

Field notes Suar [REDACTED]
Chantaburi province 09.08.2014

location: about 40km from Chantaburi, total: 100rai (80 on main property, 20 on spare one opposite the river), in parts natural forest but big trees cause too much shade

S [REDACTED]'s brother (with the parents) bought the land 8 yrs ago. Most of the trees have been there before. Some new banana trees. He lost 22 longan trees by a storm some years ago.

Soil is okay but needs to be improved, through Bodendecker and manure. For longan, his main fruit, he recently used pig manure mixed with some kind of charcoal.

He has no livestock yet but wants to get cow, goat and chicken. Has to buy manure from outside. Cow manure is currently at 3,5 THB / kg.

Longan is in season at the moment. Mangosteen season nearly over. Banana more or less all year round, the same for lamyai. There is also Rambutan. Fruit is good and has sweet taste.

Motivations. He does not use any chemicals because he does not want to harm animals, and for health reasons. Interested in PC but finds it complicated – still experimenting with the best way to grow. For vegetables, corn is successful after 3 bad years. Sweet corn – also sold at Bkkfm. Own consumption veggie garden still experimental; it's a lot of work.

He had allergies when staying in the city to any kind of chemicals (pollution in Bangkok, residues in food). >wants to grow organic food. Argument “if I grow good food for me, why should I grow bad food for others?”

He: in his late 30s, married one child, 3 ½ . Background in telecommunication and IT, Bangkok people, M.A from Pittsburgh USA. Good English skills.

Produce: longan / lamyai sold at Bkkfm at 70TBH/kg. Compared, price for conventional at supermarket is 60THB / kg.

Only 1 season: organic doesn't give fruit more than once a year. Conventional farmers put potassium and other chemicals to harvest all year round.

His technique gives quite good yields and growth and taste: pig manure and smoke from burning charcoal under trees when in flower. Also okay to prevent insects. No other technique for insect prevention.

“I let just eat them and I take the rest” but sometimes, this is hard as insects eat all

No certification, no volunteers, work with seasonal workers from Cambodia but they are hardly ever reliable.

Still facing many challenges, especially as land is too big for him alone. He wanted to buy half of property but owner gave only entire one.

All his farming knowledge from books or own experience. Social networking to exchange with other farmers. No time go on farm visits.

Solid knowledge about nutritional values and healing properties of plants. Is into Thai traditional medicine and has vision to help the world with it – combining Western medicine with Thai herbal medicine.

Observations: farm too much for him, he already lost control over his plants. I don't see beds. He has banana plantation but himself not strong enough to handle it. Also because trees have been there before

discussion about OM:

He sees an OM, upcoming, not very strong but existing. He sees himself as part of it. A pioneer that he mentions is Ajairn Nyak from Map Ueang community. He also mentions the SE as inspiration

because help for farmers. First become self-reliant and then produce more to sell.

He cannot sell with Raitong organics as he has no certification and also doesn't sympathise with them much

He also mentions the aspect of traditional farming. Farmers were introduced to chemical farming, now plants, after giving high yields over the 1st 10 years, become addicted to chemicals and cannot go back any more. Also farmers don't know any more how to farm without chemicals. Need assistance, don't know to do organic and have fear of low harvest.

Many farmer want to convert but don't have the market. He relates OM more to farmer's mm (my own impression)

He finds OF hard but he will try because the strongly believes that it is the only way out of the misery for farming in TH. As after GR, farmers became aware of the damage, e.g. hard and stiff soil.

Soil properties at Suat [redacted] similar to Trat at [redacted]'s place. Not too good, not too bad but after mulching and manure application and ash, soil improved already. Rainy region: about 8 months per year. However, deforestation in the area changed ecosystem: flooding are more typical and severe: last year, his dam broke down. Weather becomes more unpredictable. Between the trees, it is no problem with water drainage. Irrigation system though is fragile, causes lot of work and maintenance, sometimes pipes are cut by workers or covered, blocked.

Organic certification requires own water supply >> he let built a huge basin for 350000THB !! sometimes, rain water is not enough for irrigation >> groundwater pumping , e.g. in dry season.