

## **Vietnam to attend rubber cartel meeting, may join**

Vietnam has agreed to participate in the December meeting of the International Tripartite Rubber Council (ITRC), suggesting the possibility the world's fourth-largest rubber producer will become a new member of the council.

Deputy Agriculture Minister Natthawut Saikua said Vietnam, which had steered clear in the past, agreed in principle to become an observer for the ITRC meeting held in Thailand.

Established 10 years ago, the ITRC represents the world's three largest rubber producers – Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia – and its main goal is to stabilise rubber prices.

If Vietnam agrees to join, up to 80% of the world's rubber exports will be represented by the group.

Vietnam's annual rubber production is 500,000 tonnes, and it plans to raise its production to 1 million tonnes in 2023.

Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, representing 70% of global output, have agreed to cut shipments by 300,000 tonnes starting next Tuesday.

Prices of raw rubber sheet broke 90 baht a kilogramme this month after a 14-month slump to a low of 77.63 baht on Sept 3.

Yesterday, raw rubber sheet prices were quoted at 91.69 baht per kg with smoked sheet rubber at 95.05 baht.

Charuk Singhapreecha, the director of Kasetsart University's Office of Agricultural Economics, earlier said rubber prices could exceed 100 baht per kg next month on the back of a global economic recovery and the low season.

Mr Natthawut said the next ITRC meeting will likely include discussion about upgrading into an Asean Rubber Council to make it compliant with a single market in 2015.