

First one 03.10.

meet khun [A], organiser of the project and owner of Suan S. at hotel around 4pm. We are going to meet one of the farmers communities in a nearby village. This project is a fruit farming project, basically about Guava. Several people from S. staff join, as well as 3 university lecturers / professors who are closely linked to the project being kind of advisors. Khun [A]'s idea also is to involve different people in the project, in order to meet farmers and get a close link to them. That's why he also invites university people. >create identification. One professor from Kastesart Bang Khe campus.

Two farmers who are representing another farmer group nearby (one of the very successful and strong and reliable communities) join the meeting to present their experiences and help with some suggestions.

Objective of the meeting is production planning: setting up a plan for the next year. „Forecast“ of how much production will be, when to harvest etc. Khun [A] is keen on that because he started to deal with hotels to constantly buy produce, and needs a rough outlook for that.

Location: at the village, kind of community centre but mainly nursery and compost / organic fertilizer production and distribution centre. It is a big garage. People sitting around a board where they pin posters for explanations. S. staff involved and some farmers have to talk. Questions can be asked all the time. Nursery – seedlings for sale as well.

Procedure: (from field notes in booklet)

meeting of farmer's representatives and S. project staff, including university professors;

It starts with khun [S] (S. staff) preparing the farmers for the upcoming A.C.T audit.

Today's focus is on production planning, today about fruit.

Discussion about how to deal with conversion period. According to khun [A], there have been worries about this period of 1-3 years during which farmers (once) could not sell organically, but didn't have much chance on conventional market either, as produce didn't look flawless enough to get a fair price. Now, A.C.T gives some status to produce during conversion period. So, the produce has an official status although no label yet.

Today idea to create a model for fruit farmers how to keep track of their input and outcome, how much harvest, where to they sell how much, etc. Farmers are supposed to note down everything thoroughly, also for the audits.

The group produces organic fertilizer for sale > compost, cow dung

discussion around a table on the board with number of harvest (total harvest, share that goes to Suan S. hotel, return / waste [not sure about that, as professor translated but than, figures wouldn't make sens], share to Sukchai Market. Table is about Guava produce (one species)

khun [A] mentions the forecast for upcoming year / season. He says, this is quite hard for farmers as they have never done that before.

>idea is to do tree counting, estimation of productivity, disease, possible damage, possible loss de to young age of trees, etc. Including these factors, a prognosis / rough estimation should be taken for one year in advance.

Do farmers grow vegetable for themselves? Confirmed by the prof lady who asked one of the farmers. So, self-sufficiency before sale kind of concept.

PGS concept appears on a poster, but doesn't seem to be discussed. Khun [A] mentions it though.

Khun [A] mentions some difficulties. He is trying to build up trust relationships between consumers and growers. It usually works out quite well, however he has to suspense one farmer who used

pesticides and doesn't seem to see the point why he should not do that. [A] is having steadily discussions with him about that because the farmer would like to stay in the group. So for some communities which started quite recently to work together, the project is a challenge. [A] also mentions that fruit farmers have a slightly different mind from the vegetable farmers, more business oriented.

Project with [a person from Thai Cityfarm] and

S. staff T-shirts SoSoSo sponsored, or at least mentioned on the sleeve.

22.10.14

meeting with (mainly) veggie farmers in Thapluang
see notes

discussion with [A] on way back:

paper work

TOAF staff „stiff“ > miscommunication with farmers ([person from Thai Cityfarm] confirms)

PGS not so much economically interesting but for growing community

before road show on 20.12. was success, everyone sold out, at least the fruit. Guava group came with one delegate (maybe more) and sold out 600kg!! Cut or as kg. Location was some office building with 1000 or more people working. People even showed interest in knowing the farmers, coming to S., to the hotel, etc. Apparently potential to go there regularly and even more often than once a month

mention that the one farmer is cheating and [A] is having troubles with him.

He thinks that in Thailand, trust is maybe hard to establish in Thailand as mentality tends to „close your eyes“ and not blaming cheating neighbours. What I don't see, I don't want to know. A farmer in a village would probably not blaming some farmer who is cheating.

> different from my personal understanding of trust system in Thailand so far.

community trust building

„interview“ question what is your motivation? And before, what is his „benefit“ from it?

