

Invited Article

Collaborative Research and Development of Agri-business Management System on Organic Rice by Uttaradit Rajabhat University, Agricultural Networks and Stakeholders : From Perspective to Social Learning Assistant Professor Chedsada Mingchai, Ph.D. Faculty of Agriculture, Uttaradit Rajabhat University



Introduction:

In B.E.2553, the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) initiated a mutual academic issue with Uttaradit Rajabhat University in order to operate a 3 year-research project entitled “Collaborative Research and Development of Agri-business Management System on Organic Rice by Uttaradit Rajabhat University, Agricultural Networks and Stakeholders”. Under area based collaborative (ABC) research, the province is a working base with the available mechanism of executive management providing systematically acceptable changes. Cooperation and mutual learning were created to determine the causes and factors concerning the value chain of organic rice. The local university fills the role of “Research Management Unit: RMU” overseeing all general benefits or conflicts and linking this innovative mission.

Such an endeavor has caused quite a phenomenon in the university. First of all, the President, the highest ranking university executive, took charge as the project leader himself¹. Also not regularly found, more than

50 university researchers worked together under the same project along with a hundred of researchers outside the university.

The central committee of organic rice research project set 3 questions to find a clear guideline and process for the work. First, what should the university do with the organic rice agricultural business? Secondly, how does the university collaborate with local agricultural networks? Finally under this defining situation, what does the TRF think about Uttaradit Rajabhat University as an Engagement University?

The Purpose

This article chronicles the experience of the research manager with reflection from the organic rice research project by focusing on design, management and synthesis. The very important aspect is to create value-added on ABC² research for society. The reflection from this article may be subject to environmental events, but the purpose of this article

¹Asst. Prof. Sitihichai Harnsombat, President as Research Project head acting during B.E. 2553-2555 and Asst. Prof. Dr. Ruangdet Wongla, President as Research Project head acting during B.E. 2556.

²ABC: Area Based Collaborative Research for Development work together with at least 3 adherents: academics within university, community and functions for development area (Suteera Prasertsan, 2556)

is to address the learning process of ABC research which is an important experience for research executives, managers and all researchers.

Perspective and Learning Process

As important questions are raised, the university itself must find the answer during the operation of organic rice research project. This is a rare experience for general universities. Although Uttaradit Rajabhat University has continually gained experience working in area development for about 15 years since B.E 2541, it has had to carefully revise the idea of how to run the innovative research project such as this.

Thus far, it is interesting to seek a proper answer for the ABC Research for Development on the investigation and development of agricultural business within an organic rice management system. In particular, how do the characters of Uttaradit Rajabhat University, local agricultural networks in Uttaradit province and participants fit with ABC research?

ABC research focuses on economical, social and environmental developments of stakeholders by encouraging development functions to acquire their own power based on data and knowledge as well as true learning process of resource management to achieve the goal. The final result is area development (Figure 1). So the university will oversee connection, relation, knowledge transference together with body of knowledge creation from some research works to construct management functions. “Research leads to a more rational idea with a clear sight of complex relations” resulting in a more systematic understanding of problems. All development functions realize that the use of its own organization will empower others and enhance efficacy in the development. (Suteera Prasertsan: 2556)

The first issue: What should the University do with the organic rice agricultural business?

In common research projects aiming for a body of knowledge on organic rice, researchers will take the

