

Key Success Factors on the Organic Vegetable System in Thailand

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Introduction

Health awareness of Thai urban consumers is increasing, particularly regarding the very high level of pesticide use by Thai farmers and thus the possibility of toxic residues in food. 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 (Roitner-Schobesberger, 2006).

Organic agriculture is the most dynamic and rapidly-growing sector of the global food industry. 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 (Ellis et al, 2006).



Picture 1: Organic vegetable farm



Picture 2: Organic produces on shelves

Objectives

To understand the existing situation and key success factors on production of organic vegetables in Thailand.

Methodology

Data were collected from the best practice farmers, and processors/handlers: Rai Thon Nuey (Dare to sweat farm), Rai Plook Ruk (Thai Organic Farm), Suwannabhumi Organic Co.Ltd., and Swift Co.Ltd.

The techniques of semi-structured interview and observation were used for data collection. Empirical and documentary analyses were applied.

Results

1. Organic vegetables in Thailand

Organic vegetables are mainly leafy vegetables, especially the salad type, Chinese vegetables and premium crops such as asparagus and baby corn.

Three types of organic vegetable producers are: (Ellis et al, 2006 and Stracke-Lassmann, 2007)

- 1) commercial family farms
- 2) farmer groups with contract farming
 - farmer groups under a common organic project
 - farmer groups under the large conventional companies with an organic product line as contract grower groups
- 3) large-scale corporate farms

2. Farming technique

Techniques from best practice of organic vegetable farms (Figure 1) lead from preparation of ecosystem, soil nutrient and tillage depending on plant root system, between planting, crop maintenance with the system of food chain, and harvesting only edible pieces.

3. Key success factors

Key success factors and important technique of organic agriculture from the best practice of organic farms and the processors/ traders of organic vegetable product (Table 1) like farm production plan provide sufficient volume, good farming practice, harvesting due to postharvest control improve quality of vegetables, give direct supply from farm to pack houses, minimizing waste (approaching zero), on time payment and cost saving in buyer's operation and production line.

Preparation

- Improving soil fertility: green manure, compost and manure
- Ecology: predators and parasites
- Soil preparation: plough depending on crop root system, minimum tillage

Plant

- Selected crop type with suitable season
- Diversify crop (biodiversity)

Maintenance

- Insects: food chain e.g. crop for insects, biological control, light and sound
- Weed use and control

Harvest

- harvest only eating pieces
- simply post harvest management at farm

Table 1: Key success factors of organic vegetable system

Production	Processing/ trading
- farm production plan	- direct supply from farm to pack houses
- sufficient volume	- minimizing waste (approaching zero)
- good farming practice: knowledge, balanced ecosystem, plant nutrients, pest management	- cost saving in buyer's operation and production line (min. layer)
- harvest only eating pieces	- on time payment
- post harvest control	- direct access to market
- quality of supply	
- simultaneous and correlate well system	

Figure 1: Organic vegetables technique

Conclusions and recommendations

Organic vegetables are mainly leafy vegetables, especially the salad type, Chinese vegetables and exported crops such as asparagus and baby corn. Organic vegetables depend more on market. The success of farming is the practice with true knowledge and all systems must be collaborated and done simultaneously.

References

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