

# Guideline on Promotion of Community Participation in the Farmer Market

*Kangsadan Chaowatthanakun*

Faculty of Social Sciences, Kasetsart University, Thailand

E-mail: fsockdc@ku.ac.th

## Abstract

This paper aims to present the social conditions, problems and obstacles in the implementation of the Farmer Market Project with community participatory principles in 77 Provinces. And to seek the ways to promote community participation in the implementation of the farmers market project. Researcher surveyed the data from market managers in the farmer market in 77 provinces and interviewed 16 market managers. Policy recommendation on farmer market project at practical level has been presented. The results are summarized as follows; (1) The social conditions that implied the success or failure of the farmers market project are: 1) cooperation from public and private sectors; 2) strong market presence and good management; 3) cooperation from farmers and the strong farmers group; 4) good quality products with fair price; 5) consumers focus on safe agricultural products; 6) good and thorough public relations; 7) market location is in a good location and physical structure is favorable. (2) The major problems and obstacles are location problems, product problems, and vendor issues problems. (3) Guidelines for promoting community participation in project implementation should start with an analysis of the social capital of each area. And recognizing the participation of at least 4 stakeholders; 1) farmers, farmers group, and farmer management committees; 2) government agencies; 3) private sectors; 4) consumers.

**Keywords:** Farmer Market, Market Manager, Social Capital, Community Participation, Safe Agriculture

## Introduction

"Farmer Market Project" is a project that the Thai government has been established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives since the year 2014 until the present. This project is aimed at farmers selling directly to consumers, especially consumers in urban areas. The project aims to provide consumers with quality and safety-certified products, such as organic agriculture (GMP), safe agriculture (GAP). In addition, the private sector in the province has the opportunity to cooperate in organizing the farmers market for the benefit of the community. The farmers market is scheduled to be held at least once a week in 86 of the 77 provinces. Most of the products sold are standard quality products or certified by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. The value of buying and selling agricultural products through the market is 6,504,982 baht. (Thai Government, 2016; Evaluation center Office of Agricultural Economics, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, 2015)

However, the evaluation of the Farmer Market Project showed that the implementation of the Farmer Market Project still had some problems and limitations that prevented the objectives of the project. In particular, the objective is to ensure that products sold in the farmers market are of high quality and safety, and that products are endorsed by systems such as GAP GMP, and the private sector in the province has the opportunity to cooperate in managing the farmers market

with corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Preliminary performance has not been achieved because only 44% of products are certified by the system. And only 46% of the private sector has participated and supported the farmers. (Evaluation center Office of Agricultural Economics, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, 2015)

This study aims to study social conditions, problems and obstacles in the implementation of the farmers market project with the participation of communities in 77 provinces from market managers, those who are directly responsible for the management and implementation of the objectives. In order to find ways to promote community participation in the farmers market project.