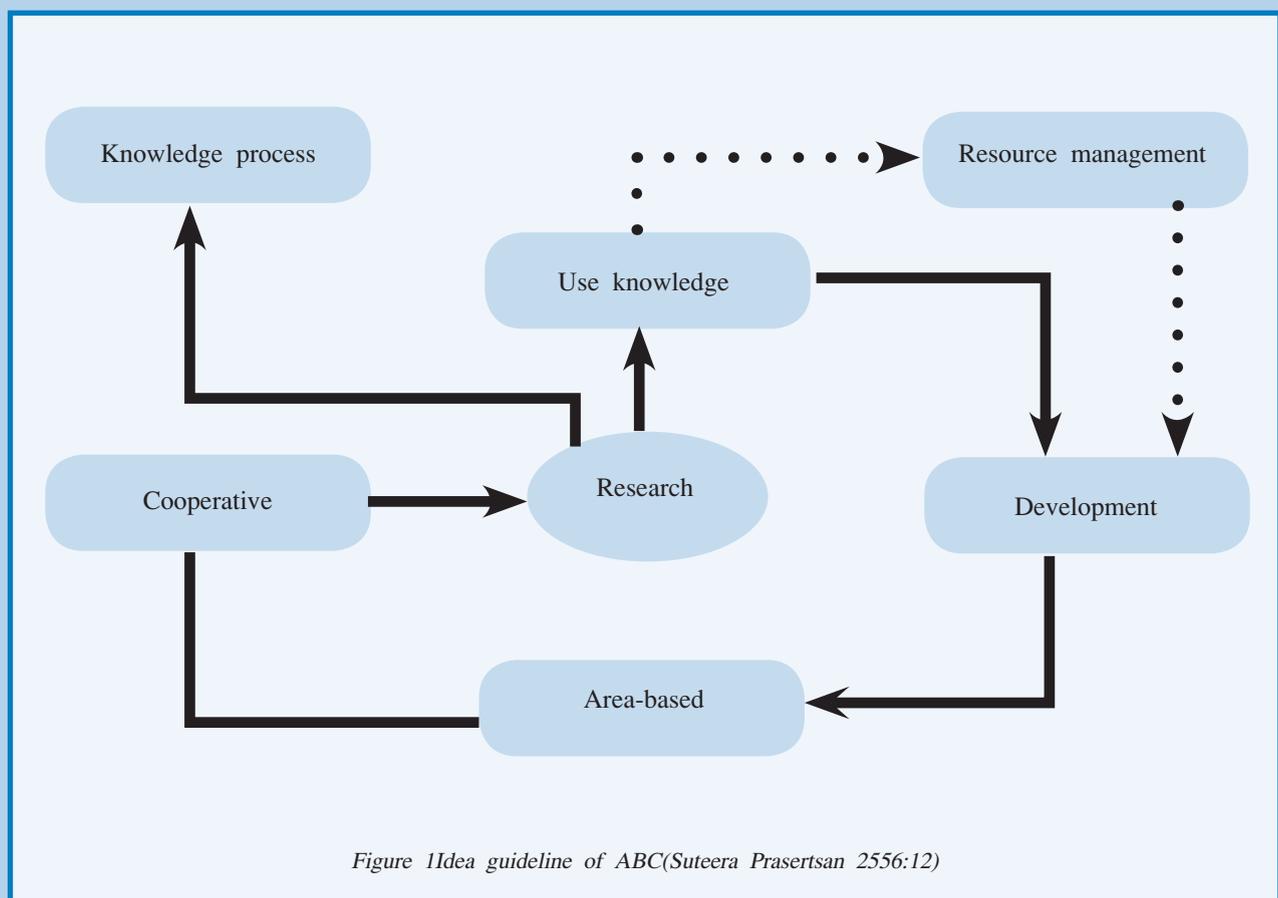


Figure 1 Idea guideline of ABC (Suteera Prasertsan 2556:12)

body of knowledge and experts within the university as the starting point for the study. Then the researchers will investigate, revise, develop and add to findings from the previous body of knowledge. Later on the the researchers get the body of knowledge and hand on to agriculturists who produce organic rice through seminars on seeding, management on disease and insect control, postharvest, management on farm machinery, packaging, international standards, marketing and so on. Then the researchers will assess knowledge before and after the training or seminar. Finally we evaluate the satisfaction of participants in the activity.

The researchers will subsequently look for conferences to present their findings in an article in an academic forum. Otherwise they will organize a research article and send for printing in a research journal. The report will then be sent to the committee for approval of quality assurance in the faculty. Finally the job will be collected and presented for an academic rank of the researchers.

However, this particular research project on organic rice follows the approach of ABC research. The process is somewhat different from the regular research paradigm. While some research methodology in knowledge creation may be closely similar, the researcher cannot completely set his/her own research direction from the beginning. Besides, this ABC research work cannot be done to answer the needs of researchers, department or faculty. In addition, the body of knowledge from the study cannot conventionally be presented in the academic conference or published in a research journal for the fulfillment of academic position.

For these reasons, the organic rice research project has to set the concept which will be done by a central committee who work as both a “Think-Tank Team” and “Facilitator” in order to set the direction and pace to the right goal in time. This will also support all team members in the mutual learning process while working together.

Apart from the principal idea, the “Research Question” is changed and does not belong to only “the researcher” anymore. But it must be a question that has a clear future in how the knowledge gained from this research will connect to the functions of organic rice in Uttaradit? Who will benefit from the research results? They should have a chance to participate in the research design from the beginning and not only accept the research results at the end of the project but gain a sense of mutual participation so that the benefit of the research results will be maximized.

