



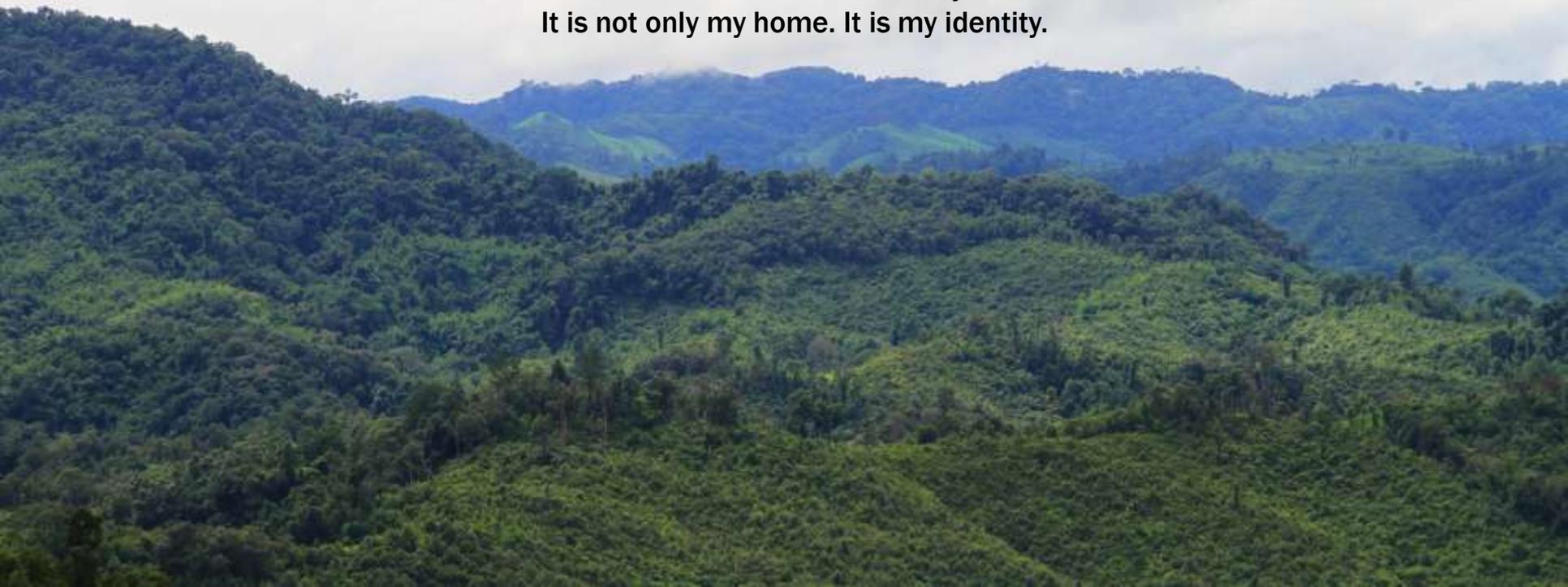
**I AM THE  
KHAO  
CHAKARN  
FOREST**  
#IAMTHEFOREST

- Krirk Meemungkit from Thailand -

# I AM THE FOREST

#IAMTHEFOREST

I have lived in the forest all my life.  
It is not only my home. It is my identity.





**My name is Krirk Meemungkit.**

**I am an agriculturist from Srakaew province, Thailand.  
I chose to afforest in order to return “life” to the community.**



In the past, I was a teacher. However, I realized that teaching only the text from books didn't create critical thinking or often couldn't be applied to use.

Therefore, I started to look to do something to develop as my real career, and not only just working for salary which is a social norm.



**After I deliberated on how to release myself from this social norm, I realized that the career that suits me best is an agriculturist.**

**I was inspired to do this by following the self-sufficiency economic views of His Majesty the King Bhumibol.**



He always encourages us to never get frustrated or move in other directions. So I began a community training center that provides capacity building and vocational education for villagers, and also joined the Tree Bank project, where I am now the Branch Manager for Srakaew province.

