

**ATTENDANCE OF AND PROSPECTS FOR FEMALE  
STUDENTS WITH REGARD TO AGRICULTURAL  
COLLEGES IN THAILAND**

Report on a study tour



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**ABSTRACT**

**ATTENDANCE OF AND PROSPECTS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS WITH REGARD TO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES IN THAILAND; REPORT ON A STUDY TOUR**

Hoek, J.M. van den

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A description is given of the agricultural colleges in Thailand with special reference to the attendance of and prospects for female students. The report is based on information gathered during a study tour in 1990, and on relevant literature.

Education/Women/Agricultural colleges/Developing countries/Thailand

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## Preface

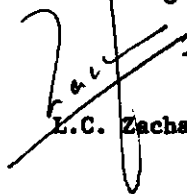
In September and October 1990, Joke van den Hoek (author) and Geke Brals of the Dutch Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI-DLO) participated in a study/training programme in Thailand. This study tour was organised by the Exchange Foundation in Bergen in co-operation with the Ministry of Education, Department of Vocational Education in Bangkok.

Ms. van den Hoek has seized the opportunity of this exchange to study the educational system and the position of women in rural areas in Thailand. In particular, her attention concerned the agricultural colleges, with special reference to the attendance of and the prospects for female students on those colleges.

The report highlights the fact that female attendance at agricultural colleges is relatively high, but that only graduates who return to the more advanced parental farms can put their knowledge into practice. The daughters of poor, traditional farmers are less fortunate in that respect and often go looking for off-farm labour.

The author wishes to thank her colleague, Ms. Brals, who has been helpful with gathering information during the tour, and the people in Thailand who were very willing to give the information.

The Managing-director,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L.C. Zachariasse', written over a horizontal line.

L.C. Zachariasse

The Hague, March 1992

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Aim of the tour

This report is the result of a study tour to Thailand in September and October 1990. The tour was organised by the Dutch Exchange Foundation in Bergen. This foundation arranges international exchange programmes for young agricultural people. The aim of the tour to Thailand was to get to know the Thai way of life. Many cultural and agricultural objects were visited for this purpose. The exchange took place in co-operation with the Ministry of Education, Department of Vocational Education in Bangkok. Accommodation was arranged at several agricultural colleges throughout the country.

Since several agricultural colleges were visited, the tour could be combined with a study on agricultural colleges in Thailand and the education of women. The theme of *women in developing countries* now has full attention of the Dutch Ministry of Development Co-operation. The subject of education is in line with one of the recommendations of a symposium in Ethiopia in 1989, organised by the Dutch Agricultural Economics Research Institute under auspices of the International Society for Horticultural Science. This was the first symposium on horticultural economics in developing countries. One of the subjects of this symposium was 'women in horticultural development'. The participants in Ethiopia referred to the important role of women's labour in horticulture for food production, both in the home garden for their own family's food supply as well as in commercial horticulture.

One of the recommendations of the symposium was to encourage home gardening and to improve the skills of women on cultivation of horticultural crops, post harvest, storage, marketing and processing. This, it was said, could be realised through better access to technology for women in developing countries. To that end, adaptations in society would be needed. A wider and better educational system might contribute to that.

This report deals with this theme. It describes the education, women receive on the agricultural colleges in Thailand.

The aim of this study is: to gain an insight into the educational system on agricultural colleges in Thailand and into the attendance of and prospects for female students.

## 1.2 Objectives

The study is geared towards the following objectives concerning the educational system on agricultural colleges in Thailand and the position of female students:

1. The description of the educational system in Thailand.

2. The description of the position of women in rural areas in Thailand.
3. The description of the agricultural colleges in Thailand.
  - a. the objectives of the colleges;
  - b. the curriculum structure;
  - c. the number of students and attendance.
4. The description of the position of female students on the agricultural colleges.
  - a. the number of female students on the colleges;
  - b. the prospects for female students in the future.

The topics of the next chapters are as follows. First, some aspects of Thailand such as geography, economy and agriculture are described (chapter 2). Chapter 3 deals with the educational system in Thailand and the position of women in rural areas (objective 1 and 2). Chapter 4 describes the agricultural colleges in Thailand and the position of female students (objective 3 and 4). The fifth chapter presents some conclusions and some final remarks are provided.

## 2. Aspects of Thailand

### 2.1 Introduction

Thailand, formerly known as Siam, is situated in the heart of mainland South-East Asia. Compared to other South-East Asian countries the standard of living is high. The country is bordered by Myanmar (Burma) to the west, by Laos and Cambodia to the east, and by Peninsular Malaysia to the south (figure 2.1). Its total area is 514.000 sq.km.