For this reason, the organic rice research project is systematically designed with functions of organic rice management during 3 years of the research action plan and the mutual learning comprising 1) Integrative administration system for movement of organic rice businesses 2) Organic rice business management system for quality of life and creative economy 3) System of competency development of agriculturists and stakeholders 4) Network on agricultural business management of stakeholders in Uttaradit 5) Knowledge, innovation and appropriate technology. 6) System of organic rice living database on a community based idea and 7) Management system on organic rice and products for the social business responsibility unit.

For all 7 systems, the goal is set on output level. It has certain character domain, with each field of study to find a specific body of knowledge, with researchers, a task force and resources to operate research in a specific system. When each system makes progress on its research results, the central team can bring those research results to connect, relate and make benefit at the output level in complete accord with the project index. This will include the ability to design the research team learning together with some other supporting teams to simultaneously understand the development of the organic rice research project. Details in each system are as follows:

1. Integrative administration system for movement of organic rice businesses. This system was designed for academic operations in Uttaradit Rajabhat University. The working procedure comprises a Research Management Unit (RMU) in each faculty. It is a functional research development task since the beginning of the project in the problem development procedure and research questions stages. The middle stage involves supporters following and giving advice as well as research problem correction, and the final stage is research application in accord with the needs. The RMU has been employed using the “Uttaradit Model” since B.E. 2552. At present there is an area function management called Tambon Research Management Unit (TRMU) comprising a change agent within a purpose area. They are from local organization administration such as schools, hospitals in Tambons, etc. They participate in the integrated mission in utilizing mutual resources. This kind of executive management will start the project based on the area in the Tambon with supporting functions by setting structure and policy in concrete forms.

TRMU at Tambon Hat-kruat³, Muang, Uttaradit is an example of such research management. It has organic rice business management according to the international standard for rice export in close cooperation with Maejo University. It was done as a pilot project to develop the competency of agriculturists and stakeholders to upgrade organic rice businesses in accord with market mechanisms. There is also an MOU for academic cooperation, and a task force capability development system. The proposal of an area development project using external funding was made

for community development promotion such as source funding from the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Thailand Research Fund (TRF), the Office of Health Promotion Funding and Earth Safe Foundation etc.

Besides TRMU at Hat-kruat problems and some important points were sent to academic departments of the University to exercise their research capability such as the problem of disease of organic rice seeds affecting the rice quality and rice gene seeds. Finally, the research project was set to solve the problems⁴ under the good cooperation among the Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Extension and Pai-Yai community.

For some other issues such as the amount of biowaste and garbage (60 %) left after separation within the community, the TRMU change agent tried to find some other ways besides fertilizer production. After URU researchers were informed, and the earthworm project⁵ was set to eliminate bio garbage. At present, the products from earthworms are not only fermented water but also fertilizer from earthworms dung. Both products are allowed for organic rice production and exports in accordance with international standards.

2. Organic rice business management system for quality of life and creative economy. This kind of system is the organic rice business development to fulfill the niche market both within and outside Thailand under the standard of dual trade nations agreement and consumers needs. Organic rice research projects classify purposive areas into 3 groups: the purposive original learning model, the main purposive group and the purposive result magnifying group. The main purposive group is composed of Tambon Wang-din, Tambon

³Mr. Jaruk Wongpiyamarut, Department of Agricultural Extension, Hat-kruat Municipality, TRMU teams who take important roles dealing with organic rice production in accord with international standards.

⁴Research Project on Organic rice seeds production for cost lessening within Community by Waraporn Pupakdeepon, Faculty of Agriculture, URU. Research funding of URU (Mutual Research Fund TRMU)

⁵Project on “Science and Technology Village” by Pattana Somniam, Faculty of Agriculture, URU (Academic service Funds from Science and Technology Ministry B.E. 2556-2558)

Wung-kapee in Muang district; and Tambon Kho-rum in Pichai district, Uttaradit. The runner up group comprises 11 Tambons that acquire efficacy of organic rice production and extensively know all about organic rice. This group has Tambon Hat-kruat, Muang district as the purposive group for the original learning model for organic rice development in accordance with international standards.

In the main purposive group, the selection process is from data finding, discussing, efficiency analysis dealing with organic rice production including the physical dimensions, social, environment, leader and etc. This identifies the level of development within that Tambon from the beginning. For example, Tambon Wang-din acquires area efficacy of “The management organic rice product in term of quality under provincial and national standard.” because this Tambon possesses trading channels for organic rice, as well as public sectors, organization and stakeholder that supports continuous learning process. The physical area is the raining rice field, and the rice will be grown only once a year. This easily leads to the development and the upgrade to meet the national standards. So the organic rice research project set the plan for organic rice business at Tambon Wang-din⁶ in order to use the area efficacy in accordance with the development.