**Back then, the Tree Bank project only operated in a few provinces.**

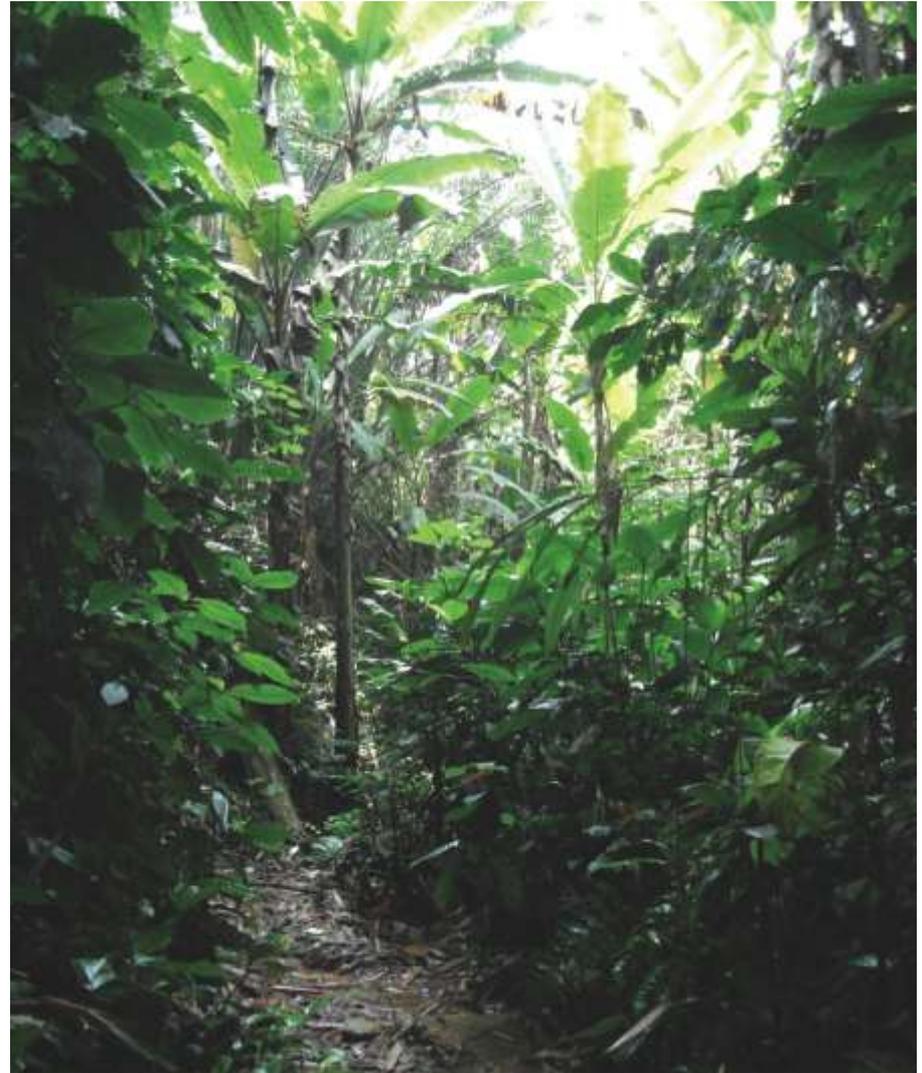
**Tree Bank is an independent civil society organization that aims to motivate farmers to grow trees in various agricultural land as well as on farmers' own land to stimulate adding valuable assets to the land.**



More importantly the Tree Bank promotes tree ownership and rights to harvest them despite unclear land tenure in Thailand. Tree Bank members operate around the objective of managing trees on their lands and harvesting them when they are mature to obtain the highest benefit from its timber.



The TreeBank believes that growing trees should obtain a similar treatment as when money is deposited in the bank and should benefit from an increase in value.



The Tree Bank manages a database documenting and valuing living trees from farmer groups and eventually aims to act as a financial institution from which advance cash or loans can be obtained. Through the valuation trees can be treated as collateral, to overcome many farmers lack of land tenure certificates normally accepted by banks.



