



Community Enterprise Development Approach: A Case Study of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, Sa Kaeo Province

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were to study the condition of Baan Beegrimm's mushroom farming community enterprise, the problems and obstructions in its operation, and the solution for the community enterprise development for Baan Beegrimm's mushroom farming group, Khlong Thap Chan sub-district, Aranyaprathet district, Sa Kaeo province, using the qualitative research method. The results revealed that the major problems of Beegrimm's mushroom farming group were the inconsistency of productivity and product processing and the lack of manufacturing labor and market distribution channel. The researcher therefore proposed the development approach from the analysis of findings, by develop mushroom product and added value as the safety agriculture product, development of distribution channel and marketing campaign with more variety, as well as developing network and partners within the group of manufacturers and marketing network.

Keywords : Community Enterprise, Mushroom Farming Group, Social Development,
Community Empowerment

Introduction

Due to the current fragility of the Thai economy, the empowerment of local communities is becoming increasingly vital. This can begin with the development of the grassroots economy to increase capacity and self-reliance, encouraging unity among, and strengthening, local organizations, achieving greater career security, and increasing incomes through the development of the community economy according to the Sufficiency Economy strategy.



In previous years, prior to the 1997 economic crisis, local products barely accessed larger markets. The crisis itself halted national economic development for a time. Thus, the concept of self-reliance and the importance of the grassroots economy as well as extensive community product development gained greater prominence (Community Organizations Development Institute, 2016). Government policy also supported and encouraged community career development by utilizing the available resources in order to increase productivity which would enhance the community economy until self-reliance became possible.

Community unity involves utilizing local wisdom and the available resources to generate income in order for the community's members to rely on themselves. Hence, the empowerment of community enterprises generates income for households and creates employment within the local community. This is a concept in which communities come together so that those members who participate in manufacturing can operate businesses 'through the utilization of local resources in order to create value (Petchprasert & Wongkul, 2002) Ultimately, local resources and cultures are integrated with manufacturing goods and services in a unique way which can be sold, generate income, and create job opportunities for community members.

Meanwhile, community empowerment is the process of the continuous enhancement of power relationships between people who collaborate within their society. Within the context of this research, community empowerment is a process whereby a group of people and communities use their own potential to generate progress in the form of increasingly developed and self-organized social enterprises, and move toward business success to ensure the future strength and sustainability of the group (Laverack, 2006).

For the aforementioned reasons, the researcher chose to study the approach of community development in terms of community empowerment, by investigating the case of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, located in the Khlong Thap Chan sub-district, Aranyaprathet district, in Sa Kaeo province. Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group offers compelling insights as a case study for other areas as concerns the community empowerment approach as it is a competent major mushroom and mushroom spawn producer formed by a large group of local villagers. The results of this study could benefit community enterprise development and create opportunities for interested parties as regards sustainable community entrepreneurship, while also developing products which could be further extended to the One Tambon One Product project.



Objectives

1. To study the current condition of Baan Beegrimm's Mushroom Farming Group, Aranyaprathet District, Sa Kaeo Province.
2. To study the problems and obstructions facing the administration of the community enterprise of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, Aranyaprathet district, Sa Kaeo province.
3. To seek an approach to develop the administration of community enterprise in Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, Aranyaprathet District, Sa Kaeo Province.

Literature Review

Community empowerment is defined as a process by which individuals achieve greater control over those forces that influence their lives on the community level. In so doing they further and enlarge their assets and attributes as well as enhance their capacities to acquire access, partners, networks and/or a voice, so as to achieve more control (Baum, 2008). Community empowerment is not merely the participation or engagement of communities, but also community ownership and action that specifically targets social and political change. Indeed, community empowerment involves the re-negotiation of power for greater control to be achieved. Specifically, at the core of community enterprise is the concept of community members uniting to help each other in entrepreneurial operations or business administration for the financial security of the community members (Parwez, 2017).