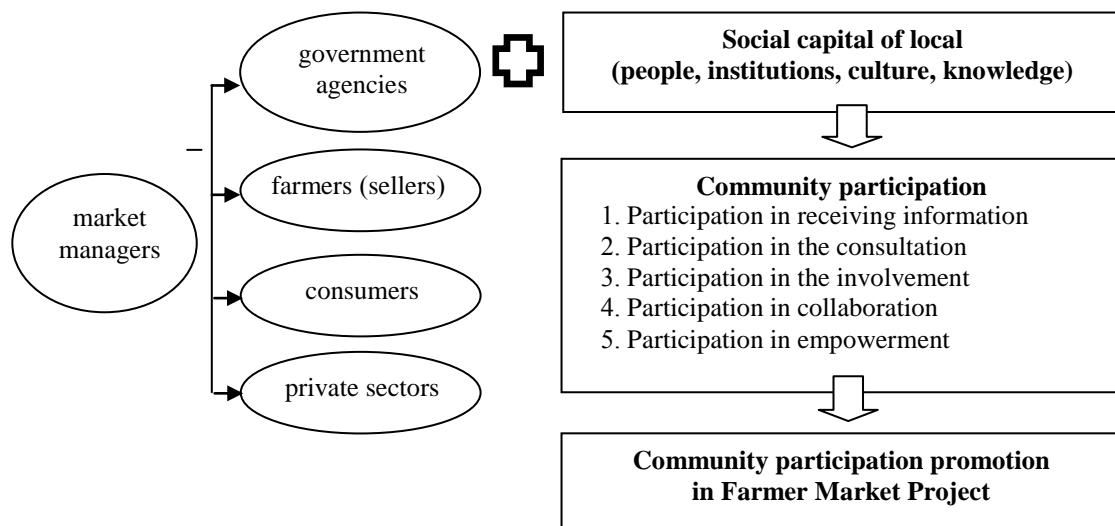
## Research Objectives

This paper aims to present the social conditions, problems and obstacles in the implementation of the farmer market project with community participatory principles in 77 provinces, as well as guidelines for promoting community participation in the implementation of the farmer market project.

## Research Framework

From the concept of farmer market project, community participation concept, social capital concept, and related research review. The "Farmer Market Project" is a project that is relevant to four stakeholder groups: government officials, private sector, farmers and local people. The market manager is responsible for directing the management and implementation of the objectives. Based on the social capital concept, the role of social capital in the four components are the people, institutions, culture, and knowledge. It can be linked to social capital to drive community development. This research uses the four components of social capital as a framework for studying the social conditions that lead to community participation in the farmer's market, including the steps of initiation, planning, implementation, and evaluation. To promote the participation of the community in the implementation of the project farmers. The conceptual framework for research is as follows.

### Participants in the farmers market system.



**Figure 1** The conceptual framework

## Research Methodology

This study is mixed method research using both quantitative and qualitative data. The researcher surveyed data from 80 market managers in the farmers' markets in 77 provinces, and interviews with key informants from 16 market managers to support the surveyed data. The period of field data collection was during the year 2017.

## Research Results

### The implementation of the farmers market project with the principle of community participation.

The quantitative survey of 61 market managers (from 80 market managers in 77 provinces), which accounted for 76.25% of the total population, found that most farmers' markets were located at the government center, front of town hall, or district office, accounting for 73.8%. The average number of shops is less than 20, accounting for 44.3%. Most of the respondents agree that highlights of the farmers market are that (1) most sellers are real farmers and (2) the project location is in a good location. The sample evaluates the success of the farmers market project at an average of 7.0 points out of a total of 10 points.

The sample group assessed that "the farmers" were the most involved in the project with an average of 4.4. Secondly, consumers and government agencies had an average of 4.2. The lowest is the private sectors had an average 2.5 out of 5 points.

**Table 1** The opinions of the sample on the participation of stakeholder groups in the implementation of the farmers market project.

| Participation in the implementation of the farmers market project | MEAN | S.D. | Level of participation |
|---|------|------|------------------------|
| 1) Participation of farmers                                       | 4.4  | .7   | the highest level      |
| 2) Participation of consumers                                     | 4.2  | .7   | the high level         |
| 3) Participation of government agencies                           | 4.2  | .9   | the high level         |
| 4) Participation of private sectors                               | 2.5  | 1.2  | the low level          |

Information about the implementation of the farmers market project from the interviews with key informants including four stakeholder groups, farmers, consumers, government agencies, and private sectors, are as the follows;

**1) The participation of farmers:** Farmers participating in the Farmer Market Project are involved in various stages of implementation; planning, implementation, and evaluation. Most of the farmers are involved in the production and distribution activities, marketing management, commenting, selection of the market management committee, and public relations projects for friends and the public. In some provinces, the market management committee can contribute to the creation of a network of farmers for joint development and problem solving.

**2) Participation of consumers:** Most consumers are civil servants and government employees. Most of them are regular customers because the majority of farmers markets are located in front of government offices. Overall, consumers, who are government officials and the public, are primarily involved in buying products, participating in market activities, sharing opinions, and sharing information with others. Consumers are involved in providing information to encourage the government agency to hold the market continuously.