Tambon Wung-kapee has an active community leader. It contains functions connecting some other agricultural groups, and marketing organic rice outside Uttaradit province as well as being the mixing agricultural learning center. The physical area character is suburban agriculture and illustrates an upcountry

agriculture and urban community development. The rice can be produced in both rainy and dry seasons with irrigation and the area is set as “social marketing management under a fair trading system”. The organic rice research project therefore set Tambon Wung-kapee⁷ as the setting plan for the organic rice business of the Tambon.

Tambon Koh-rum is a community rice seeding center and has learning aspects of rice farmer school to upgrade agriculturist competency. There are connections between the group administration and other local organizations. It produces organic rice products following the self sustainability approach. Moreover the area is suitable for all year round rice growth under irrigation, so it is established as “self sustainable production of rice seeds and support under community and provincial standards.” The organic rice research project has set an organic rice business plan at Tambon Koh-rum⁸ for organic rice business planning dealing with Tambon efficacy.

From the aforementioned examples, the organic rice research project has clearly set the main idea of area setting, functions and conditions for different research plans focusing on learning on different area contexts. The obtained results will be adopted to manage an organic rice business system with a focus on different production in each Uttaradit area.

The organic rice research project has brought 3 business plans, as guidelines for working, including the starting of a social responsibility business unit⁹ (SBU). The aim is to drive social business in the forms of various marketing models to answer the needs of

⁶Research project on the Management of organic rice business plan, Tambon Wung-din, Muang district, Uttaradit by Sineenat Vikromprasit and Others. Faculty of Management Science, URU.

⁷Research project on the Management of organic rice business plan, Tambon Wung-kapee, Muang district, Uttaradit by Thidarat Muandacha and Others Faculty of Management Science, URU.

⁸Research Project on the Management of organic rice business plan, Tambon Koh-rum, Pichai district, Uttaradit by Asst Prof Dr. Irawat Chomraka and Others. Faculty of Management Science, URU.

⁹Research project on the Model Management of organic rice agricultural business for society by Sriprai Sakunphan and Others. Faculty of Management Science, URU.

consumers under fairtrade or “social marketing”.

The model obtained through the initial phase is that URU should act as a coordinator in the systems and functions of the network which answer the needs of producers and consumers for organic rice and extend marketing and health products in Uttaradit for producers and consumers in accord with legitimacy theory and public responsibility. This is the stakeholder's right for an organic rice production business operation plan.

The results are social marketing models where stakeholders join the benefit gained from organic rice extended marketing and health products by means of marketing communication¹⁰ model focusing on safety products and fair trade answering human rights and various social welfare within the university and outside society. Mutual activities are introduced as opportunities for children and youth using leisure benefit. Career promotion is created for disabled people, reducing income and social gap as well as response to the expectation of society and stakeholders.

3. The system of competency development of agriculturists and stakeholder. This system developed focuses on “human resources”. It is the individual creation of both agriculturists, agricultural academics within the local organization and dealing stakeholder containing 5 important domains: area management, management of organic rice standards, management of disease and insect risk for plants, management on group working and management on learning. Such a process uses the Internal Control System (ICS) to improve the rice in accordance with the organic agriculture standard¹¹ and organic rice standard of the Rice Department.

The agriculturist competency development using ICS for organic rice production is the research for internal quality control system development for additional competency by applying the Tambon Hatkruat model plus a grower group certification¹². There is a comparison of the expected competency level of agriculturists of the original area model development with a joint area of participation project that has the context area condition with different goals from different groups.

These researches also focus on the investigation and condition of management on internal quality control affecting both direct and indirect agriculturist competency for organic rice production. The results will be used to develop models at local, national and international levels.

Guidelines for development of competency levels and internal quality control constructed from the related literature review, from the learning from the accomplishment of the original model and from the needs of agriculturalists, lead to the guideline of competency development of agricultural group by using an internal quality control. The result will then be used to create a handbook for agriculturist's competency development on organic rice production, and stakeholders¹³. This guideline comprises a handbook and criterion setting for competency dictionary, a handbook for guidelines of competency based training (CBT), a handbook for the internal control system (ICS), a handbook for internal inspector of workshop, a handbook for the field trip to construct learning process for competency addition of organic rice production

¹⁰Research project on the Model of Marketing Communication for organic rice consumer's satisfaction in Uttaradit by Dr. Benjawan Sujarit and Others, Faculty of Management Science, URU.

