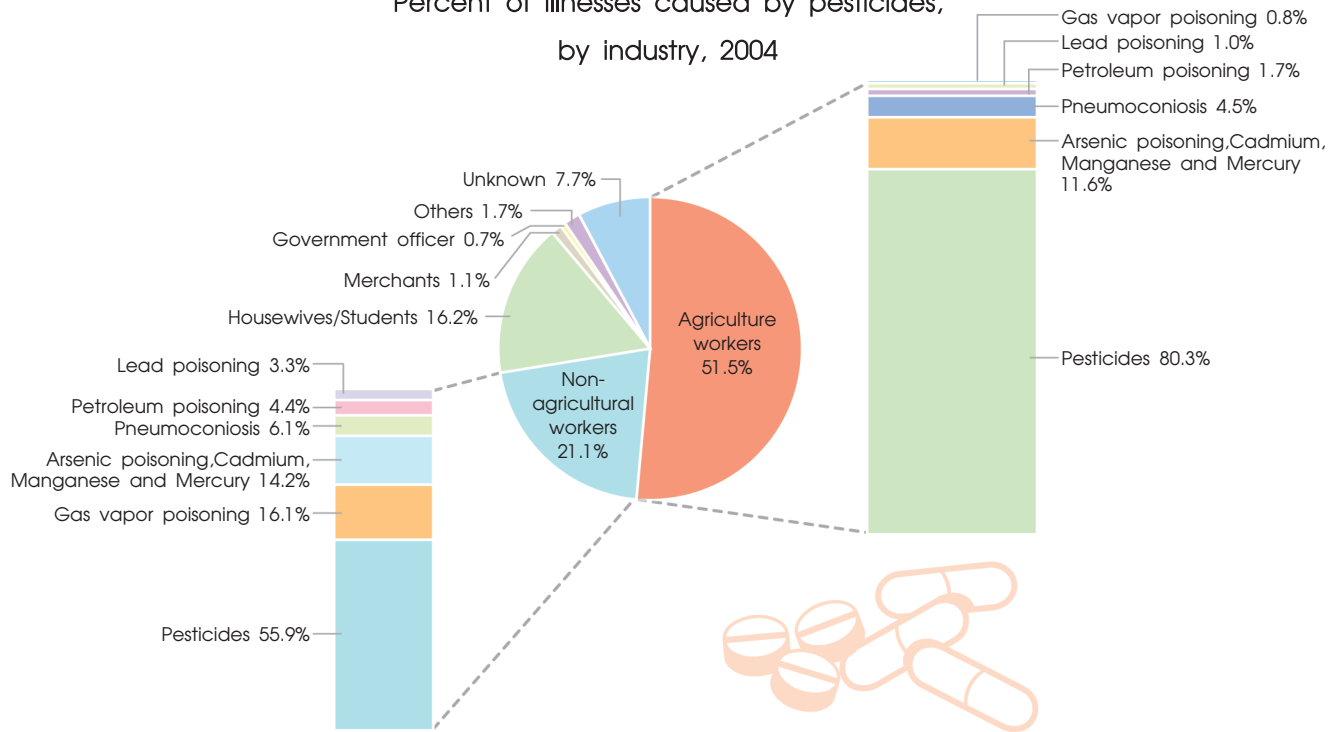
However, a research program to assess the effects of pesticides on the health of agricultural workers in 5 provinces found that 42.2% of workers had had sufficiently high levels of exposure to affect their enzyme levels. Moreover, pesticides are still an important source of risk to industrial workers. As long as Thailand produces and imports increasing quantities of chemicals, agricultural and industrial workers will continue to accumulate chemicals in their bodies, weakening Thailand's economy and society.

Reported Cases of Occupational illnesses
per 100,000 people, 1998-2004



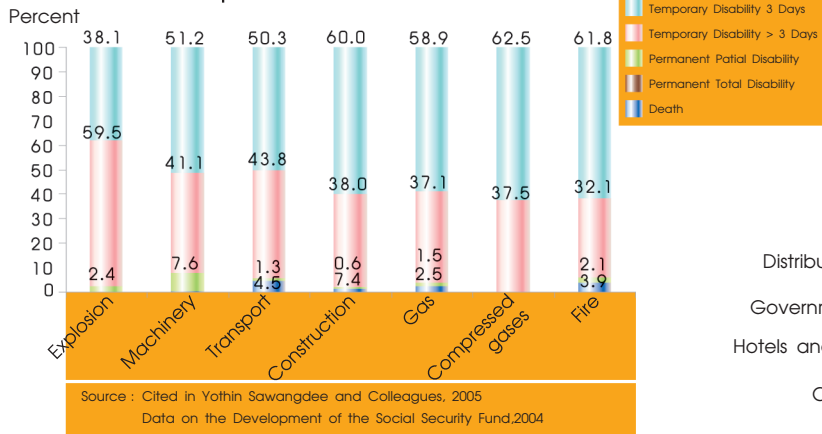
Source : Annual Epidemiological Surveillance Reports for 2002, 2003, 2004,
Bureau of Epidemiology, Ministry of Public Health.

Percent of illnesses caused by pesticides, by industry, 2004

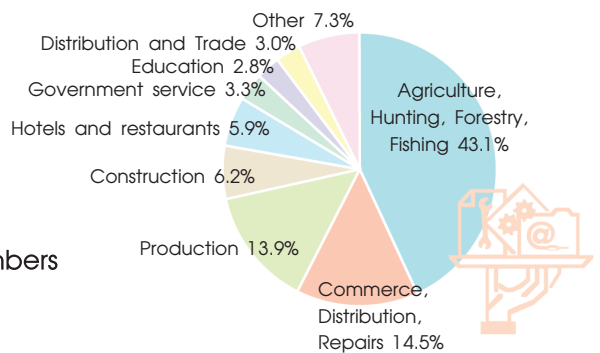


Source: Epidemiological Surveillance Reports for 2004, Bureau of Epidemiology, Ministry of Public Health.

Occupational accidents, 2004

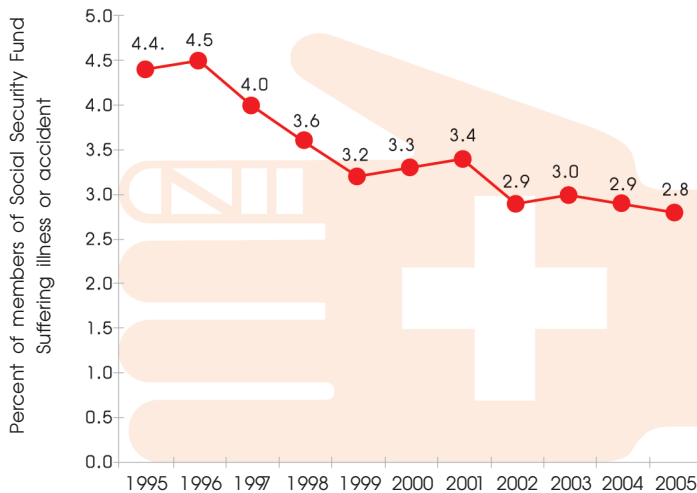


Employees aged 15 and over, by industry, 2005



Source: Report on Population Characteristics from the Survey of Population Change, 2005-2006. National Statistical Office.

Percent of Illness and Accident for members of Social Security Fund, 1995 - 2005



Source: Social Security Office, Ministry of Labor, 1995-2005