Thailand has a tropical climate, dominated by monsoons with high temperatures and humidity. Most regions have three seasons; the rainy season from June to October, the cool season from November to February and the hot season from March to May. Rainfall is heaviest in the south and lightest in the northeast.

The population is estimated to be about 55 million, of which more than 6 million people live in the capital Bangkok. The popu-

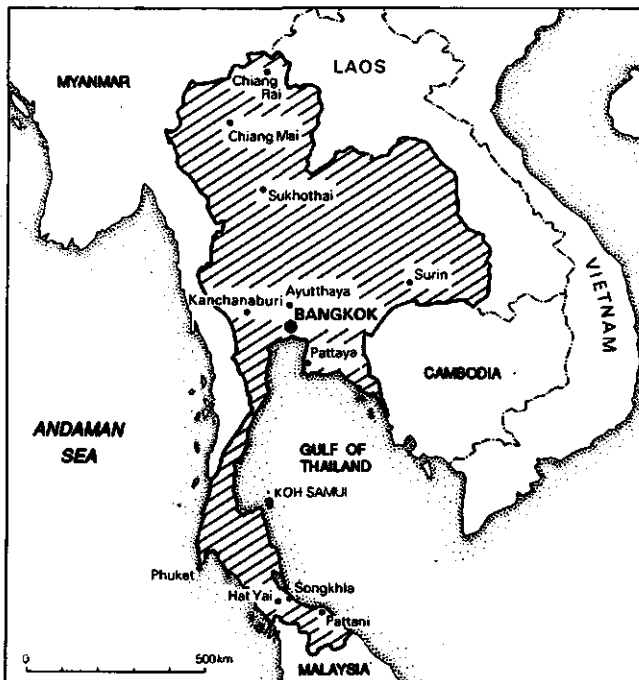


Figure 2.1 Map of Thailand

lation of Thailand is rather homogeneous. The largest minorities are the Chinese (12% of the population) and the Malay-speaking Muslims in the south (4%). Other small groups are the Khmer, the Mon and the Vietnamese. About twenty different hill-tribes live in the northern mountainous part of the country. The most important hill tribes are: Karen, Meo, Yao, Akha, Lisu and Laku.

The official language is Thai. More than 85% of the population speaks a dialect of Thai language and shares a common culture. Theravada Buddhism is the main religion of more than 90% of the population. Spirit worship and animism are also important in Thai religious life.

In 1932 Thailand changed from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. The country has predominantly been ruled by a succession of military governments and brief periods of civilian governments. At present, a military government is in charge.

The King is formally head of state but has little direct power. Nevertheless King Bhumibol Adulyadej is an important symbol of national identity and unity. He and his wife are widely respected by the entire population. For many years they have been travelling around the country supporting irrigation projects and similar schemes.

## 2.2 Geography

Thailand can be divided into four regions; the south, the central plains, the north and the north-east. The regions can be distinguished in a geographical and cultural sense. The two poorest regions are the north and the north-east.

The north-east is quite large. It covers about one-third of the total area of the country and includes one-third of the population. The region is flat and droughts are common. The most important reason for the poverty in this region is the poor quality of the agricultural land: since the average temperatures are high and the soil is very porous, the efficiency of the rainfall is very low.

In the north the situation is different from the north-east. This area covers about one quarter of the country's area. The north is very hilly and the more remote parts are populated by hill tribes. The agricultural lands are often situated on a hillside, thus making irrigation difficult. Poverty in villages in the north is mostly the result of shortage of arable land.

In the central plains the soil is alluvial and because of the flatness of this area, irrigation is less problematic. Presently there is an extensive and highly developed network of canals and irrigation projects. Farmers can grow rice in this area on a large scale.

The south is endowed with many natural resources and mainly covered by rain forest. The natural conditions for growing rubber-trees, coconut cultivation and fisheries are good.



## 2.3 Economy

Thailand is endowed with many natural resources such as tin, rubber, natural gas, timber and fisheries products. Agriculture and industry are important sectors of the economy. Especially because of the growing industrial and services sector, the Thai economy has grown rapidly in the past ten years. From 1982 to 1986 the economy grew by thirty per cent. In the last few years the average annual growth rate was about ten per cent.

Agriculture has been the most important economic activity in Thailand for many years. But in the last few years the industry has grown faster than the agricultural sector, so now the industry has become the most important economic activity. Major products of the industrial sector are clothes, shoes, toys, plastics, light machinery and electronics. The agro-industry for canning fish and fruit is also expanding very fast.

