

Draft Proposed Strategies
Wellbeing of Rice Farmers: Strengthening Networks of Farmer Organizations

Vision: "Strong, self-reliant farmers with a good quality of life"

Target

For rice farmers to have security in life in line with the principle of Sufficiency Economy, to be able to manage production and value-add their produce, to increase their income in an effective and comprehensive manner using traditional wisdom in conjunction with a body of new knowledge, to reduce chemical use for better health, greater care for the ecosystem in the rice field, and environmental conservation, to have adaptation skills and be informed about the global change, to create and develop a new generation of farmers, and to strengthen farmer organization networks in a continuous and sustainable manner.

Strategic issues

There are five strategic issues:

1. Strategy on recovery from a crisis
2. Strategy on wisdom restoration and self-management
3. Strategy on disease reduction
4. Strategy on additional income generation
5. Strategy for driving forward rice farmer wellbeing

1. Strategic issue on recovery from a crisis by the government sector (focusing on poor farmers) with the following Strategies and action guidelines:

Strategy 1: Appropriate prevention and recovery from a crisis with the following action guidelines:

1) Restructure farmer debts, whether formal or informal, and debts arising from the government policy, while for the latter debt the government sector should have appropriate responsible recovery measures,

2) Provide the cooperative system with a greater flow of funding interest-free or at a low interest rate enabling to keep the amount of storage of rice paddy from farmer members and have it processed for better pricing, an action originally known as "the cooperative project to link credits for greater productivity and rice market service",

3) Provide farmer protection and care against possible impacts from the government order and policy on their farmland,

4) Provide an insurance system against agricultural risks from production and export,

5) Put in place measures to stabilize rice prices in such forms as a rice stockpile system and fund to maintain price stability.

Strategy 2: Promotion and support of problem solving in the face of crisis with the following action guidelines:

- 1) Provide financial support for such production factors as rice strains, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and fuel supply,
- 2) Control rice field rent and prices of important production factors to a fair and appropriate level,
- 3) Shoulder the difference between the paddy price sold by farmers and what it should have been to cover the cost and bring an appropriate profit margin,
- 4) Encourage farmers to grow other crops during the off-season or create local supplementary works or employments for additional income besides rice farming,
- 5) Campaign to promote consumption of Thai rice.

2. Strategic issue on wisdom restoration and self-management with the following strategies and action guidelines:

Strategy 1: Protection of farming career with the following action guidelines:

- 1) Amend outdated, problematic or inappropriate laws, rules and regulations, and standards on rice (e.g. laws on land rent and rice trade) in accordance with the modern practice and situation conducive to sustainable development and problem-solving of rice issues,
- 2) Pass important laws as soon as possible, e.g. Rice and Farmers Act,
- 3) Establish Rice and Farmer Fund (to support R&D on rice strain development and rice processing development/rice production/rice processing and value addition/rice market management/stabilization of rice prices) with the budgetary support from the government sector and additional contributions from the private sector (through tax incentive measures and imposition of duties on imported chemical pesticides that are hazardous to health and the environment),
- 4) Develop a master plan on rice and farmers with an area-based approach, together with measures to promote problem-solving of rice and farmer issues on a sustainable basis, specifying such details as what to do, how, who by, and which responsible agencies,
- 5) Put in place a rice institute responsible for promoting and supporting rice production in all aspects ranging from production to marketing, with representatives of farmer organizations as co-leaders in the work,
- 6) Pass laws on protection of agricultural areas/ first-time ownership of land deeds to protect suitable areas for rice growing and allocate land to landless farmers or those with too small a rice field to earn an adequate living,
- 7) Control and supervise contract farming to ensure that the practice is fair to farmers and the other signatory,
- 8) Protect rice strains for Thai farmers,
- 9) Create torch bearers of the farming profession (a new generation of farmers), instill the right value and worldview in young people and students, encouraging them to play a part in rice and rice growing issues, e.g. acting as rice volunteers and farmers, to participate in activities/projects relating to rice and farmers, e.g. volunteer development camp programs, "rice farmers during the holiday" programs, and rice and farmer school programs,
- 10) Support, develop and upgrade current farmers to be smart and professional farmers,
- 11) Promote the savings system for security purposes and support the farmer welfare system (by passing a law on rice farmer welfare fund),