The project got funds from SoSoSo and also TDRI Thai Research Institute, enough for paying travel expenses, staff, [A] and some other expenses.

[A] > some good aspect for his hotel (ingredients for kitchen, raw material, sukchai market people coming, hotel management aspect of HR team building staff identify and everyone happily involved)

But on the long run, that's why he wants to make the Sukchai project a foundation. Expenses can be covered by the donations, etc from foundation budget, and some benefit can go back to the budget.

[check how foundations work]

motivation: he basically answered in 3 aspects

> business aspect

„Well if you want to see it from the business point of view, I wanted to serve organic but couldn't find enough organic food on the market“

from a business point of view, he trains farmers near his hotel to grow for his business. He can outsource it. He wants to cut the middleman as well to make organic more accessible to him, but

also in general to consumers. Equally he wants the farmers to get more benefit than on the regular market. Guava example is 20Baht/kilo on regular market. At Sukchai, they sell 40Baht/kilo. And they could ask for more but don't want that.

Part of their harvest, they supply to the kitchen of his hotel. He benefits by offering the healthy and locally grown concept to visitors. [I guess not all but a great share of the food served at his hotel is from their organic communities > need to check] So, from this point of view, it is an attraction. Through the Sukchai market in the weekend that has about 1000 visitors each day, he attracts additional people, mainly from Bkk. This is good promotion for his hotel. Plus, he can sell his own products as soaps, oils, products from distillation of this roses. Kind of having own brand [check it] and own shop on S. property.

Also has some business idea of juice making with the left-over guava.

He says, if you want you could say he is contracting the farmers to produce for him. However, this is not his idea, he wants them to benefit, to build up some sustainable and stable market for them and make them feel proud. Community building apparently already worked out for some of the groups, they feel kind of proud of what they do. Also compared to the one farmer who is cheating: they feel, they are doing the right thing, and are proud of not being so materialistic as other farmers who grow organic only for money.

> mindset changing works out well. Live for the idea.

> hotel management

„Then, there is the aspect of hotel management. It has a great impact in HR management as it strengthens the team building“. He got [at least] 5 members of his staff involved in the project, responsible for the project management, farmers training, etc. [A] created with this idea a common objective, like „working all together for one thing“ which created a feeling of commitment, common engagement [„identification“]. So „the S. staff is working as a team, and I think you can, yeah people can feel that“.

[A]'s benefit apart from the human aspect that makes the staff happy at work, is that people work better as well. „It is not just like going to work, working your hours for some one and going back home because it makes most of the staff feel like a team and doing a good thing.“

For instance khun [G] (the one with the cowboy boots) is like consultant for [A], comes from the area and is really happy about his position and is very engaged. He always joins for the meetings with the farmers. He studied agriculture and is so happy that he considers having his own farm any time, he goes to meet the farmers. ;)

> personal interest

„Apart from these, there is the personal aspect, my personal motivation which probably is much stronger than the others and the aspect that drives me. I am personally interested in holistic health, and health starts with food.“

Asking how he became interested in holistic health, he says it was probably during his college time in England, when he became more aware of what we eat...

But an aspect is also to create sth sustainable and to help the farmers.

He believes in happiness and bringing people together, creating linkages, bonding between people to create a healthy society. Aspect is also that Bangkok is so capitalist. He believes that people are running behind the idea of earning money and spending it. Like working for sth uncertain.

However, he considers this kind of society as unhealthy. Bondages between people as part of holistic health.

[no quote, only reconstruction]: „I was working for this as well for 13 years and of course it was ok, it was good. But people are missing something, some bonding between people is missing. To know what you are eating, to make the food chain as short as possible is better. To go and grow yourself or put your hands into soil from time to time can help to reconnect. Also knowing the people who are growing for you.“

He is happy when people come to the market and make them feel countryside a little bit. Also happy to hear, e.g. on the road show, when people say they want to come out to the market, even to the farms and see the farmers. So people seem to be interested and especially looking for these kind of activities / links / bondages. It might be leisure for them. And also not far from Bkk.
„Create sustainable links. Yes, that's sustainability for me“

[A] really seems to have this spirit of bondages is what people need, relationships, down-to-earth idea, simple life and make people feel good.