**In my training center, community members have learned and are hoping to benefit from this system. As a result, they can have their own livelihood as well as make a sustainable and balanced living with nature.**





**In my community, we found that the promotion of afforestation to the villagers and expanding this to other areas, amounts to afforestation at the national level.**

**If only one man plants trees, it cannot be called a “forest.”**



**A real “forest” is a network of people helping to take care of the forest. The government should provide more support to people on afforestation in agriculture plots and to support their rights to get the maximum benefit from afforestation.**



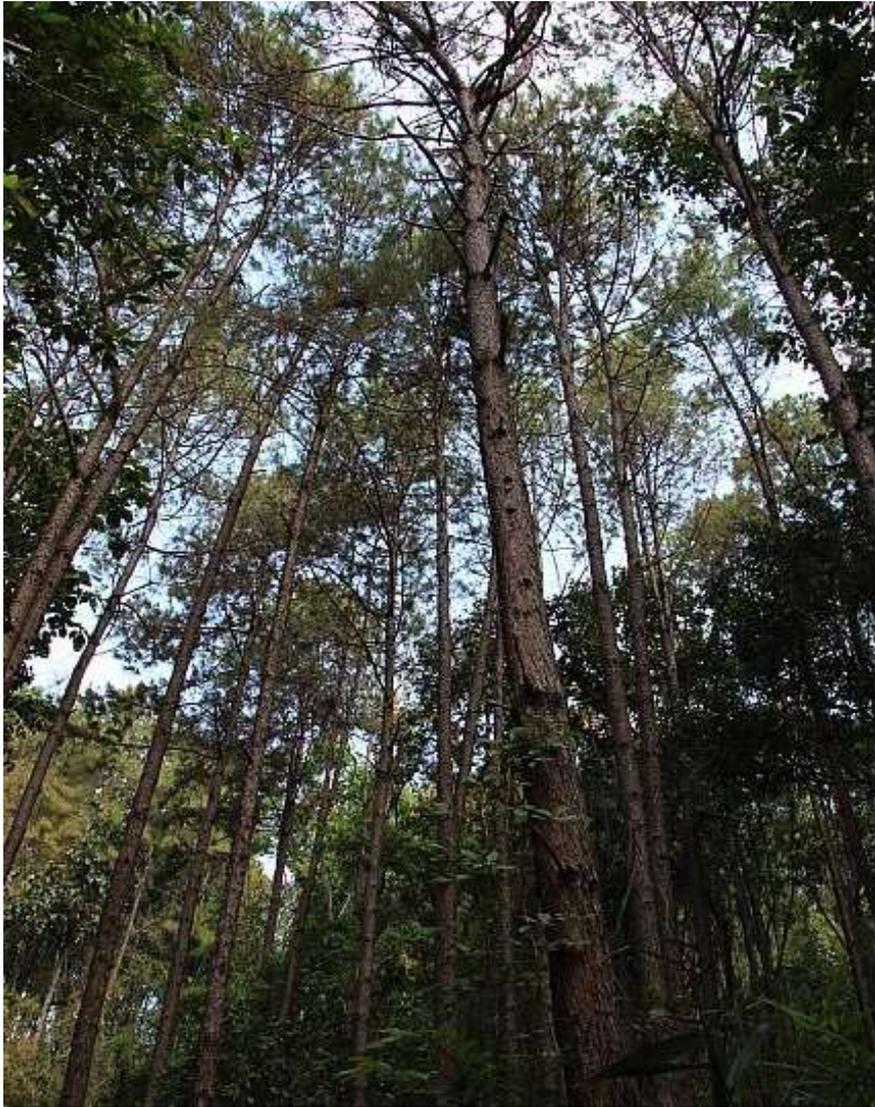
**However, one thing that I worry about is the collaboration among government, government officers and capitalists against communities' rights to have an opportunity to be independent.**



**In Thailand, there is a law which is not in line with or giving an opportunity for people to benefit from afforestation.**



The issues many farmers face however, is that trees grown on much government owned agricultural land are legally owned by the state Forest Law and complex procedures control their management thereby not motivating people to grow trees in the first place.