Strategy 2: Strengthening of farmer organizations in all aspects in a continuous manner with the following action guidelines:

1) Promote, support and develop (existing and new) farmer groups/organizations so that they "are able to manage the whole spectrum of rice issues (upstream, midstream, and downstream) by themselves efficiently and effectively, rely on themselves on a sustainable long-term basis, and enjoy as good a quality of life as other groups of the population in society,

2) Provide training and education (through such mechanisms as Farmer Development Institute, local farmer clinics/schools or through the Rice Department's programs on transfer of rice production technology to farmers, especially those organized in provinces known for rice production hubs) to enhance farmers' ability to manage various aspects of rice production, including marketing, and raise their quality of life as professional, intelligent and smart farmers.

3) Re-align the farmers' conceptual framework so that they are able to keep up with the changing situation, paying attention to production of good-quality rice safe for consumption, e.g. organic rice and nutritious Osot rice,

4) Campaign to promote a greater sense of belonging in the farmers to care for their own groups/ organizations, community, society and locality and support one another through such mechanisms as consultative forums between farmers, merchants of agricultural supplies, rice mills, processing plants, rice traders and consumers in the locality to share opinions, analyze, coordinate, connect and integrate their demands, as well as collectively managing themselves,

5) Promote the establishment of mechanism networks linking cooperation between various farmer organizations so that they are on the same line based on the participatory brainstorming approach from all organizations, raise the farmer level of negotiation, and increase their capacity in national policy formulation, leading to concrete action and conducive to the desired development goals,

6) Reform the credit system of financial institutes to facilitate farmer access to funding sources, support the availability of funding interest-free or at a low interest rate for farmer groups/ organizations to procure/ improve production infrastructure, processing and marketing (e.g. water sources in rice fields, barns, silos, rice mills, and processing plants) and to use as working capital for the collection of rice produce, processing and marketing. These farmer groups/ organizations are expected to participate by making financial contributions or acting as subcontractors to manage and maintain such programs, while the extent of the government sector's contribution will vary depending on the level of the farmer's contribution or participation.

7) Promote and support funding accumulation of the farmer community to serve as farmer community bank, managed by the community for the community.

Strategy 3: Management and transfer of knowledge in all aspects to farmers with the following action guidelines:

1) Put in place an agency to act as the center for information collection and dissemination, especially on the principle of Sufficiency Economy, marketing principles, guidelines for production cost reduction, guidelines for increased productivity, guidelines for using appropriate agricultural technology, and traditional wisdom and knowledge, while the action should involve integrating the cooperation of various agencies concerned such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Ministry of Commerce, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

2) Develop the capacity of personnel or leaders, at upstream, midstream, and downstream, to ensure that they are ready to manage information effectively, especially for the new generation of leaders,

3) Put in place a system of managing and presenting various kinds of information which farmers can easily access and understand,

4) Increase channels through which information can reach farmers more diversely and speedily, e.g. making available radio/ television stations specifically for farmers and promoting line groups designed to pass on information to each farmer group accordingly. For all this, efforts should be made for agencies concerned to meet in brainstorming sessions, with NBTC, Department of Public Relations, and Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives acting as lead agencies.

5) Disseminate farmer information of every province to the public in an efficient manner as a means of publicity and exchange/ transfer of information between the farmers.

Strategy 4: Campaign to create the value of being a farmer as a principle of life and promote wellbeing as widely as possible, with the following action guidelines:

1) Promote and support the creation of the value of being a farmer consisting of the following elements:

(1) Having an ideal of life and pride in the dignity of being a farmer

(2) Having faith in self-reliance

(3) Having an awareness, loyalty and a sense of belonging to one's group/organization

(4) Having faith in the application of tradition, local wisdom, principle of Sufficiency Economy, and New Theory Agriculture to one's way of life and farming

(5) Having responsibility for self, family, community, society and the country

(6) Having determination and interest in self-development, livelihood, and care for one's health on a regular basis

(7) Strictly following the manuals and directions of the use of chemicals, hormone drugs, pesticides and herbicides.

