

Country Report - Thailand

Department of Agricultural Extension

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1. Organisation and Funding Arrangements

The primary IPM programme under the Thai Department of Agriculture Extension (DoAE) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC) is *Transferring Agricultural Technology through the Farmer Field School Process*. This programme is implemented through the Institute for Biological Agriculture and Farmer Field Schools (IBAFFS), established in 1999 under Royal Initiative by His Majesty the King of Thailand.

Both the FAO Community and Vegetable IPM Programmes have provided technical and financial support to the work of IBAFFS, but the great majority of programme funding is from the Thai Government. Over the past three years, government budgets for IBAFFS IPM work have increased annually to approximately 20 million Baht for the current year of 2001. Also this year, the government disbursed an additional 23 million Baht for DoAE FFS activities under the *Community Rice Seed Promotion Project*, a project aiming to increase the quality of rice seed stocks.

The three-year *Strengthening Farmers' IPM in Pesticide-Intensive Areas* project was initiated in 2000 by the Department of Agriculture (DoA) with technical and nearly 16 million Danish Kroner in financial support from the Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development (DANCED). In addition, the FAO-EU Cotton IPM Programme for Asia is exploring collaboration with the DoAE for cotton IPM activities in late 2001 or 2002.

Finally, IPM activities have been implemented with farmers and students for several years through several departments in the Ministry of Education (MoE), with support from the Community and Vegetable FAO IPM Programmes and the Thai Education Foundation (TEF). These MoE/TEF initiatives are addressed in a separate report.





2. Training Achievements

Since the establishment of IBAFFS in early 1999, 13 Training of Trainers courses for over 300 Government staff have been conducted. In this same period, more than 400 Farmer Field Schools have been budgeted for some 10,000 farmers in rice, vegetables and fruit.

Table 1: TOT and FFS Activities by the DoAE for 1999 - 2001					
Activity	Year ->	1999	2000	2001	Total
<i>Training of Trainers</i>					
Rice (TOTs/Participants)		3/63	4/100	2/65	9/228
Vegetables (TOTs/Part.)		2/26	1/32	1/41	4/109
<i>Farmer Field Schools by Government Trainers</i>					
Rice (FFSs/Participants)		39/975	42/1,050	150/3,750	231/5,775
Vegetables (FFSs/Part.)		21/525	60/1,500	100/2,500	181/4,525
Fruits (FFSs/Participants)		--	--	33/785	33/785
<i>FFSs by Farmer Trainers</i>					
Rice (FFS/Participants)		--	--	40/1,000	40/1,000
Community Rice Seed FFS Activities by Government Trainers					
Rice (FFS/Participants)		--	--	1,782/44,550	1,782/44,550

Regarding assessment of these activities' impact, a research study is currently being conducted by staff and students of the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics of Kasetsart University. Pre- and post- interviews are being conducted with some 250 farmers from six provinces in three regions who have attended an FFS, farmers who live in communities where an FFS has been held, and farmers who live in communities where no FFSs have been held. Initial results indicate that FFS graduates are using fewer insecticides. Additional and more comprehensive results are expected as the longitudinal study continues for at least two more years.

In late 2000, the Community IPM Programme undertook a mid-term review in seven member countries. One of the major recommendations for Thailand was for an increased focus on farmer-led activities, including Farmer Trainers, farmer field studies, farmer networks and forums, and the like. As noted above, FFSs conducted by Farmer Trainers began in 40 localities in 18 provinces across four regions of the country. As the skills and confidence of these Farmer Trainers grows, and the work is expanded, additional focus on and support for farmer-led activities will be possible.

The mid-term review mission also stressed the need for maintaining and improving the quality of FFSs and other field activities. In support of this, increased inter-country



exchanges and study visits were recommended. To this end, a number of exchange visits between Lao and Thai Government officials have been conducted, most recently a trip in September of this year for 12 Thai officials involved in Vegetable FFS follow-up and monitoring to visit similar activities in the Lao PDR. In October, 12 Thai Farmer Trainers visited numerous farmer-led activities in Cambodia, including FFSs, farmer action research, and the innovative Farmer Life Schools.



Finally, in recent years IBAFFS staff have hosted and participated in numerous international workshops. These include those held by the Thai MoAC on crop protection policy, by the FAO Cotton Programme on helping farmers to understand microbial organisms, by the FAO Vegetable Programme on curriculum development, by CABI and the FAO Global IPM Facility on farmer participatory research, and currently, by the Community IPM Programme Project Advisory Committee.