As concerns the details of the approach taken in community enterprise development, Seree Pongpit (2009) asserted that the development must be specific and suit the concept and goal while also contributing to the development of a self-dependent community economic system. It is not solely a project under the existing structure of society. Community enterprise development begins and operates at the community level, as families and the community are the units of production which generate real productivity in the economic system. Such enterprises can be managed independently according to the capabilities of the community organization. The community should receive the appropriate compensation. This way, the rights to production management and product development are returned to the community.

The community enterprise can be developed through connection with external organizations, as the community organization which owns the enterprise is still limited in terms



of management skill or capital, that partnering with an external organization could bring, with the community still able to decide and select its own partners. It is, therefore, not a decision to be made by external agencies or organizations which do not belong to the community.

According to Jentsantikul (2019), who studied the development of community enterprises in the lower central provinces in Region so as to enhance competitiveness in the ASEAN community, the community enterprise can be developed in the following ways: 1) human resource development, 2) access to capital and accounting system development, 3) marketing development through the channel of electronic media, 4) product development and product standard certification, and 5) community enterprise network development to increase competency. Therefore, in all types of community development the needs of consumers in different locations and with different consumer values should be studied.

In Kenaphoom's study (2015), The Approach for Developing the Effectiveness of the Small and Micro of Community Enterprise (SMCE) in Maha Sara Kham Province, the results revealed ways to improve the productivity of community enterprises involving: (1) a proactive strategy by developing production capacity, increasing the level of product standards towards national and international levels, expanding distribution channels, and developing business partners to promote product distribution; (2) a development strategy by enhancing the capacity of community enterprise management, support budget and human resources in community enterprise development, and creating systematic integration with related agencies in the promotion of community enterprises; and (3) an applied strategy by strengthening the community enterprise network, innovative research for product development, and coordination with government sector and private sector to ensure that the community enterprise is strong and self-sustaining.

Methodology

This research used the following qualitative research method:

1. Studying the related documents and research about the approach of community enterprise development for community empowerment.
2. Conducting a field survey on community enterprises at Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, Khlong Thap Chan sub-district, Aranyaprathet district, Sa Kaeo province, in order to study the manufacturing process, marketing, administration, socio-economic



conditions, the household society, and the local cultures related to the mushroom farming group.

3. In-depth interviews with the sample group, by designating the questions to cover content about community enterprise development for community empowerment.

Population and Informant Group

The population of this research included the president, members, and those related to the community enterprise of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, Khlong Thap Chan sub-District, Aranyaprathet District, Sa Kaeo Province. The informant group was selected using the judgmental sampling method, from the group of 6 persons who were related to the community enterprise development. Therefore, the informants group included the president of community enterprise, 3 members of the mushroom farming group community enterprise, and 2 persons related to the community enterprise development in Sa Kaeo Province.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data from the field survey includes recorded in memo from non-participatory observation and in-depth interview. The researcher analyzed the data using an approach which consisting of the following two elements: 1) Connecting the collected data according to the research framework and verifying the data through the triangulation approach which compares data collected from various sources. 2) Interpreting and drawing descriptive conclusions from both tangible and abstract information. This involved content analysis and data interpretation, in order to explain the meaning and significance of the findings, so as to draw research conclusions.

Research Framework

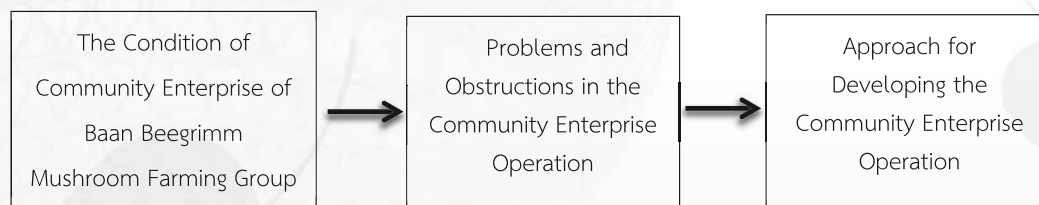


Figure 1 Research Framework

Results

In this study – The Approach of Community Enterprise Development for Community Empowerment: Case Study of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, Khlong Thap Chan



sub-District, Aranyaprathet District, Sa Kaeo Province – the following details on the issues relating to the condition of the community enterprise, the problems and obstacles it faces, as well as the development approach were identified.