Thailand exports large quantities of food every year. The main export crop is rice. Other important crops for export and for domestic consumption are tapioca, corn, rubber, sugarcane, tobacco, fruits and vegetables. Some major non-agricultural exports are textiles, tin and electronics. The agricultural sector accounts for around one-third of the total export value. Agricultural imports are relatively small. Because of the growing industry, the export of industrial products is growing faster than the export of agricultural products. For instance, the export of textiles and clothes has recently become more important than the export of rice.

The total employed population in 1986 was, according to official statistics, almost 27 million people. The bulk of the labour force continues to make its living in the agricultural sector, where employment in 1986 was estimated at 17 million people. The labour absorption by the agricultural sector appears to have been slowing down in recent years and, despite a steady growth in industrial employment, the number of unemployed has been rising. According to official statistics, the number of unemployed in 1987 was about 800.000 but unofficial estimates put the figure considerably higher (EIU, 1989).

## 2.4 Agriculture

About forty per cent of the total land area is used for agricultural purposes. Thai agriculture is largely extensive in character. The increases in production are mainly a result of the steady expansion of the cultivated area. The irrigated area is expanding very slowly while new schemes are often unsuccessful, especially in areas outside the central plains. This inhibits the development of more intensive and more reliable production. In the last few years much land has been cleared which is not suitable for permanent cultivation, so serious problems of land

shortage and soil erosion are emerging, particularly in parts of the north and the northeast.

Rice is the main agricultural product. About 90% of the cultivated area is used for growing rice. This product is very important for the country's domestic food supply and for export. In the central plains, rice is grown on a rather large scale due to the many irrigation projects. Other important crops are cassava and maize for cattle feed. In the northern part of Thailand people grow tea, coffee and tobacco.

Vegetables such as cucumber, mungbeans, soybeans, cabbages, salad, tomatoes and onion are mostly grown in the north because of the cool climate in this part of the country. In the most northern part of Thailand people grow flowers of which the orchid is the most famous.

Fruits are grown all over the country. There are many kinds of fruit; such as pineapples, bananas, oranges, mango, mango-steen, rambutan, strawberries, pomelo, dureau and jackfruit. The government tries to develop the tropical fruit exports because the planting of fruit trees could compensate the increasing deforestation. Deforestation has become a problem because it reduces rainfall.

Besides the commercial large scale agricultural production, home gardening is much practised in Thailand for domestic food supply. Families in rural areas who have a piece of land often have such a family garden where they grow several spices such as lemon grass, ginger, chili, pepper and vegetables such as cucumber and beans. They also grow tree crops; mostly fruit or cashew-nut.

Like most other developing countries, the majority of the population lives in rural areas. Thailand has seen little drift from rural to urban areas. In 1965, 13% of the population lived in towns and cities. By 1985, that figure had only risen to 18% (The Economist, 1987). Still many Thai live in small agricultural communities practising the same farming techniques as their parents.

The industrial development in rural areas is far less than in urban areas like Bangkok. A good educational system is one of the means to advance the industrial development in rural areas (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 1989). In the next chapter the educational system will be described.

### 3. Education and position of women in rural areas

#### 3.1 The educational system

Education, training and research are important factors for a country's development. Most developing countries have a shortage of trained people and the universities and other teaching institutions stand in need of practical knowledge. In general there is a lack of suitably skilled manpower.

In the developing countries the proportion of people with no schooling (the common proxy for illiteracy in developing countries) has decreased in the last four decades. The absolute number of illiterates however, still increases due to the population growth. Illiteracy is most prevalent among poor people in rural areas.

In most developing countries the illiteracy rate of men is lower than the illiteracy rate of women. On each level of education more men than women participate. Many economic, social and cultural norms are detrimental to the education of girls, who are usually destined to become future mothers and are kept responsible for household activities (Stromquist, 1989).

In the past 25 years the developing countries have made some progress in a social and economic way. Particularly in Asia, the food supply has improved for millions of people; in some Asian countries the industrial development has taken off; the average length of life has increased and the illiteracy rate is decreasing.

In Thailand the illiteracy rate is low as compared to other Asian countries. The adult illiteracy rate had decreased to 12% in 1980, as compared to 50% in 1960. The rate for women is higher than for men. But compared to other Asian and Pacific countries the illiteracy rate of Thai women is very low (table 3.1). According to UNESCO estimates, the adult illiteracy rate in 1985 was about 9% (males 5.8% and females 12.2%). In the national Thai budget, education is a very important item, accounting for about fifteen per cent of the total.