¹¹Institute of Certified Agricultural Production System (ICAPS) Maejo University. According to standard and Framework of Organic rice volume. Production, Transfiguration, Labeling and Distribution.

¹²Research Project on Development of Agriculturist Competency level based on Internal Quality Control for Organic rice Production in Uttaradit Province by Piyawan Palas and Others. Faculty of Agriculture, URU.

¹³Partial Dissertation by Samran Cheumuangpaan. A candidate for Doctoral Degree: Environmental Study Faculty of Science and Technology, URU.

agriculturists together with the model of participated technology transfer creation of learning process for agriculturists and stakeholders¹⁴.

Besides the organic rice production of agriculturists with limitations to reach the international standard or national standard, the organic rice project developed a quality index of organic rice process under local wisdom incorporating agricultural science body of knowledge with quality products close to the international standard¹⁵. This was accepted by groups or networks in terms of moral rice together with importance giving a balance of agricultural environment as the principal. This should be considered as another choice for agriculturists and consumers.

4. The Networks on Agricultural Business Management of Adherence in Uttaradit. Uttaradit agriculturists have created the agricultural network and the process dealing with the stakeholder, and it is the principal function for development. The learning process and development have been constructed in the forms of sharing of ideas, grouping conference, giving of advice and creative fieldtrip etc. Together with system development on networks management, knowledge management units and community research¹⁶ which lead to the area working function as well as problem issues concerning networks management.

The stakeholders of the network are Uttaradit agricultural council, private sectors, public organization and local administration that take part in continuing the development of the organic agricultural production

model and are set as a strategy point of the Uttaradit agricultural development plan 2555-2559 as well as the development plan for dealing with local administration for implementation.

At the same time, the organic agricultural research project acts as model scheme to support organic rice agriculturists from the original model of system development to support organic rice business of the network that use the model scheme and action plan¹⁷. The plan comprising 3 stages: Short plan (1 year): prompt preparation of the area for growing organic rice and agriculturists of organic rice production along with a body of knowledge and technology for more products and less capital of production. Medium range plan (3 years): development of a management system for agricultural organic rice business complete with added product value and agriculturists' income who participate the project. The quality development and product standard are upgraded by means of connecting production and marketing with agriculturist development for learning capability and the ability to manage agricultural products. This leads to self reliance of survival with income for good quality of life as well as strengthening agriculturist groups. Long plan (10 years): the motivation of the project to be an original model of Uttaradit agricultural organic rice business management will be set as a model area development. This will lead to the sustainability of agricultural organic rice business management. There will be data connections to catch up with changes¹⁸, and they can

¹⁴Research Project on Application of Additive Competency concept of Community Enterprise using Model of Technology Transfer by Asst. Prof. Dr. Gunt Intuwong and Others, Faculty of Industrial Technology, URU.

¹⁵Research Project on Quality Management system development of production for organic rice standard in Uttaradit Province by Dr. Pimjai Sehanam and Others. Faculty of Agriculture, URU.

¹⁶Research Project on Development system knowledge Management Unit of Networks and Community Research Tambon Level for Promotion of Organic rice Agriculturists by Dr. Yupin Teansri and Others. Faculty of Humanity and Social Science, URU.

¹⁷Research Project on Development of supporting system Agricultural of Agriculturists Network with URU and Agricultural Adherents by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Chatnapa Promma. Faculty of Education, URU.

¹⁸Research Project on the investigation of Problem situation and Potential for Data Base Collecting and Networks Connection of Organic Rice by Prapun Jangaem and Others. Faculty of Humanity and Social Science, URU.

develop sustainably agricultural organic rice.

The organic research project has curriculum development of organic rice and learning media for organic rice local wisdom¹⁹. This will also be good for creation of bio-field working for purposive agriculturists at present and create motivation to young generation agriculturists. Also this learning media creates assurance and right understanding for organic rice consumers.

5. Knowledge, Innovation and Appropriate Technology. This system is the innovation development and technology for cost reduction of organic rice production for community by means of appropriate technology development such as a soil grinding machine²⁰ to solve labor cost problems. There are more efficacy and safety additions. The test for energy and efficacy indicates that the project can save electricity by 3,699.39 baht a year and increase the safety for users. For rice drum seeder machines²¹ for rice parachute fields, the experiment showed that the workforce, time spent and 50% of rice seedling can be reduced by 66%, 90% and 50% respectively. In the test of a soil sprinkling machine²² for rice seedling plant of rice throwing field, the result showed that it worked efficiently with a decrease 97-98% in labor.