1. The Condition of the Community Enterprise of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, Khlong Thap Chan Sub-District, Aranyaprathet District, Sa Kaeo Province

Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group was established on the initiative of the villagers in Khlong Thap Chan sub-district, Aranyaprathet District, under the leadership of Khun Roonglawan Baokham. The group consisted of approximately 20 founding members, comprising mostly farmers who joined the group to start mushroom farming together and generate additional income. With changes in the economic situation, the income derived from farming for each household often proved inadequate, and additional income could help increase the well-being of the villagers. Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group is registered as a community enterprise. They are the major manufacturer of mushroom spawn and mushrooms within their area. Their main products are Khon and Sajor-caju mushrooms. The group received financial aid as well as equipment for mushroom spawn production by way of government grant. They also received further support in other areas such as farmstead construction, sterile room, and labor employment within the area of Baan Beegrimm. This has all resulted in additional income for the local villagers to that gained from farming. Apart from the mushroom farming in Baan Beegrimm, the village also includes other production groups in circular sewing, broom braiding, and salted egg making, among others.

Apart from being a producer of mushroom spawn and mushrooms for sale, Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group also develop products from their mushrooms, such as bottled mushroom drinks for health benefits, crispy rice cakes with mushroom, and mushroom chili paste. The mushroom processing was originally supported and developed by various organizations and the members of the mushroom farming group further developed and extended the know-how to create other mushroom products in order to generate additional income from the the excess mushrooms in some seasons. According to interviews with the members of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, they've started to experiment with mushroom processing in small quantities and developing products for further One Tambon One Product (OTOP) registration.

After conducting a SWOT analysis of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, the strengths of the group, the internal factors, included a strong and visionary leader, the



dedicated members, and high yields of mushrooms in each batch. However, the weaknesses included the mushroom product development, the sole manufacture of mushroom-related products, and the dependency of the mushroom price on market price, as well as uncertainty as regards processing and extension to OTOP products.

SWOT Analysis

S	W
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong leader with experiences, knowledge, and specialization - Dedicating members who participate in activities - Good level of productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manufacturing led the marketing - Manufacturing solely of single product, no variety - Products depend on the market and agent - Problem with distribution channel - Mushroom could be easily spoiled - Production is uncertain as it depends on the weather - The activities depend on the leader's direction
O	T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good environment, good agricultural productivity - Aranyaprathet District is close to the border, so there are more channels of trading and marketing - Being the community enterprise & OTOP entrepreneur would allow further supports in operation - The opening of special economic zone - Few competitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pollution from the collective garbage - The emergence of mushroom farming competitors in the local area. - The government's projects which attempted to develop. The area through the existing community enterprises. They would receive supports, but might have to conduct other activities outside the objectives instead of focusing on their sustainable product development.

TOWS Matrix Analysis

SO strategy	WO strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote leader of the enterprise to become a representative and seek support from government sector and entrepreneur network. - Promote local products regularly especially in border trade channel. - Highlight cooperation of the enterprise in cultivating and processing mushroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study the local market thoroughly to create a market - driven production and make a systematic production plan. - Expand new markets particularly through the special economic channel to increase the distribution channel. - Develop new generation leaders who have many skills and capacity to reach the modern market. - Find network to promote the production channel.
ST Strategy	WT Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members of the enterprise and villagers should make a complaint to the related agencies about waste management in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be cautious about toxic contamination from pollution in the community and find a new way of production that can control temperature at reasonable and affordable cost



TOWS Matrix Analysis	
ST Strategy	WT Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze competitor to prepare for competition in the future. It can be done by highlighting steady production and price. - The enterprise leaders should make a cooperation with competitors in form of network. - If the government projects are offered, the enterprise should select only a project that get along with its operations for accordance and benefit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The leader should concern with potential of the enterprise and invite comments from members in operating activities beyond the production target. - Study local market systematically to avoid competing with the nearby competitor. - Develop mushroom products alternatively by seeking support from the government agencies, therefore; the local agencies can know about the enterprise's operations and demands.