**3) Participation of government agencies:** The government agency directly responsible for the farmers market project is the agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, which work with other agencies in the area, such as the province or city. Government agencies are involved in the project from planning, implementation, and evaluation.

**4) Participation of private sectors:** Private sector participation also occurs in some areas. And it seems to be the least stakeholder group participating in this project. The private sector has been involved in supporting materials. However, in some areas businesses have been invited to participate since the start of the project, participating in market planning. In some areas, the private sector is involved in the purchase of agricultural products from the project.

**Social conditions in the implementation of the farmers market project.**

From the quantitative survey, it was found that the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives at the provincial level plays the most important role in promoting the farmers' market in the province, namely, the Provincial Agriculture, Provincial Cooperatives, Provincial Cooperatives, Provincial Fisheries, Provincial Livestock Department, Department of Agriculture, and Department of Agriculture, which accounted for 52.5%. Secondly, other government agencies in the province, especially the provincial government, accounted for 24.6%.

From the interviews with key informants, the social conditions that affected successful and unsuccessful farmers market operations are as follows:

**1) Cooperation with government and private sectors:** Farmers' markets, whether public or private, provide serious and ongoing support, are critical conditions for successful implementation.

**2) Strong market management and good management:** The Market Management Committee is a working group that plays a key role in market planning. This requires market management knowledge and skills, hard work, creating a good market management mechanism. Therefore, if the marketing board is strong and well managed, it will contribute to the smooth operation of the farmers market.

**3) The cooperation of farmers and strong farmers:** Farmers are the main target group of the project as both a producer and a supplier. For a farmers market that can be run smoothly, farmers must be able to produce quality and enough product to meet the needs of the market. In addition, farmers can be vendors themselves in the market. Many market managers believe that if the real farmers come to sell their own products, it will create confidence for consumers that the product is quality and safe.

**4) Good quality, standard, fair price:** Product is another important condition to attract consumers into the farmers market. Farmer marketing campaigns usually focus on providing good quality products, safe, and standardized products. Consumers are therefore expected to purchase quality agricultural products at fair prices. The product must be diversified, and enough to meet the needs of consumers as well.

**5) Consumers focus on safe agricultural products:** The informants agree that the successful farmers market needs to be promoted to the public about the importance of agricultural products. When consumers give priority to the need for safe and standardized agricultural commodities, they are able to buy and sell their products.

**6) Good and thorough public relations:** Public relations is important for farmers, producers and the general public to know and understand information about the project. Provincial government agencies had an important role to promoting public awareness of projects and recognizing the location of farmers market in their province. This is directly related to the budget allocation for public relations.

**7) The market location is in a good location and has a favorable physical structure:** If the farmers market is in a community location, it will be advantageous for consumers to shop in the farmers market. The market place should be a stable and physical infrastructure such as sufficient parking space, a roof or tent for outdoor sales, a bathroom for the buyer and seller, and a table for the merchant. In addition, within the market should be divided into zones of various types of goods that will allow consumers to shop easily.

**Problems and obstacles in the implementation of the farmers market project.**

In the quantitative survey, it was found that the problems and obstacles in the implementation of the farmers' market project were 52.5% of the location problems, followed by product problems and vendor problems respectively (24.6% and 23.0%, respectively).

**Table 2** Problems and obstacles in the implementation of the farmers market project in the province.

| <b>Major problems and obstacles in implementing the farmers market project.</b> | <b>Frequencies*</b> | <b>percent**</b> |
|---|---------------------|------------------|
| 1) Location's problem   | 32                  | 52.5             |
| 2) Product's problem  | 15                  | 24.6             |
| 3) Vendor's Problem   | 14                  | 23.0             |
| 4) The lack of support equipment problem  | 13                  | 21.3             |
| 5) Conflict and lack of cooperation from local agencies problem                 | 11                  | 18.0             |
| 6) Public relations' problem  | 4                   | 6.6              |
| 7) Consumer's problem   | 3                   | 4.9              |

\* The respondent can answer more than one.

\*\* Calculate the percentage of respondents in each sample from the sample of 61.

