



Fresh Food Markets, Small-Food Producers and Transformative Path of Food System in Thailand

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Introduction

The decline of importance of agriculture in the developing world highlights the competing food systems. On the one hand, the local food systems producing food in response to local food demand, and on the other hand, the global and industrial food systems that widen the food supply chains in response to the global food demands.

This paper seeks to explore interactions between two main food systems in two geographical space of food systems in Thailand. These interactions ingrained in local socioeconomics and wider development, resulting the dynamics of food production, circulation and consumption. The analysis the pathway on which local food system could be transformed into the future.

Methods

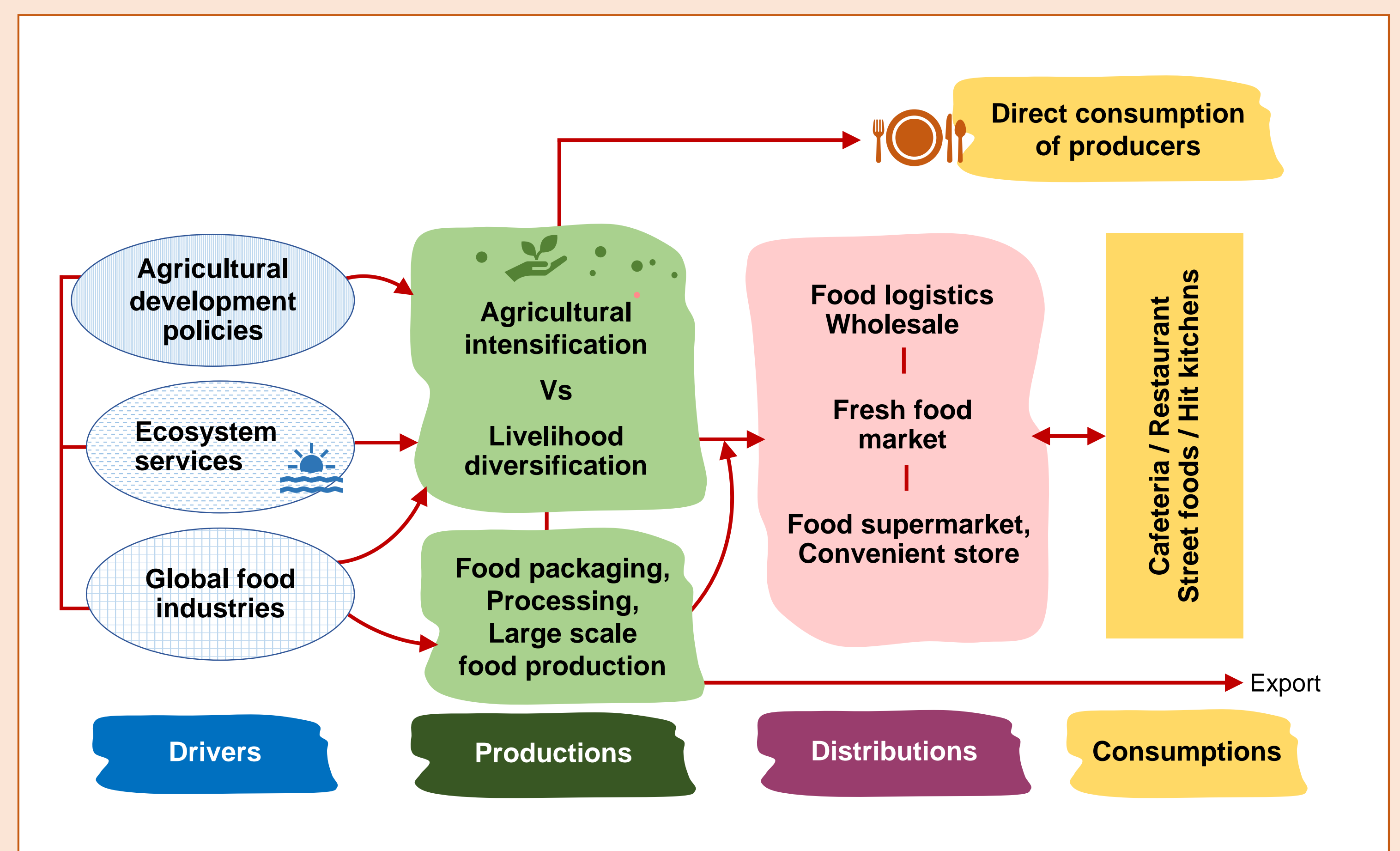
This study adopted mixed methods, multiple tools for obtaining data were used, i.e. the survey of local food markets, the focus group discussion of small food producers, and the structured interview guide to obtain data of households in locals.



Results

The agricultural intensification that has occurred since six decades ago resulted in the diversification of local livelihood. The recent transformation sees the coexistence between modern food system and traditional food system.

Three paths of transformative are identified. First is a situation that small producers are integrated into modern agricultural inputs supply chain, while maintaining independence in managing the market of products. Secondly, small producers are under control of both modern agricultural inputs and the product circulation, meanwhile continues to maintain for a certain degree of traditional food production along with livelihood diversity. Third is that small producers confront the modern food system, producing food with limit scope of using agricultural input supplies of large agribusinesses. The type of small food producers can be identified as organic farming, permaculture or sustainable agriculture. These three paths can shape local food system differently.



Conclusions

The transformative pathway for sustainable local food system can be achieved by different means, however, all of these involved local small producers. The non-sustainable chained small producers with modern input supplies of agro-industries and market channels. To break from the supply and market chain of the agro-industries is the greatest challenge for sustainable local food system, because local livelihoods have been conditioned by agribusiness. It is important that networks supporting small producers to be fabricated, for instance, network between those who grow maize and husbandry farmers. The breakaway from market and input chains could heighten the costs of food products, which can be managed or controlled with redirection of public investments, i.e. the urban food waste management, the development of innovation and appropriate technology for processing agricultural or crop residues into fertilizers, etc.

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