Figure 2 SWOT and TOWS Matrix Analysis of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, Khlong Thap Chan Sub-District, Aranyaprathet District, Sa Kaeo Province.

Nevertheless, there are interesting opportunities in terms of the external factors. As the location of Aranyaprathet District is close to the border, there is the potential for increasing distribution channels and markets. Also, as Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group is registering as a community enterprise and OTOP entrepreneur, they receive further support from both the government and private sector in their operation. Also, there is the external factor of there being few competitors in their business around the local area. However, threats to the group include the emergence of competitors from other mushroom farming groups, and the environmental problem in Khlong Thap Chan sub-District where the collective garbage is a source of pollution. This could impact agricultural productivity and the long-term environment of the area. Furthermore, there have been government projects attempting to develop the community area through existing community enterprises. The advantage is that the various groups of villagers receive support in their activities. However, this might involve other activities apart from the group's main objectives, which could disrupt their focus towards sustainable product development as they would have to follow the state's conditions in order to receive said support.

2. Problems and Obstructions in the Community Enterprise Operation

The information concerning the context and this research proved to be beneficial in the analysis of the problems in the operation of the community enterprises. The overall problems were identified as follows.



One of the most important problems was the lack of water for agriculture. There are 12 important natural water resources within Sa Kaeo Province, but the reservoir can only collect 376.705 million cubic meters, or 15% of the average amount of water. The area for irrigation consisted of just 10.4% of the agricultural area (Sa Kaeo Provincial Office, 2016), resulting in a scarcity of water for growing other plants after rice harvesting. There was also the problem of water quality for daily usage and agricultural use. These became problems in producing agricultural products that depend on the quantity and quality of water available in the area, which when not enough affects consistency in agricultural produce as well as productivity. This can happen for many reasons such as dry spells, the location of the agricultural area outside the irrigation area, and the low level of soil fertility. Also, most farmers are poor and so cannot afford the development or changes in the manufacturing system in order to increase productivity. According to the interviews with the members of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, apart from the problem of water quantity and quality, mushroom productivity could also be affected by temperature and the subsequent low amount of mushrooms or no mushrooms at all. As consistency in productivity is unreliable, product development from processed mushrooms by Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group cannot be continuous, as it depends on the quantities of mushrooms and willingness to buy products which might not be supplied regularly by the producer.

2.2 Labor Problem

Aranyaprathet in Sa Kaeo province is a town located next to the Thai-Cambodian border. It is an area for agriculture, trade, and manufacturing, as the basic facilities and infrastructure are fairly advanced compared to those of the neighboring country. Therefore, the demand for labor is high and wages are also higher than in Cambodia, resulting in foreign laborers being attracted to seek employment within the province. Also, previous local laborers in Sa Kaeo Province have migrated to other provinces and therefore employers must depend on foreign labor instead. Hence, there is a problem with the increase of foreign laborers. Yet despite the entrepreneurs in Sa Kaeo Province having the choice of hiring foreign laborers in the manufacture their products or services, according to interviews with government officers from the provincial labor department, most foreign laborers are contacted to work in the industrial and commercial sectors rather than the agricultural sector. Most laborers required the same wages as Thai laborers, and are not willing to work in the agricultural sector where the payment rate is irregular, or in a small manufacturing sector which does not constantly



and consistently hire labor. These sectors face problems when both Thai and foreign laborers are not willing to work with them. Although there are almost 20 members in Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, only 5-6 members actually grow mushrooms as it requires partial funding, and time during the early morning for mushroom harvesting and delivery for sale. Also, the manufacture of mushroom-related products depends on a large quantity of laborers. Therefore, the producers cannot afford to use laborers to process new products. Hiring foreign laborers to help in the production only increases production costs.