2) Create incentive measures to follow the value of being a farmer so that it is practiced widely.

3. Strategic issue on disease reduction

Strategy 1: Development of knowledge, re-adjustment of attitude and potential expansion of organic rice in all aspects with the following action guidelines:

1) Develop knowledge and re-adjust attitude: The attitude re-adjustment includes such components as creation of a new conceptual framework, concept of ecosystem in the rice field, not burning hay, use of natural material and herbs instead of chemicals, development of rice strains for annual and off-season rice growing by oneself (selection, mixing, storage, and growth testing), soil improvement, soil maintenance, and soil ecosystem (compost, manure, and dry/wet microorganisms), and hazards from agricultural chemicals.

2) The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Science, and Ministry of Education to collect information and disseminate traditional and modern knowledge together with other branches of knowledge in an appropriate manner, e.g. safe agricultural practice, Thai traditional medicine, healthcare, and science, and to consider adjusting the learning/ teaching system in education

institutes by including a curriculum on rice and farmers so as to raise awareness of children and youth, as well as developing other sources of knowledge and communication channels for transfer of technology for farmers, such as mobile farmer clinics/schools (locally situated and easy to get access to), village public communication system.

Strategy 2: Development of the competitive capability of the organic rice system through comprehensive and intensive incentive measures with the following action guidelines:

1) Driving forward mechanisms to create landownership security for small organic rice growing farmers by, among other things, improving laws, rules and regulations on landownership and other measures concerned,

2) Support the participation of small rice-growing farmers and operators intending to pursue the development of the organic rice system through such activities as development of action plans and establishment of committees consisting of various agencies and networks of partner organizations,

3) Focus on expanding the results to existing small organic rice growers, for example, by providing more than 50% support to such groups out of the farmer population targeted for support,

4) Apply the marketing concept to the production of quality rice through the creation of various rice stories to enable the consumers to see the difference between two kinds of rice growing, one from the ordinary rice growing method and the other from the quality rice growing process, while using the standards of productivity and quality as the criteria for setting selling prices,

5) Providing budgetary support to small rice farmers in the development of organic rice through activities designed to promote internal control and certification to the international standard,

6) Support organic farmers, processors, distributors and exporters to get access to various funding sources at a special low interest rate of not more than 3% per annum,

7) Develop the capability of all personnel concerned through special tailor-made programs,

8) Encourage processors, distributors and exporters to publicize and promote the sale of produce,

9) Promote the policy of one village/one household to engage in safe/organic rice production, while organizing organic market fairs on a regular basis and issuing product certification,

10) Encourage every supermarket to have chemical-free rice/ organic fruit and vegetable for sale constituting not less than 10% of the agricultural goods.

Strategy 3: Development of capacity in the surveillance and control of disease and health hazards from rice occupation, especially from chemicals and pesticides, through various mechanisms available in the health and agricultural systems, with the following action guidelines:

1) The Ministry of Public Health and National Health Security Office to support the creation and development of farmer health-specific database by putting in place local agencies to be responsible for the purpose and to be inter-connected throughout the country,

2) Offices of Disease Prevention and Control (ODPC) and provincial health offices (PHO) to promote and support studies on physical, biological, chemical and

ergonomic impacts and risk factors of the use of chemicals and pesticides in farmers at least one study a year,

3) Offices of Disease Prevention and Control (ODPC) and provincial health offices (PHO) to support and develop the capability of the networks engaged in surveillance, protection and control of diseases and health hazards from chemicals and pesticides in the farming sector. For this end primary healthcare units will do clinical work for farmer health, develop the capability of their workers, and come up with ways and means to do pesticide exposure assessment to the required standard. For 2015 the work will cover 20% of the health-promoting hospitals at the sub-district level in every province with a 10% growth in each year that follows.