The body of knowledge on product addition value such as the production of broken organic rice

porridge²³, developed for purposive groups such as infants, senior people and patient of diabetes etc, by choosing technology in line with the competency of community enterprise production group is conducted. The purposive group can learn and produce themselves. Moreover, the value can be added to leftovers such as "straws". They are used to produce organic straw paper²⁴ for making of various products for daily use through the design which answers the needs of the purposive groups and local context.

6. The system of organic rice living database on community based ideas. The process of living data at the Tambon level for beneficial use in Uttaradit has continually developed starting from healthy Tambon development. Initially, the university supports the operation for learning exchange by collaboration with local office administration and the organization of stakeholders for healthy Tambon data base development.

For the organic rice research project, the design and central data base development of management are carried out. There is also data connection development as well as development of a data base system supporting agricultural business decisions such as production consumption and organic rice marketing. The design and agricultural organic rice business data base was developed with an information technology system for agricultural business²⁵. There are connections for

¹⁹Research Project on The Curriculum Development of Organic Rice by Jariya Pichaikum and Research Project on Learning Media Development for local wisdom succeeding of organic rice by Dr. Suparporn Jabjai, Faculty of Education, URU.

²⁰Research Project on The Development of Soil Grinder for parachute rice planting by Thanapoom Fuangpian and Others. Faculty of Industrial Technology, URU.

²¹Research Project on Design and Development of participated Rice Drum seeder for Rice parachute planting by Saran Krachong and Others. Faculty of Industrial Technology, URU.

²²Research Project on Technology Development of Soil sprinkle Machine to public benefit use by Technology Transference by Asst. Prof. Pairote Nathiang and Others. Faculty of Industrial Technology, URU.

²³Research Project on Product Development of Instant Broken Organic rice Porridge with ground pork by Darunee Munrotand Others. Faculty of Agriculture, URU.

²⁴Research Project on Packaging Development for Value Addition of Uttaradit Organic rice Products by Jantima Pokkrong and Others. Faculty of Humanity and Social Science, URU.

²⁵Research Project on Development of Database Management System for Organic rice Business in the Local Community by Phanuwat Khanja and Others. Faculty of Industrial Technology, URU.

geo-agricultural information technology²⁶ for organic rice growing area from 3 sources: community data base (beginning source), the system of information technology for business management support (middle source) and community data center of organic rice (ending source).

The spatial data development is operated to set organic rice trading guidelines which analyze the most suitable rice trading way for the dissemination of organic rice products²⁷. The geo-information technology for administrative management is applied on each rice growing area²⁸ for suitable planning of production and traceability for organic rice products.

7. Management system on organic rice and product for social business responsibility unit. This is the systematic connection for marketing networks both within and outside the area through an organic rice distribution center and health products of URU. It is a network connection with both domestic and foreign trading stakeholders. There is systematic benefit management for dealing with people in a atmosphere of mutual acceptance. It is an integrated function and common mission of URU to adhere to the concept of “Social Enterprise”. To continue at the provincial level, the working team of Uttaradit agricultural council will serve as the connection both agriculture networks and supporting stakeholders.

The second issue: How does URU collaborate with networks, local organizations and stakeholders?

The main issue from the first question is that the research project of organic rice designed the functions of the organic rice management comprising: an integrative administration system, a business management system, competency development, agricultural business management of stakeholders, knowledge, innovation and appropriate technology, organic rice living database and social business responsibility unit. So it is no surprise that the workforce is composed of more than 50 university researchers and 100 non-university members. The most interesting question arises. How will URU collaborate with executive management researchers, agriculturist networks, local organizations and stakeholders?

Conventionally, researchers often take roles at the center of the research project. And if this is the regular research project, there is no difference; the bigger research project, the closer that research project will move to the overall center dealing with the research. However the organic rice research project following the ABC approach is somewhat different. URU may take equal roles with other stakeholders and has either less or more contributions than other stakeholders depending on issues and topics.

Because the organic rice research project aims at the output and impact, the development and empowerment on the provincial level on organic rice management will mainly rely on anyone that acquires development resources right to the organic rice topics. So the cooperation of area development turns out to be the more important factor than the owner or the

²⁶Research Project on Information Technology for Agricultural Business Development by Anucha Ruengsiriwattanakul and Others. Faculty of Science and Technology, URU.