2.3 Problem of Product Processing

In general, harvesting of agricultural products for sale is carried out the same time as processing. The result is market excess. Also, mushrooms are an upstream produce with a fairly short life-period and which therefore need to be preserved appropriately. When upstream mushroom quantity exceeds marked demand, preservation is not adequate for entrepreneurs and processing into midstream products is therefore needed. These increases both the value and variety of mushroom products for the group through a process of transforming the shape and characteristics of products and also reducing the problem of rotten produce. According to the observations and interviews with the entrepreneurs in Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group, production of mushroom spawn and fresh mushrooms were more profitable than mushroom processing. In general, they manufacture at least 5,000 mushroom spawns per batch, which could be sold as fresh mushrooms and mushroom spawn. Upstream mushrooms yield greater profit, while mushroom spawn generates more cash per batch. Traders come and buy upstream mushrooms directly from the farm and further sell them to the market. So, it's clear that processing is the best choice when there are mushrooms remaining left over from sale. Processing into midstream products with longer shelf-lives therefore has become a second priority for the entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, they plan to manufacture more processed mushroom products as they have gained the know-how from the support of educational organizations. They have also experimented with processing in various ways, and now possess the know-how to adjust or develop products more consistent in taste and with attractive packaging in order to be registered as OTOP products.

2.4 Problems and Obstacles for Entrepreneurs in Standardization

The process of registering for product standardization for the community enterprises was a major obstacle for the entrepreneurs. For example, registration with the Thai FDA Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires a registration number for any processed food products



packaging. The registration process was deemed complicated for the entrepreneurs, as they must pass the approval of location and manufacturing building, equipment, machinery, all equipment related to production, and the quality control process (Bureau of Food, FDA, n.d.). Furthermore, there was the Community Product Standard (CPS) to be met. This is a regulation on quality intended to create credibility, acceptance, and consumer confidence in buying the products, which would result in the raising of community product standards and sustainable development. Nevertheless, registration for product standards is necessary for entrepreneurs who wish to adjust themselves and improve food and product quality according to international standards. This increases product quality acceptance by consumers of both internal and foreign markets, where guarantees from many institutions are required. Also, from the perspective of entrepreneurs, these standard approval marks increase their own standardized competency. Through the guarantee of product quality, the product is more credible and can gain marketing advantages. From the consumer's perspective, these marks give them confidence in their choices for consumption, especially when the food or products are guaranteed by community or environmental organizations.

2.5 Problem of Distribution Channel

Most products by Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group are usually bought by traders for resale. There are no direct channels to markets where the entrepreneurs can sell directly to the consumer. The group still uses a traditional marketing and sales strategy through traders who buy directly from them. In addition, the mushroom products and mushroom spawn from the entrepreneurs' group is not so well-known and is unable to access a wider group of consumers. Nevertheless, after the entrepreneurs of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group attended training and visits from government organizations and the university, they increased their market opportunities and capacity for product development as well as distribution channels. For example, the president of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group identified the market opportunity of producing food and snacks from mushroom produce to cater for various organizations, such as snacks for meetings of the Sub-district Administrative Organization. There were also opportunities to process mushrooms into other types of snacks to generate higher income and raise awareness of the group's products.

As Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group also attempted to develop mushroom products as OTOP products, the planning of distribution channels and marketing has proven an important issue for the entrepreneurs, as consumers of traditional mushrooms might differ



from those of processed mushroom products. A marketing strategy focusing on the local area might not be enough, as the broader market must be considered, such as the OTOP market or health product market, etc. Nevertheless, according to the interviews with the commercial store entrepreneurs who bought the products for sale in Sa Kaeo province, most agricultural product entrepreneurs in Sa Kaeo Province still lack broader marketing knowledge and skills. There are few innovative products or services, with most on sale being imitations of existing products.

3. Approach to Developing Community Enterprise Operations

3.1 Approach to Product Development

For community enterprises, there should be systematic production planning, with the collection of productivity data in each batch within their group, such as for the amount of mushroom spawn, the amount of produce, and the type of produce in each batch. These data should be analysed together in the production plan, such as the production calendar and marketing plan. Additionally, the entrepreneurs should plan product development by finding locally available resources and enhancing existing products, while also developing new products and adjusting processes to increase productivity, in order to develop sustainable value addition through creative product development.