The interviews about the problems and obstacles in the implementation of the farmers market project were summarized as follows:

**1) Location's problem:** It is a major problem since the beginning of the implementation of agricultural market projects, such as the lack of market locations, the market location is in a bad location, and the market location is in a good location but the physical environment is not good. For example Most farmers' markets are located in government offices, where people are able to shop easily. But the limitation of the government office is the inability to set up a tent or permanent roof. During the rainy season can not trade.

**2) Product's problem:** The farmers market operation requires a variety of agricultural products, quality standards, and sufficient supply for distribution continuously. Some season, farmers encounter pest problems, resulting in fewer products. While some season, the output is too large to sell the goods immediately. Farmers also have to calculate the amount of output and transportation costs to sell products at farmers markets. This may be located in a remote area of production. In many markets, the problem of products is not consistent with the needs of consumers. In addition, farmers have to develop products of standard quality, processing, and development of packaging to meet the needs of consumers.

**3) Vendor and consumer's Problems:**

3.1) The vendor's problem is the shortage of real farmers who will sell their products in the farmers market. The farmers are very old. There are few farmers. Farmers who have the capacity

to produce enough products are often sold elsewhere. At some period, the farmers market has no sellers, especially during the growing season.

3.2) Buyer problem is that in some markets there are few buyers. Buyers are specific groups such as health lover groups, those who want to farm products, etc.

**4) The lack of budgets for equipment procurement and public relations:** The smooth operation of the farmers market will require funding for the establishment of a market such as rent, electricity, water supply, nine tables, tents, etc., as well as public relations budgets.

**5) Conflict and lack of cooperation from local agencies problem:** The smooth operation of the farmers market will require cooperation from local agencies. In some areas, there are problems of external agencies such as provincial government agencies and private sectors are not cooperating, not allowed to use places, and not supported by public relations. In some areas, there is a conflict within the agency, such as not cooperating within the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives at the provincial level who directly responsible for this project. Including conflicts of interest between the old board and the new board.

#### **Guidelines for promoting community participation in project implementation.**

The research was analyzed in conjunction with the community participation concept and social capital concept. This is a summary of the ways of promoting community participation in the implementation of the farmers market program:

##### **1) Farmers, farmers group, and farmer management committees**

**Social capital analysis:** The results showed that farmer who has knowledge of market management and a strong farmers' network in province are also important human capitals to mobilize a successful farmers market. The community market or local market is as a cultural capital, farmer market initiatives that start from the local community market are likely to continue.

**Farmer participation promotion:** it should be started with the development of farmers' potential by providing training and knowledge including production, agricultural product processing, packaging development, product quality development, product distribution, and marketing skills. The farmers should be encouraged the creation of a network of farmers and a strong group, exchange of knowledge, and joint development activities. Moreover, they should be encouraged to participate in the board of directors. In the same way, the board of directors of the farmers market should be given more potential development, particularly the development of market management skills. Another successful farmer study will have an important role to play in managing the farmers market in managing their farmers' markets.

##### **2) Government agencies**

**Social capital analysis:** The government sector is the institutional capital that drives the farmers market. Successful farmer marketing is often achieved through the cooperation of various sectors in the area, especially government agencies.

**Government agencies participation promotion:** It should start with a policy to support the farmers market project from the government first so that all government agencies can see the importance of each other. All sectors should be related to the farmers market. The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the provincial governor, by the governor, are primarily responsible for managing the rules, supervising the ongoing projects, developing public relations, coordinating the various sectors, cooperating, meeting and planning together.

### 3) Private sectors

**Social capital analysis:** private agencies can help solve many operational problems. In some provinces, the private sector participates in being a major consumer, receiving safe agricultural products in farmers' markets for consumption in their own organizations.

