

Visit to Puchi Duan Organic Coffee Producer Community Enterprise, Chiang Rai

25 July 2023

Summary of findings and recommendations

Findings

1. The coffee producer group started its activities in 2013 with a small number of like-minded coffee farmers. It was formally registered as a cooperative /community enterprise under the Agricultural Cooperative Act of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives in 2018.
2. It has a membership of a total of 83 farm households scattered across nearly 20 small sub-villages at a different elevation of hill areas ranging 1000-1300 meter above sea level.
3. The group is a mixture of different tribes including Mon (40%), Mian (20%), Chinese (10%) and Akha (10%) and they live in different sub-villages.
4. The group (of 83 farmers) produces about 60,000-80,000 kg of parchment coffee beans /year, out of which organic certified coffee beans represents 6-8% (about 5,000 kg).
5. All 83 farmers were trained for organic coffee production under the initiative of PGS with a help of Rachabot University and Mae Fah Luang University. The training was conducted for 3 times (2 days duration at each time). Till today, 2 farmers have passed the examination and received a certificate of PGS organic coffee producer, while other 10 farmers haven't yet passed the test, but continuing to endeavor to receive the organic farmer certificate. It was noted that remaining 71 farmers (out of 83 group members) were not fully interested to become organic coffee producers due to various reasons including low productivity without chemical fertilizer, and a difficulty to control plant pests without chemical pesticides.
6. The farmers in the group produce coffee beans from Arabica coffee strain with varieties including Catimor (about 50%), Tipica, Catura, Bourbon and a little quantity of Gesha. The taste of the coffee, according to my own judgement, was reasonably good and would have a good market value.
7. The producer price of Arabica green beans (washed process) is around 320-350 baht/1 kg, which appeared slightly higher than other farmers in different locations.
8. The Leader of the Group stated the main difficulties they are facing at present include

a) control of plant disease, b) marketing of coffee beans (many farmers have to depend on middlemen for coffee marketing), c) negative impacts of climate changes and extreme weather conditions, and d) competition of work with other agricultural activities such as rice and corn production.

9. It was noted that the group had created a good relationship with the Central Group which helped to build a group office (including coffee brewing equipment) in lower part of the hill area (about 600 meter latitude) and encouraged the group to produce organic coffee.

Recommendations

1. The group calls itself as Puchi Duan Organic Coffee Producer Community Enterprise, while only 2 farmers produce organic coffee out of 83 group farmers. Even if additional 10 farmers would be added as organic coffee producers, still 71 group farmers would remain as non-organic farmers. The name of “ Organic coffee producer group” would not match with the reality and perhaps would create a negative image. On the other hand, non-organic coffee producers be encouraged to use minimum quantity of chemical fertilizer and chemical pesticides and obtain GAP certification on their coffee products. So that the group would be regarded as “Organic and GAP coffee producers’ group”. Alternatively, the group might wish to reorganize/restructure and might allow only organic coffee farmers as the members of the group who passed organic examination or who want to be an organic coffee producer in the future.
2. Problems associated with plant pests appears serious. There is different type of bio-pesticides which are produced from plants. The group should test various options on the production and use of bio-pesticides.
3. Nearly a half of coffee tree varieties grown by the group farmers are Catimor variety which is a hybrid of Arabia and Robusta. Catimor is good for high yield, but the taste of coffee beans is not at a high quality. It is suggested to reduce the proportion of Catimor gradually, and replace it by high quality varieties such as Gesha, Tipica, Catura, Bourbon, etc.
4. At present, group farmers market their own coffee beans on individual basis with their individual logo and trade mark. This would not help in promoting group joint efforts in near future. It is suggested to create a common trademark and common logo for the organic coffee beans produced by the group.
5. GIAPSA would consider to support the group, subject to further discussions, once remaining 10 farmers pass the organic examination and there would be at least more

than 12 organic coffee producers in the group. GIAPS` s support might be ranged from a help to strengthen group activities, planting of new coffee varieties, group coffee processing, group marketing, etc., which might be determined at a later stage.