The group of entrepreneurs should also plan a long-term policy of product development, and develop the product brand as well as packaging in order to ensure reliable quality and possible market extension towards a larger market in the future.

- Safe Agricultural Product Development

In modern times, consumers are adjusting their behavior in buying more environmental-friendly products. Another important changing trend is that of health concerns, as the number of senior citizens is increasing and the way of life is changing towards city life. This could prove an opportunity to develop new products to suit the needs of the niche group. Furthermore, there is pressure from increasing agricultural product prices, which support the development towards safer agriculture. Safe agriculture means a system of agriculture which yields non-toxic produce without any chemicals or metal contamination which has adverse effects upon consumers. Furthermore, the production system must be safe for the environment and the farmers, especially for agricultural product food such as mushroom, as farming of various plants in Sa Kaeo Province which can be processed. This corresponds to the study by Nattanan Thitiyapramote (2011), which found that to enhance efficiency,



entrepreneurs must be self-reliant and be able to produce main ingredients that are toxin-free. This could in turn prove an additional strength for the entrepreneurs. Therefore, Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group still has the opportunity to create a new channel of safe agricultural products by growing various types of mushroom for further development.

- Value-Added Development of Agriculture Products

Prices of agriculture products are adjusted for the value-added for consumption using modern technology and equipment to increase the productivity within a lesser area and labor. Standardization has been encouraged in all dimensions including breeding, place, process, production, harvest, packaging, research, and marketing, in order to process them into consumer products.

In the in-depth interviews about the value-added product development approach of the entrepreneurs, a community entrepreneur from Mueng Sa Kaeo producing incense provided the example of value addition from her own experience. For example, a multi-colour incense stick was developed from the regular brown incense stick. The price was subsequently increased from 35 baht per kilogram to 350 baht per kilogram, and the product was well-received. The colours, fragrances, image, and a prayer booklet were also added. Additionally, product development was conducted into incense and fragrance which could be used daily and this became a 5-star OTOP product. So, it was clear that there had been an attempt to improve product variety to create more choice for consumers.

For the processed mushroom development, the entrepreneurs of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group tried to find solutions for preserving the mushrooms, which spoil easily due to high water content. They processed fresh mushrooms into a bottled Sajor-caju mushroom drink, crispy rice with mushroom, mushroom chili paste, and mushroom vermicelli mixed with fish soup. The processing of mushrooms into other products has been a recent initiative following training from an academic institute's lecturers. The entrepreneurs also attempted to develop their own products by adding other ingredients. However, local consumers did not buy the product as the price was higher than the regular product. There was also the labor problem. Nevertheless, product development by processing the fresh produce adding choice for the consumer and the entrepreneurs could help them enter broader and newer markets by themselves.

3.2 Approach to Labor problem



A sustainable solution for the lack of labor must focus on increasing production efficiency in order to reduce manufacturing cost. Local labor should be hired within the area and the neighboring area of the group, and turn-key contracts might sometimes be needed. At the same time, a new generation of quality labor should be sought out to enter the agricultural industry so as to prepare for the future, as this group can learn fast and adjust well to modern technology. Moreover, investment in small innovation or equipment which is practical and suitable for the group's operation might help solve the labor problem over the long term. Furthermore, there should be a systematic employment system. In the future, entrepreneurs might allocate profits from operations for the basic welfare of workers, such as pensions or education funds for children (Kammungkhun, 2015), which will motivate working with the group and act as a model of human resource management of small community enterprise which will in turn lead to sustainability in an agricultural career.

3.3 Approach for Marketing Channel Operation

According to the in-depth interviews with the entrepreneurs of community product stores in Sa Kaeo province, the Sa Kaeo community entrepreneurs had usually used the distribution channel of the trade fair, with the trader gathering products from various groups and selling them at booths. The Red Cross Fair is also held within the province which does not place a limit on the stars of the product and is thus open to all levels of entrepreneurs including entrepreneurs from all communities in general to sell their products. Also, related organizations have offered support by organizing stores for rent in the coming Special Economic Zone of the Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand, where community entrepreneurs can sell their products. According to the interviews with the key informants concerning marketing problems, entrepreneurs should start some recording simple marketing data, such as the names of major clients for the group's products, the products in demand, the prices, and that such marketing information be used with a participatory marketing plan, as the entrepreneurs should conduct situation analysis in order to better develop their product marketing.

