

Growing with Harmony: Strengthening Local Food Economy via Community - Supported Agriculture

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Small Farmers in Thailand

- Do not grow food crops but cash crops which are agricultural commodities
- Lack of power to bargain for reasonable price that cover real production costs and enough for sustaining livelihood security
- Degradation of natural resources (soil, water, agrodiversity) and agroecosystems
- Debts
- Seasonal migration of youth labor for employment in towns

Conversion to Organic Agriculture

- For food security
 - Sufficient, diversified, and healthy food supply grown with in farms
- Income generation from surplus production
 - Which also secure household access to foods by income generated form surplus production
- Revival and conservation of natural resources within agroecosystem
 - The land and soil, water, local climate, and agrodiversity

Problems of Organic Produce in Conventional Markets

- Markets of organic produce are limited to mainly supermarkets and specialized food shops in Bangkok and large cities
- Farmers do not get fair price if they sell organic produce to super markets via food company or "middleman".
- Vulnerability of individual farms due to extreme environment, especially storm and drought
- Production of the group is too small to create even niche market
- Rising transportation costs because of the increase in oil price

The Thai Consumers

- Consumers mostly have concerns about their "Health"
 - How to avoid foods contaminated by pesticides and pollutions
 - How to get quality (generally good-looking, hygienic and organic) but cheap foods
- They are never informed enough on how the food they eat have been produced, how much energy it consumes, how far it travels.
- Foods have passed very complicated processes before reaching the consumers, they are thus not fresh, lose quality and nutrition.
- At supermarkets, the consumers have to pay at higher price for organic foods.
- The consumers actually do not have real options to get quality foods in conventional markets

Community-Supported Agriculture

- Is a new idea and approach to local food economy in which farmers produce *healthy foods* in an ecologically sound agricultural system and the consumers, as partners, *support and/or share* the cost of production, share the harvests, as well as *share the risk* of any failure in food crop production.
- Core Principles are:
 - Advance payment by supporters to growers
 - Cooperation between farmers and consumers, and among the consumers
 - Sharing of farmer 's risks by the consumers
 - Shortened distance of transportation



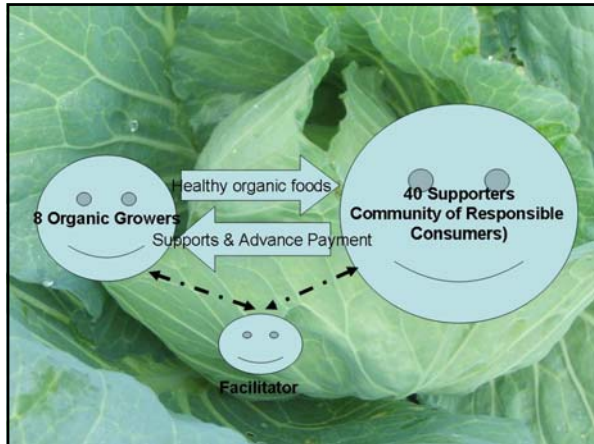
Farmers are preparing vegetables for delivery

Consumers Education

- Dialogue between farmers and consumers in meeting and seminars
- Farm visits by the consumers
- Regular communication between farmers and consumers
- Direct communication among the consumers by highly, active consumers



Farm visits by consumers



Contributions of Organic Agriculture and CSA to Farmer's Livelihood

- Food security is achieved through foods grown within the farms;
- Stable income generation from surplus produce (via CSA scheme) for supplementary foods, health services, school supplies, and payback debts, etc;
- Creation of on-farm employment , thus reduce seasonal migration;
- Rehabilitation and conservation of natural resources and agroecosystem;
- Strong community ties among farmers in the group

Contributions of Organic Agriculture and CSA to the Consumers

- The consumers to have access to fresh, good and uncontaminated foods at fair price;
- Development of mutual understanding and friendship between organic growers and social responsible consumers;
- That consumers support organic growers is the way in which they can help preserve natural resources and the environment.