4) Provincial agricultural offices and provincial health offices to campaign disseminating the knowledge about the dangers of chemicals and pesticides as widely as possible and how to prevent them, using a proactive strategy with mobile units, and creating measures to ensure that the private sector engaged in chemical and pesticide businesses show social responsibility and strictly comply with the laws,

5) Provincial agricultural offices to support the expansion and development of the capability of surveillance of disasters and rice pests to be carried out by centers responsible for transfer of agricultural technology at the sub-district level as widely as possible.

4. Strategic issue on additional income generation with the following Strategies and action guidelines:

Strategy 1: Promotion of the capability of farmers and farmer organizations to manage themselves in all aspects ranging from rice production, value addition, and marketing with the following action guidelines:

1) Promote and support the capability of farmers and farmer organizations to manage themselves at the local level concerning **rice production management** (upstream) by:

(1) Giving technical advice on production, reduction of production costs, increased productivity per rai¹, and appropriate effective rice field management together with model demonstration rice plots serving as sources of learning for farmers and promotion of use of technology and rice strains appropriate to the locality,

(2) Providing information support for rice production planning, processing, and market management, as well as developing a correct unified information system on rice, farmers and other related issues, including basic information on rice and farmers, regulations, prohibitions, tastes, and types of market demand that help to boost rice production and market,

(3) Supporting investment and development of the irrigation system to ensure sufficient water for rice production, e.g. putting in place "Monkey Cheek" water reservoirs, digging ponds to keep water in rice fields, and diverting water from abundant water sources to less abundant ones,

(4) Holding meetings with the parties concerned (e.g. rice mills, traders, and consumers) to develop plans together on rice production, processing, and application of marketing knowledge to appropriate production management,

(5) Supporting farmer initiatives to set up groups that produce good-quality rice strains and groups that produce good quality rice,

¹ A unit of land area in Thailand which is equal to 1,600 sq.m.

(6) Campaigning to promote correct and appropriate use of such production factors as rice strains, fertilizers, pesticides,

(7) Promoting a collective use of machinery, tools, equipment, barns and drying areas,

(8) Supporting access to low-interest funding sources for members to borrow for investment purposes,

(9) Encouraging members to minimize production costs through appropriate use of environmentally friendly production methods,

(10) Supporting members' initiatives to develop water sources in their own rice fields,

(11) Supporting R&D on the development of rice strains capable of yielding high productivity and disease-resistant and those capable of growing in various terrains (e.g. strains that need little water suitable for dry land and those suitable for water-flooded areas), including those that meet specific customer requirements (e.g. strains with high nutritional values of protein and vitamins),

(12) Supporting the development of a weather-forecasting and early disaster warning system with greater precision.

2) Promote and support farmers and farmer organizations to be able to manage themselves at a local level concerning **rice value addition** (midstream) by:

(1) Putting in place local produce-collection points, planning appropriate intake of produce to prevent unnecessary long waits, and buy up rice paddy from farmers at a market price,

(2) Supporting the development of a comprehensive rice industry or rice industrial estate in which rice production, processing and marketing are fully integrated with a view to raising the level of production, processing and marketing and increasing the rice value and farmer income,

(3) Supporting farmer organizations to have barns, drying areas, moisture-reducing appliances, silos, millers, and collective milling, designed to improve rice quality, storage and processing,

(4) Improving the quality of paddy, e.g. by reducing moisture and removing adulterated substance,

(5) Supporting the processing of paddy into rice and other ready-made products for greater value addition,

(6) Supporting R&D on processing of rice into various ready-made products for product variety and value-added purposes.