3. Policy Developments

By 1999, the MoAC had completely ended its policy of the purchase and distribution of pesticides to control outbreaks. The MbA, with financial and technical support from Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) is currently drafting new policies and regulations on the importation, formulation, registration, and labeling of pesticides. In recent years, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration has introduced regulations and extensive monitoring of pesticide residues for fresh produce imported into the city.

Following the Asian economic crises, His Majesty the King of Thailand exhorted an "economy of self-reliance," where families and communities look to their own basic needs and security first, and then seek wider economic gain only when these have been ensured. Many have taken this as support for more focus on localized and sustainable agriculture. Others, spearheaded by the major international financial institutions, continue to champion increased production and exports toward a national "self-reliance" within a globalized economy.

In 2000, the DoAE instituted Sub-District Agricultural Technology Transfer Centers throughout the country, with the former Sub-District Agricultural Extension Agents becoming the centers' Directors. This has weakened their mandate and ability to work with farmers at the field level, and consequently their ability to conduct FFSs. Some of these centers have become known as "Farmer Field Schools" themselves.

As part of continuing efforts to decentralize power, the Thai Government has created Sub-District Administrative Councils nationwide, each with discretionary budgets under



their control. This mechanism will constitute a valuable source for local funding of FFSs and related post-FFS activities as the programme strengthens.

Finally, work is underway to establish a division within each Provincial Agriculture Office responsible for FFSs and IPM-related work. If successful, this will be an important step toward creating the framework necessary for more localized and responsive planning, development, coordination, support and quality control of the field level IPM activities.

4. Developments in Community IPM

Although some farmer-organized activities, such as local rearing of natural enemies, simple follow-up field studies by small groups, or continuing FFSs with local funding, are taking place, there is still far more potential to be realized. Two major steps in this direction, both mentioned above, are the initiation of Farmer Trainer FFSs, and the availability of local funding from the Sub-District Administrative Councils.

Continuing effort to increase farmer involvement in and ownership of current FFS activities, particularly in the design, implementation and analysis of field studies and research, will also help carry this forward. Thirdly, although numerous NGOs are working with farmers and farmers' groups in various aspects of sustainable or organic agriculture and marketing, none are currently working directly with farmers in FFSs or follow-up activities.

5. Other Developments

In addition to IPM and FFS activities in rice and vegetables, the DoAE has been involved in FFSs for fruit tree crops such as durian, pomelo, and oranges since 1994. A five-province project for organic cotton, which will utilize FFSs, will begin early next year with support from the FAO Cotton and Global IPM Programmes.

One FFS was conducted with teenagers at a Youth Correctional Center in the Western Region of Thailand this year. Quite remarkably, a number of participants asked that their release date be extended so that they could complete the course.



On a more general level, due to factors ranging from the Royal Initiative, to increasing environmental and consumer awareness, to increasingly strict standards for the export of produce, "IPM" and "the FFS process" have become very popular. As a result, there is strong interest in implementing IPM and FFSs in numerous crops--from sugar cane and corn to flowers and decorative plants--and in numerous modalities--from intensive and multi-faceted training programmes to three-day courses and materials packages. The challenge is to



respond to the demands and support for programme breadth and diversity, while preserving and enhancing programme depth and quality.

6. Future Plans and Priorities

For the year 2002, tentative plans under the DoAE include:

- Four hundred rice FFSs and 150 vegetable FFSs by government officials in 74 provinces in all regions.
- Sixty three fruit FFSs by government officials in 17 provinces in the Eastern and Southern Regions.
- Seventy one rice FFS by farmer trainers in 37 provinces in all but the Eastern Region.
- Eighteen vegetable FFSs by government officials in 18 provinces in the Northern and Northeastern Regions.
- Tentatively, some 1,782 FFS activities in 65 provinces under the *Community Rice Seed Promotion Project*.
- Two rice training of trainers with approximately 75 participants and one vegetable training of trainers with some 40 participants in the Northern and Western Regions.

Within these training targets, focus by IBAFFS will be toward:

- Maintaining and increasing FFS quality, particularly regarding applied experiments and studies, and farmer participation and ownership of the FFSs.
- Increasing opportunities and mechanisms for FFS facilitators to join together to plan and exchange before, during and after FFS implementation.
- Developing and implementing structural frameworks and methods for FFS monitoring, support and reporting.
- Increasing the strategic importance and role of Farmer Trainers.
- Developing mechanisms to reduce delays in the disbursement of government budgets, and the restrictions imposed by regulations and the budget cycle.
- Exploring options for promoting and supporting post-FFS activities that are designed and managed by FFS participants themselves.
- Increasing opportunities for exchange among field practitioners, both domestically and regionally.