Apart from the direct distribution channel from the entrepreneurs or selling through the trader, the online market channel is also becoming increasingly important nowadays, as modern consumers tend to buy from these channels, such as the online retailers Lazada, Shopee. Entrepreneurs could sell their products through these websites. The Community Development Department, Ministry of Interior has also encouraged the entrepreneurs to use



more online marketing, by providing training on how to sell their products through these specific channels. Small and medium-sized enterprises should further prioritise the e-commerce distribution channel in order to enter the national market as well as take the opportunity to enter the foreign market and generate more income (Moertini, 2012).

Due to the convenience in logistics and commercial liberalization, large private entrepreneurs and foreign products compete with the local products or those manufactured by the small and medium enterprises in the country. This corresponds to the study of Rattiya Chunsen (Chunsen, 2005), which found that the government did not provide support in terms of finding distribution channels to specific destinations and increasing the distribution channels to reach consumers as well as systematically focusing on target groups. With the founding of community product stores in each province, the capacity of the person who operates the project should be considered with a focus on product clusters that can be developed towards exporting.

3.4 Approach to the Development of Network and Allies

In order to support a community enterprise, there must be a network of similar enterprises for information exchange, career paths, sourcing of raw material and production factors, and mutual support in the form of horizontal networks. Furthermore, the community enterprise's professional commercial network should be encouraged to allow the progress of business through the vertical networks, which could extend commercial and marketing opportunities as well as forging relationships with external individuals and parties in the forms of supply chains. A supply chain would link the various organizations in the production chain in reaching the traders and consumers. This is considered cluster competitiveness. This is in agreement with Chaichon, Tatiyaporn and Klinsoan (2005) who found that a sustainable business should coordinate with other networks, with the support and consultation from government organizations, the private sector, and the education sector, helping create knowledge exchange. The government should provide training for entrepreneurs of a level below the standard through the District Community Development Offices to inspire and increase their knowledge in product development. Also, most entrepreneurs were willing to attend the training. Furthermore, the network of education institutions could act as important support for the community enterprises' product development. For example, the network which provides assistance in the Sa Kaeo's product development includes Burapha University,



Srinakharinwirot University, and the local community college, which provide various know-how such as nutritional value testing and product processing.

3.5 The Role of Local Government Organization

The organization directly related to the community enterprise registration is the Provincial Agricultural Extension which is also the secretary of the Provincial Community Enterprise Extension Committee. The various organizations should be connected in providing systematic support for the community enterprises, and the related government organizations should monitor the progress and evaluate the support, as well as integrate the existing data for further planning of support. The Provincial Agricultural Extension Office in particular has the role of ensuring the community enterprises' objectives and activities correspond to the role and mission of the Department of Agricultural Extension, specifically as regards agricultural products related to processed plants including food, craft, and manufacturing factors, among others. It oversees this by encouraging the groups to register as community enterprises. The government organization should find an approach to solve problems for entrepreneurs who lack the knowledge of product development, packaging, and brand management through serious measures and support such as training, field trips, or allowing the entrepreneurs to gain experience from real-life situations. Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group has the capacity to be the model community enterprise of a mushroom farming group. Therefore, related government organizations should provide support and assistance to the model community enterprise as it could itself act as an educational resource for emerging community enterprises in other areas.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this research, the findings from this study revealed the condition of Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group. It was found that the strength of the group is the commitment of their members. This concurs with the perspective of Department of Community Development (2017), that good community organization management must include the group, committees, rules, funding, and activities. Moreover, Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group displays several strong management aspects of human resources, budgets, materials and equipment, good governance, and inclusive benefit allocation. The leadership of Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group is also strong and visionary in pushing the operations of the group and finding creative approaches to promote product processing in new ways. These factors are similar to the



findings in the work of Wronka (2013) who stated that a factor for the success of a social enterprise or community business must include leadership which can largely reinforce the success of the group.