3) Promote and support farmers and farmer organizations to be able to manage themselves at a local level concerning **rice market management** (downstream) by:

(1) Creating networks of cooperation between farmer groups/organizations, developing them into networks or clusters of producers and traders in a manner in which stronger groups lend assistance to weaker ones, as well as connecting them to the networks of those who need rice as raw material for their product production or rice distributors (e.g. processors, exporters, and sellers of rice packs), and modern trade (e.g. department stores, hypermarkets, supermarkets, and convenience stores),

(2) Developing niche markets, e.g. organic rice market,

(3) Creating brands for rice goods and products with local identity (one province, one model Project),

(4) Developing a direct-sale system connecting producers with consumers, designed to create a regular market, e.g. hospitals, prisons, military barracks, factories, and private business establishments,

- (5) Creating creative agricultural estates using public space as a place to sell good quality rice at a fair price,
- (6) Putting in place a central paddy market and a central rice auction market,
- (7) Putting in place systems for appropriate rice storage, management of rice stock and distribution of paddy, rice, and rice products,
- (8) Returning reasonable profits from sale after deducting expenses in paddy collection and marketing (with a price stability maintaining fund as a security against which farmers are given a selling price that covers the costs with a reasonable profit margin),

Strategy 2: Campaigning to promote the consumer awareness with the following action guidelines:

- 1) Campaign to promote farmers and consumers to have knowledge, understanding and awareness about producing and consuming "safe/organic rice" and develop a value of Thai rice consumption with a health-oriented marketing,
- 2) Disseminate information on agricultural chemicals hazardous to health and the environment as well as on their prevention and treatment after exposure to such health hazards,
- 3) Promote and support communication channels through radio and television for farmer groups/organizations and consumers to campaign to promote growing and consuming "safe/ organic rice" and provide relevant knowledge to farmers and consumers alike,
- 4) Consider ways to collect duties on agricultural chemicals and use them to establish a fund to provide protection for farmers and consumers with an independent organization to manage the fund possibly using the Thai Health Promotion Foundation as a model,
- 5) Support to enhance the effectiveness of the rice and rice product certification system to create confidence in consumers.

Strategy 3: Increased economic opportunity and access to social welfare for farmer households and use of net income as an indicator for assessment with the following action guidelines:

- 1) Promote the capability of farmers to enjoy additional income, non-monetary income, and savings,
- 2) Adopt the principle of Sufficiency Economy as the farmer way of life,
- 3) Develop a welfare system in various aspects to which the farmers can get access on an equitable basis,
- 4) Measure the achievements of action guidelines 1-3 by the figures of the net income of farmer households and use the findings as a feedback for further improvement.

5. Strategic issue on driving forward rice farmer wellbeing: to ensure that all the strategies are driven as one with synergy, consideration should be given to the management of mechanisms at three levels as follows:

1) Mechanism to coordinate driving forward action-oriented strategies:

The government to support the Federation of Thai Farmer Associations as a lead agency to coordinate the work between growers (farmers), processors (rice mills), sellers/exporters, supporters, consumers and government agencies to serve as the chain at national level responsible for allocating benefits to all parties concerned in a fair

manner based on love and unity, using the marketing principle before production, and entrusting the Federation of Thai Farmer Associations to monitor the work,

2) Mechanism to support driving the strategy at the provincial level:

2.1) Each provincial governor, together with the National Farmer Council at provincial level, to serve as the lead mechanism in driving forward the work at local level, with the participation of farmers and farmer organizations in setting policy and plans of production and other issues concerned, including the establishment of a joint committee consisting of the public, private and political sectors, and increasing the farmer representation ratio in various committees, sub-committees and working groups in a comprehensive manner, particularly ensuring the existing mechanisms to function more effectively and to submit the proposal to their higher authorities concerned at national level, e.g. the National Farmer Council, Ministry of Interior, and Cabinet, to be included in the national policy for implementation,

2.2) To improve the structure of existing local committees, e.g. at the provincial level, to improve the structure of the provincial joint public-private sectors consultative committee for solving economic problems (JPPCC) so that it should include the civil society or provincial farmer council,

3) Mechanism to support driving the strategy at the national level: To improve the structures of various existing national committees, e.g. Rice Policy and Management Committee (RPMC), to include representatives from the civil society sector (e.g. National Farmer Council, Federation of Thai Farmer Associations, Board of Trade, and Federation of Thai Industries) and to add the Rice Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, as assistant secretary, all this designed to set policy, work plans and measures on rice goods and their management in an integrated system, to increase their capabilities and effectiveness in a continuous manner, and to monitor and supervise the implementation of policy, measures and project already approved.