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Key Success Factors of the Organic Vegetable Production System in Thailand

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Abstract

Vegetable production is essentially a small-farm venture that benefits thousands of families in urban, peri-urban and rural communities. In recent years however, production costs have increased. Often, there is an overuse of harmful chemicals, which endanger the health of consumers and pollute the environment. Whereas, Thai agriculture suffers from problems linked to the high external input system. As the awareness of problems linked to high-input agriculture is increasing, politicians, NGOs and farmers are searching for alternatives. As the result, the emerging popularity of organic agriculture in Thailand has resulted from a combination of three major trends. The first is an increasing public aspiration for healthy living. The second trend is the development of sustainable agriculture in response to the crisis faced in the farm sector. The third trend is the rise of environmental awareness, and pollution caused by use and misuse of agro-chemicals.

The objectives of the research were to understand the existing situation and key success factors on the organic vegetable system in Thailand. Data were collected from the best practice farmers, and processors/handlers such as Rai Thon Nuey (Dare to sweat farm), Rai Plook Ruk (Thai Organic Farm), Suwannabhumi Organic Co. Ltd., and Swift Co. Ltd. Semi-structured interview and observation were used collecting data. Empirical and documentary analyses were applied.

Findings revealed that organic vegetables are mainly leafy vegetables, especially the salad type, Chinese vegetables and premium crops such as asparagus and baby corn. The empirical study showed that three types of organic vegetable producers are commercial family farms, farmer groups with contract farming and large-scale corporate farms. Key success factors and important techniques of organic farming are practised with implicit knowledge which starting from the preparation of ecosystem and soil nutrient, during planting, crop maintenance with the system of food chain, and harvesting only edible pieces. These practices need the ability of thinking out of the box. While market access with simple post harvest at farm level conduct to longer shelves life and good quality produces are necessary.

Keywords: Key success factors, organic agriculture, organic vegetables, Thailand, urban agriculture