At the same time, one important problem of Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group is the inconsistency in the yields of fresh mushroom produce, which can be harvested in large amounts each time but not controlled according to the amount of water and the temperature. As a result, there is a lack of continuity in creating and supplying products from processed mushroom. Likewise, Moonsri (2009) addressed the problems and solutions for a Phetchabun community enterprise and found that the lack of continuity in product development originated with the lack of raw material. This problem can affect both the credibility of the producer and future product development. Additionally, Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group also faces an inadequate labor problem limiting their capacity to develop new products. This problem is similar to that in the study by Janthawongsri (2004) about the success factors for community enterprises in Kantaravichai in Mahasarakham province. Janthawongsri asserted that adequate labor is one factor which contributes to the success of a community enterprise, as labor costs will be lower than a community enterprise without their own labor resource and which depends on hiring labor from other areas which demand higher wages and might be harder to negotiate than with local labor. Another important problem is that regarding marketing and sales. During the time of this study, Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group still follow the traditional channel of using traders. Therefore, their mushroom products and mushroom spawn might not achieve the greater recognition that comes from having access to a wider group of consumers. The processed mushroom still lacks any specific market and the online market has not been accessed. These problems concur with the findings of Jentsantikul (2019) on the development of community enterprises within the lower-central region to increase competency in ASEAN. Jentsantikul found that most community enterprises aim at the domestic market and produce the ordered amount. Most consumers are not aware of the products. Furthermore, in order to access a wider range of customers, a community enterprise should increase their digital channels as regards public relations, promotions, and communication with their customers.

Recommendation



The suggestions from SWOT and TOWS matrix provide strategies for advancement, one being that Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group should emphasize the uniqueness of its community enterprise cooperation in farming and processing mushroom products. And there should be regular marketing of local products for exporting across borders. The group leader group should be encouraged to represent the group and seek support from the government sector and entrepreneurs' network. Regarding strategies to overcome weaknesses, entrepreneurs should study the local market in order to create a systemic market-led system for production and production planning. Also, the enterprise should enter new markets, especially the special economic channel, in order to increase distribution channels. Furthermore, there should be the development of a new generation of leaders with various skills and increase in potential to enter modern markets. Finally, the enterprise should seek a network which supports the production channel. Regarding the strategies to avoid threats, group members and local villagers should find a way to complain to the related agencies regarding garbage management. They should also study competitors in the market and prepare for future competition by emphasizing the group's strength in production and price consistency. In addition, the group's leader might cooperate with competitors in the form of an entrepreneurs' network. Furthermore, should there be any government projects which seek cooperation, the group should selectively participate with a project that best serves the operation of a community enterprise. Regarding the strategies to avoid and overcome problems, Baan Beegrimm Mushroom Farming Group should be careful of local toxic contamination and seek a concept of production that can control the temperature at an affordable cost. The group should also develop products from mushrooms by applying for support from local government agencies, who should be aware of the operation and the support requirements of the group. Lastly, the leader should consider the potential of the group and ask for members' opinions before conducting any activities outside of the group's production objectives.

As for the recommendations for the approach of community enterprise development, entrepreneurs should plan for product development, in such aspects as safe agricultural product, value-added agriculture product through processing for longer shelf-life, using modern know-how and innovation in the processing, and packaging design.

Additionally, the entrepreneurs should seek to develop the marketing strategy by paying attention to expanding the distribution channels which reach the consumers directly,



and there should be simple records kept of marketing information, such as the major markets of the products, products in demand, and prices. Also, such records of marketing information kept by the entrepreneurs should be used in a participatory marketing plan. The entrepreneurs should analyze the situation, which will in turn lead to clearer marketing development for their products. Furthermore, the online market has become increasingly important as a result of the modern customer and their consumption behavior.

Networking and partnership building are also another factor to be considered, as it encourages the business's sustainability through the coordination with an external network: with assistance and support from government organizations, the private business sector, and the education sector. This would encourage knowledge exchange for entrepreneurs at a below-par level, to improve their know-how in product development and inspire them to develop the business.

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