²⁷Research Project on Technology Application of Geo-Information for Organic rice Trading Rout Investigation of the Community by Ratchada Kamjing and Others. Faculty of Industrial Technology, URU.

²⁸Research Project on the Application of Geo-Information on line for Administrative Management of organic rice Growing Area at Plot Level by Kunchit Pirapapke and Other. Faculty of Industrial Technology, URU.

center of issues.

From the systematic illustration of the organic rice research project (fig. 2), it is clear that the driving functions which are the heart of the topic are: Uttaradit agricultural council, organic rice agriculturist networks, and alternative agriculturist networks. The people or organizations have a direct influence in direction setting both in policy development and actual operation within the area. They represent more “the real person and the real voice” than any other stakeholders.

Public sectors still have an important function with organic rice such as the provincial agriculturist authority, provincial commerce authority and bank of agriculture and cooperative etc. They are stakeholders within the cycle and have a clear relationship to organic rice. Important organizations are private sectors such as the provincial trade of commerce, industrial council or any other private business dealing with rice trading in Uttaradit province. They will take supporting roles, enhancing the organic rice market and assessing the acceptance of organic rice among groups within the province.

The local administration within the area regardless of the Tambon municipality or Tambon administration

organization will eventually learn organic rice development processes from Hat-Kruat municipality which is the learning place of the original model such as: Tambon Nam-rid, Tambon Pa-jook, Tambon Wang-kapee municipalities and Tambon Koh-rum local administration. The goal will be directly affected.

Uttaradit has a total area for rice production of about 630.293 rai; In 2555 the production of organic rice in accordance with international standard 296 rai with 35 agriculturists or 0.05% of all provincial area for rice growing. The product (104.2 tons) was sent to Singapore; and 30 tons was reserved for family consumption. In 2556, organic rice growing area was enhanced to 378.75 rai with 56 agriculturists. The area for organic rice growing increased by 27.96% from 2555 and the area for organic rice growing is 0.06% of all the rice growing area in the province. (Samran Cheumungpan 2556) The organic rice product is approximately 190 tons with a value of 3 million baht. The growth comes from local office administrator sending the agricultural extension to participate in the learning and the competence of agriculturists participating in the research project of organic rice. The local office administrator clearly adds an important

