

Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Organic Farming

2-4 December 2013, Bangkok, Thailand

Reported by Juejan Tangtermthong



A Plenary session started with Andre Leu, President of IFOAM

The Asia-Pacific Regional Symposium on Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Organic Farming was held from 2-4 December in Bangkok, organized by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and FAO and co-organized by AFMA, APRACA and IFOAM Asia. The conference aimed to identify the different successful strategies adopted by organic farmer entrepreneurs. The presentations at the workshop

included cases from entrepreneurs, producers, NGOs and governments from around the world. The topic of Marketing was one of four topics, the others being Production, Finance and Education. There were 12 selected marketing presentations. Reports on Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) dominated the first day's Marketing session as an alternative system to third-party certification.

Different examples of promoting consumption of organic products were presented in the second Marketing session. These included agro-tourism, direct marketing, a community-supported agriculture (CSA) scheme, when a group of customers pays directly to a group of farmers in advance to get product later, and a school meal scheme. From the Republic of Korea, a story was presented concerning direct sales between farmers and schools that resulted in a government-supported establishment of 33 School Meal Support Centres nationwide by 2013. In 2014, Seoul

municipality plans to provide free organic school meals to all schools under its jurisdiction.

A field trip was organized on the second day to two organic farms in the west of Bangkok. The visits were to the Thai Organic Farm in Ratchaburi province and to the Sampran Riverside Hotel in Nakhon Pathom province, which operates a working organic farm and a weekend organic market. At the end of the day, participants learnt about plant protection techniques that are regularly used in organic agricultural systems, such as production of vermi-compost, herbal extract and beneficial insects and microorganisms.

On the third day, the Marketing session was dominated by discussions of branding and alternative certification systems, such as a collective trademark, which can improve market differentiation and be a marketing tool to promote competitiveness. Bob Quinn, the President of Kamut International, converted his 1,600 hectare wheat farm in Montana to 100% organic in 1989, gave listeners knowledge of how to protect and build value of a brand. For instance, the Kamut trademark guarantees that the product is non-GM and has a strict rule that food processor can claim their product as a Kamut product only if it contains greater than 50% of Kamut wheat.

Full papers of all presentations in this symposium will be combined with the previous event; "Symposium on Marketing and Finance of the Organic Supply Chain" organized by FAO, AFMA, APRACA and NACF in Seoul, Republic of Korea last year to be published in a book. We will inform you once it is ready late next year.

'Organic farming is not going backwards to farm as we did in the past, it is moving forward to a modern agriculture that combines tradition with innovation and science.' said by Andre Leu, President of IFOAM.



Learning on organic farming at Thai Organic Farm, Ratchaburi province



Participants at Sampran Riverside Hotel, Nakhon Pathom province