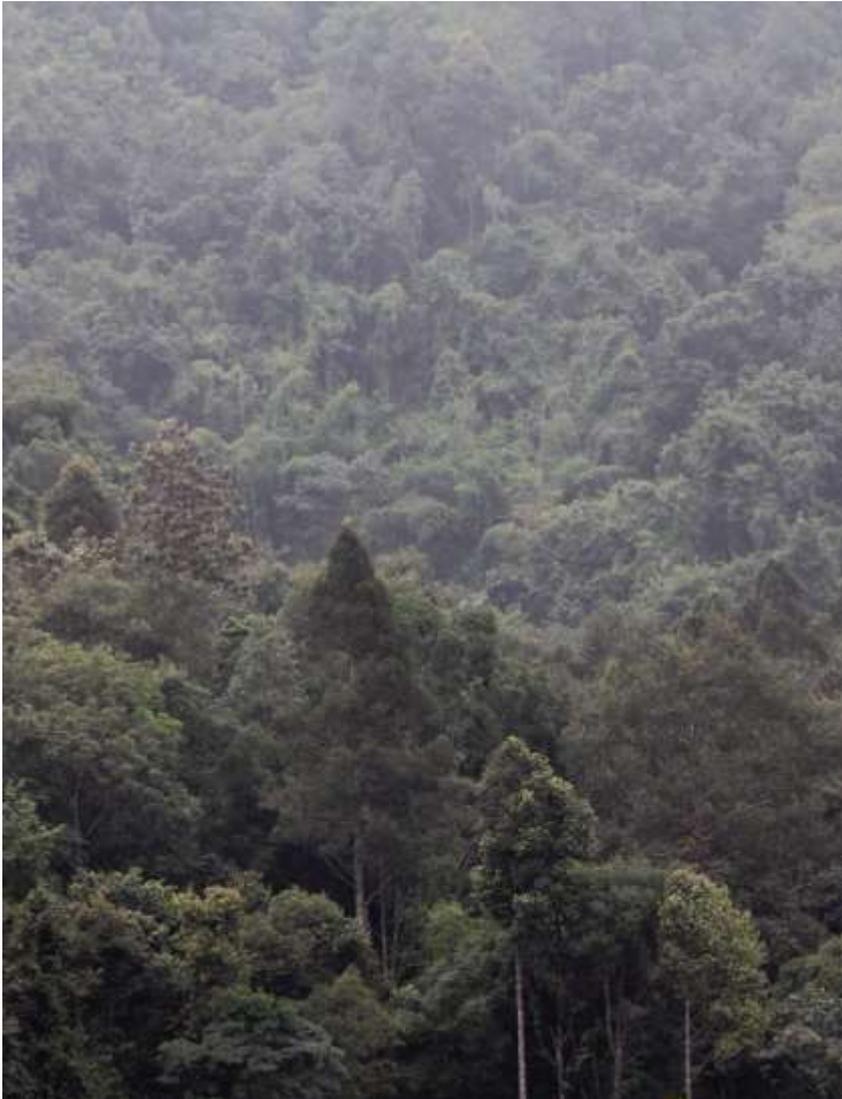


Moreover, Tree Bank members have to deal with official procedures that are complicated and take time.

At the early stage, there weren't any signs of obstacles or problems - but when the trees grew and reached maturity and it was time to cut them down, there were objections by government officers and laws which led to a denial for us to cut down the community's trees.



This process creates difficulties for the community to be independent or to make a better living. It implies that laws and orders are created for centralization of forest management.



**Last but not least, I would like to call for action from the government to change their perspective on forest management towards supporting afforestation and land-use of agriculturalists – to give us opportunities to make a living.**



**Please think about this, if we can plant trees mixed in our farms, we can harvest them in our farms and help releases us from the poverty cycle or debt, and live with hope.**



For the future, we can use trees as our savings in order to sustain our livelihood if only the government adjusts some obstructive laws or acts and guarantees those trees are our property according on Tree Bank regulations.



**This will be an opportunity for the nation to have more forests and people in Thailand will live with these trees.**

**Krirk Meemungkit**  
Thailand



**KOB KHUN**

**THANK YOU**