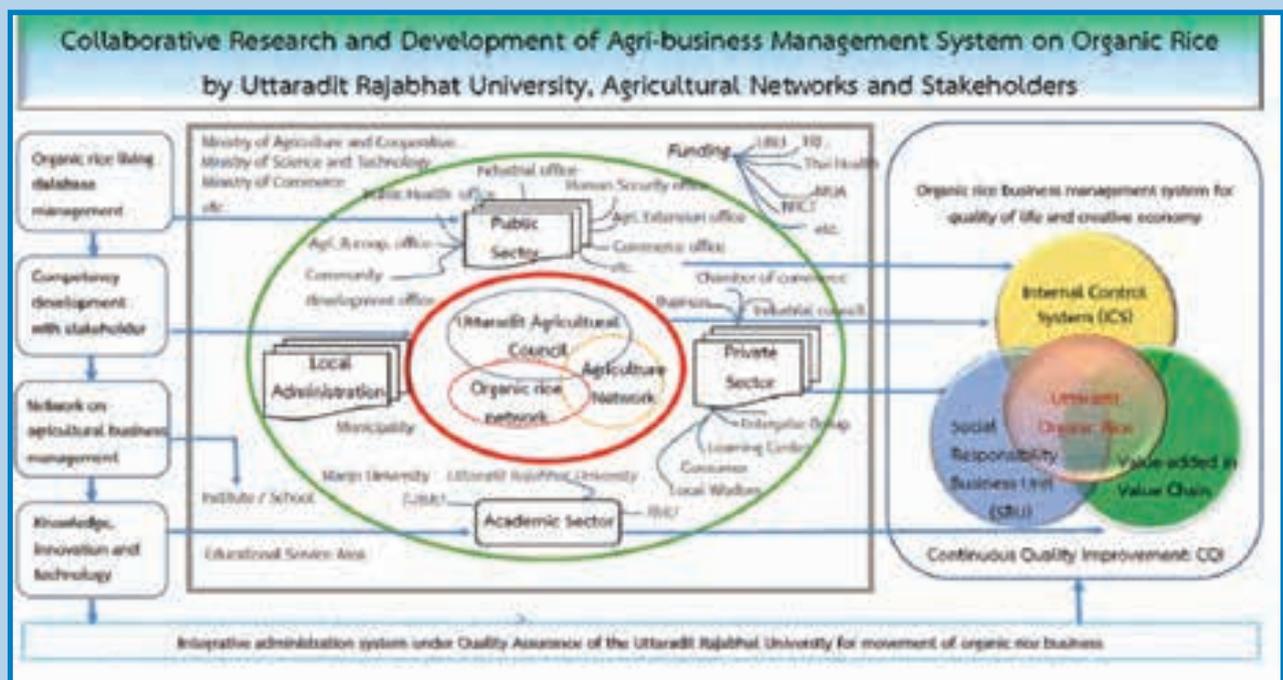


Figure 2 System Management of Collaborative Research and Development of Agri-business Management System on Organic Rice

dimension for area development of the organic rice product process.

The academic sector, URU in particular, simultaneously works as the main function in organic rice management such as the knowledge fulfillment for certain topical problem solving, the cooperation or connection with stakeholders for transferring knowledge and understanding their roles. The important role of URU on the organic rice management project is the learning process management for all sectors such as agriculturalists, local office administrators, public sectors, private sectors etc. including the role taking as supporting workers for strengthening the area development by means of using acquiring functions, RMU and TRMU, to their greatest efficacies. Another important academic partner is Maejo University²⁹ which plays active roles on the organic rice development at the beginning including supporting production and the standard acceptance of agricultural organic rice (ICAPS) with a marketing connection with a private company. This causes clear development stages. At present, this case is accepted as the roles of specific academic sector for area based support is a main factor of other interesting cases.

The third issue: Under this defining situation, what does the TRF think about Uttaradit Rajabhat University as an Engagement University?

In the first year of the organic rice research project, the progress of research was negligible. This might be one of the indexes showing that URU, researchers who acquire great experience on research works and great amount of academics publish in traditional procedure might not be 100% adapted to this new approach. However, the most important thing is that the organization and researchers firstly opened

their minds to the idea of ABC research model. The crystallization of ideas from all participants is very important including taking a broader research vision more than just the output. But they should concentrate on output value of future work that will take more time than the research project. This is the learning process on idea planning of the ABC research approach for URU and its researchers.

Up to present, the organic rice research project is not considered a perfect accomplishment or complete failure. The increased figures on organic rice growing in the area and the enhancement of harvested products and agriculturists came either from the result of quantitative research project or from social trends with other cofactors. But what has never happened before in dealing with organic rice in Uttaradit province and is certainly a direct result from this organic rice project is, “the emergence of a function and procedure system dealing with organic rice projects at various levels”, which is still active in the area in the mission, aptitude and expertise that is no longer only within URU. This is the experience of procedure learning while collaborating to give great value for area development.

Consider the 4 overlapping circles in the figure about the management system of the organic rice business (fig.2) again it might say that this defining operation will give the final answer on ABC research, and “Good Uttaradit organic rice” will come from the development “Agriculturist Quality” by means of functioning motivation “Marketing for Society” and the body of Knowledge creation of the “Value addition system” through the current function of area development to fulfill efficacy with Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).

In the future, the development problem may change from organic rice to “Long Lab Lae durian, Lin Lab Lae durian, Long-Gong, Lansat, Huay Moon

²⁹By Assoc. Prof. Danuwat Peng-Ont. Director, Institute of Product Quality and standardization, Maejo University and working Team.

pineapple, red Onion LabLae, Nampad Garlic or any other agricultural products. “The idea and the process from the 4 circles of organic rice research project can be adapted and applied if we need the quality of products to be upgraded to the sustainable development standard.

Finally, “What does the TRF think of URU as an Engagement University?” From the point of view of the research management operator, the action research on organic rice during 3 whole years is virtually “a big mirror” reflecting the true-self of URU whether as an Engagement University through action or being just another university with a lot of buildings and grounds in the local area. The products of this project will concretely help answer the question and the TRF support encourages the top rank executive, the president, to become the head of the research project himself for the first time.

Epilogue

The ABC research approach for development under cooperation between a community university and

the local area is still attractive from the point of views of the participants. Its strength really brings out the inner best from those involved. The ideas of cooperation and learning are still the principle for this kind of process. At present the universities are still the reliable academic sources for the community and society as they have been with only changes in their roles and means. Community and society are waiting for universities to motivate and support development through a thinking approach and direction aimed at encouraging the community and society to have efficient self management. They should participate and create ABC research work making them a potent force for positive changes and learning in our society.

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