**Private sectors participation promotion:** It should start with public relations to the private sector in the area to know the farmers market. Government agencies and market management committees should meet together and seek concrete demands on what is needed from the private sector to offer greater participation to the private sector. The private sector cooperation can make more successful market. Private sector agencies can take part in the Farmer Market Program such as for the establishment and operation, they can allow to establish markets in their own place, support materials, tables, chairs, umbrellas, umbrellas to facilitate trade activities. The private sector can also be involved as a major consumer, such as being a farmer in the farmers' market program for resale or consumption in their own organization.

### 4) Consumers

**Social capital analysis:** In many areas, consumers who are government officials and government officials and also have knowledge of safe agricultural products are considered as important consumer's knowledge capital in support of the successful farmers market.

**Consumers participation promotion:** To enhance capacity of selling, it should be started with public relations to make the consumers recognize the importance of the farmers market, include a campaign to raise awareness of safe food and agricultural products.

## Discussion

The results of the research reflect that, "the nature of the farmers market is different from the general market." It is a commodity that is perishable, a raw material that needs to be processed, and a product with a high volume of production and quality. Therefore, in managing the market, the farmers must take into account the special characteristics of these agricultural products. So that the promotion of community participation in the implementation of the farmer market project requires the understanding of the nature of the farmers market.

Marketing is one of the most important factors in agricultural production. It may be said that marketing problems are a major problem in agricultural development in Thailand. The marketing of agricultural products in Thailand is very complex. Only one farmer can not solve the market problem. It requires cooperation from many parties such as manufacturers, consumers, middlemen, business organizations. Government agencies (Thai Kasetsart, 2017).

Banyat Chunnaphan (1992) said that most of the farmers are small producers who are selling their produce, which means first produce and then find a way to sell. So some products are very limited. Farmers who want to sell their products need to pay attention to marketing in the following:

- 1) Knowledge of market demand before production management.
- 2) The sales of products planning.
- 3) Determining the expected time period for product selling.
- 4) Marketing assignments must be prepared in advance to keep up with the needs of consumers.
- 5) Learning to find new markets and expand markets for manufactured goods.
- 6) Analysis of product marketing plan.
- 7) Adaptation to the economic, social and political environment.

Agricultural products also have weak characteristics that are different from other products in the market system, such as easily perishable goods, raw materials that need to be processed, products

that are produced and quality is not consistent in the management of the market farmers. The special effects of these agricultural products should be accounted.

The results show that when farmers become vendors without the preparation of market management skills has caused many problems in managing the farmers market. The survey revealed that samples need knowledges of market management. Those knowledge includes knowledge for market managers, marketing committees, and farmers. This is consistent with the research by Dusadee Promthat (2015) on the Farmer's behavior of safety vegetable production in Phra Nakhon Sri Ayutthaya Province. It is found that the concern of farmers who influence the decision to expand production and marketing is the product without brand or brand itself, so that the product is not known under the production and marketing of farmers. While research by Varaporn Panyawadee (2008) on "the driving the way to a safer agriculture: case of growing vegetables", the guideline for developing safe agriculture is to focus on the marketing of the producer group. Therefore, the understanding of the characteristics of the farmers market is important in the operation of the farmers market.

In policy implementation, it is necessary to prepare knowledge about marketing system for the concerned person, such as market manager and market director should have knowledge about market management, farmers should get knowledge about production, marketing, processing, product development and packaging. At the same way, farmers market operations should provide facilities for agricultural commodities such as fresh produce, tents, and transportation vehicles.

## **Policy Recommendations**

### **At the government level**

- 1) The government should set the provincial governor responsible for locating a farmer's market, and preparing facilities for agricultural products.
- 2) The government should issue specific regulations regarding the authorization of government offices to establish a market, and be able to operate on public holidays and off-hours to reduce barriers to marketing activities that meet the needs of the customer.
- 3) The government should force the Department of Agriculture a major participant in the development of the certification system and the creation of a standard for certification of agricultural products.

### **At the provincial level**

- 1) It should be clearly defined by the agency and the person responsible for the project. The provincial governor may host an integrated planning conference for the various sectors, and pull the local, and the private sector joined in.
- 2) The responsible organization should promote the project wider and the location of the farmers market.
- 3) It should set provincial policies to expand farmers' markets to different districts.

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