

Country Brief

International Workshop on IPM and Marketing

Country: Thailand

IPM Programme active since: 1999-inception IPM FFS programme under Royal Patronage

Estimated number of farmers trained: 75,035 farmers

Estimated number of trainers currently active: 203 trainers

Main crops involved: Rice, vegetables, fruits, sugarcane, etc.

Main issues/problems encountered with respect to marketing of IPM produce:

There is no specific label, no certification or inspection for IPM products. There is no accreditation body for IPM production. In many cases, farmers grow crops employing IPM processes but when they sell the qualified products to middle men, these are mixed with other produce and sold together at the same prices.

Brief description of marketing initiatives or strategies for IPM crops that have been developed and introduced (if any):

Food Safety, Trade Facilitation & Good Agriculture Practice programmes in Thailand

Thailand as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has adopted the agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade. In response to international food safety and quality concerns, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC) has implemented Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) programmes for food crops as the first step towards food safety and trade facilitation. The government's declaration of "Food Safety Year" in 2004 has raised awareness among farmers and stakeholders on the need to address food safety issues. Together with GAP, Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) as well as Hazard Analysis and critical Control Point (HACCP) are also promoted to ensure quality in the food chain.

Institutional framework for GAP program in agriculture

Under MOAC, the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodities and Food Standard is in charge of establishing the accreditation criteria for certification. The Department of Agriculture as the Certification Body develops the GAP guidelines and inspects the farms that register for certification. The Department of Agricultural Extension is mandated to promote GAP among smallholder farmers, with a focus on training those farmers that are producing for -and are connected to- the fresh fruit and vegetables export business. In 2006 DoAE launched the project "Promotion of Safe Agricultural Products" in 31 kinds of crops nationwide with the aim to assist farmers understand the principles and framework of GAP.

The role of IPM in Good Agricultural Practices

IPM is recognized by the Thai Government as an integral part of GAP. Thai farmers applying for Q-GAP accreditation must practice IPM. To achieve this objective, the IPM-FFS is promoted and used as a tool to train farmers on GAP.

How long has the above marketing initiative/strategy been operational:

In 2004, a Cabinet resolution announced the target for the Food Safety Year and set the Framework, including guidelines for inspection and criteria for "GAP certified" products under a national scheme called "Q GAP". The framework covers four areas, namely: inputs and raw materials inspection, production certification, manufacturing facilities certification and product certification.

How many farmers participate:

As of December 2008, 353,530 farms had registered for Q GAP certification, 141,171 had been inspected and 212,359 farms had obtained Q GAP certification for 28 fruit and vegetable crops. According to official records about 20 packers or exporters have obtained the "Q" label for Food Safety.

How successful has it been (e.g. in terms of better prices for farmers, higher volumes sold, better market linkages, empowerment, etc):

Quite successful! Currently, exporters and supermarkets tend to buy agricultural products from GAP accredited farmers. This forces growers to follow GAP standards in crop production. Most consumers,

particularly those in urban areas, are now familiar with the “Q” labeled fresh fruits and vegetables on sale in supermarkets. Farmers benefit from better market access and more stable and higher farm gate prices.

What were the main obstacles, if any:

The aggressive marketing strategies of pesticide companies continue to promote pesticide use among farmers and make it difficult to encourage farmers to register for GAP.

There are not enough Inspectors and Advisors to implement the national GAP scheme.

Some unscrupulous farmers and exporters pass off un-certified products under the “Q” mark to other countries.

The requirements of GAP certification, such as the detailed record keeping, is still too difficult and cumbersome for farmers to comply with.

Sometimes, Inspectors are not sufficiently strict about checking compliance with field requirements.

Lessons learned from the marketing initiative/strategy and points that need further improvement:

The Thai government, responsible for the promotion of “Q” labeled produce for domestic and export markets should:

Provide information on or communicate about the national Food Safety Program to the public using various media channels such as radio, television, newspaper, etc. so that consumers (both inside and outside the country) will know more about, select and consume certified safe food with the “Q” label..

Develop more practical and crop specific GAP protocol and guidelines.

Set up training programs for Inspectors, Advisors, and private sector.

Introduce GAP certified farms to exporters for possible engagement in contract farming systems.

Strengthen the IPM-GAP curriculum and promote and support the implementation FFS-based IPM-GAP farmer training among smallholder farmers, both those producing for local wet markets as well as those connected to domestic and export market-oriented contract farming schemes.