In Asia and the Pacific only Japan has near universal literacy. In countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal the rates of illiteracy are still very high. The economic situation in these countries is not sufficient to supply for the basic educational needs like standard education facilities such as buildings, furniture and teaching materials. The costs of education for families, in particular where child labour is necessary for the survival of the family, operates as a major constraint to educational opportunity (Jaysweera, 1987).

**Table 3.1 Rate of illiteracy in Asian countries and the Pacific**

Country	Year	Rate of illiteracy (%)		
		Male	Female	Total
Afghanistan	1980	66.8	94.2	80.0
Bangladesh	1981	60.3	82.0	70.8
China	1982	19.2	45.3	31.9
India	1971	52.3	80.6	65.9
Indonesia	1980	22.5	42.3	32.7
Iran	1976	51.8	75.6	63.5
Rep. of Korea	1970	5.6	19.0	12.4
Malaysia	1970	30.9	53.2	42.0
Maldives	1977	17.5	17.7	17.6
Nepal	1981	68.3	90.8	79.4
Pakistan	1981	64.0	84.8	73.8
Philippines	1980	16.1	17.2	16.7
Singapore	1980	7.6	26.0	17.1
Sri Lanka	1981	9.2	18.8	13.9
Thailand	1980	7.7	16.0	12.0
Turkey	1980	16.8	46.6	31.2
Vietnam	1979	9.5	21.7	16.0

Source: Jayaweera, 1987.

The educational system in Thailand is influenced by the English and American system. All education is controlled by the state. The general system provides for education at three levels:

- a. primary education; first level;
- b. secondary education; second level;
- c. higher education; third level.

Pre-school education (nursery and kindergarten) precedes primary education and is not compulsory. Primary school starts at the age of around six and is free of charge. All children are required by law to attend primary school for a period of six years. The government now tries to prolong the compulsory period.

Secondary education aims at providing knowledge and skills to prepare pupils for a profession or to prepare them for further education. Secondary education is divided into two streams; the general stream and the vocational stream, each divided in three grades at lower and two or three grades at upper level. Secondary school is not compulsory.

The higher educational level consists of universities and other institutions of higher learning. The usual length for higher education is four years. Graduates from university get a bachelor degree. After two more years of study on a university students get their master degree. Two more years after master degree provides them with a PhD degree (same system as in the United States).

The primary school nearly reaches all children. The secondary school however, does not even reach half of the number of children, especially not in the remote rural areas and in urban slums. In 1985, 96% of primary and 30% of secondary school age children were unrolled in school, and about 5.7% were in universities or colleges. A significant proportion of the secondary school age children live in urban areas, particularly in the capital Bangkok. This bias is even more extreme for university applicants; three quarters are from Bangkok.

**Table 3.2 Percentage of Females in Total Enrolment**

Country	First Level		Second Level		Third Level	
	1975	1980	1975	1980	1975	1980
Afghanistan	15	18	11	20	14	15
Bangladesh	34	37	21	21	10	14
Burma	48	48	44	45	39	49
China	45	45	39	39	33	23
India	38	39	30	32	23	26
Indonesia	45	46	38	40	28	28
Iran	38	40	36	38	28	31
Japan	49	49	49	49	32	33
Rep. of Korea	48	49	41	45	27	24
Malaysia	48	49	44	47	29	39
Nepal	16	20	16	16	18	19
Pakistan	30	26	23	20	24	26
Philippines	51	49	49	53	55	53
Singapore	47	48	49	51	40	39
Sri Lanka	47	48	50	51	36	43
Thailand	47	48	44	47	40	43
Turkey	44	45	31	32	22	26
Vietnam	49	47	46	45	24	26

Source: Jayaweera, 1987.

The percentage of women in the total enrolment at different levels of education in Thailand is quite high as compared to some other countries in Asia and the Pacific (table 3.2). In 1980 the percentage of girls of the total enrolment at first level was 48%, at second level 47% and at third level 43%. In countries like Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan these percentages are less than 30. The specific social structures that exist between men and women in Thailand account for this difference with other Asian countries (Jayaweera, 1987). The position of women in Thailand is described in section 3.2.

## 4. Field experiences

### 4.1 Procedure

In September and October 1990, sixteen agricultural colleges were visited throughout the country (figure 4.1). Two or three days were spent at each college. During this period, accommodation was arranged at guesthouses on the compound of the college or at the private house of one of the teachers of the college. The private houses of the teachers were also built on the compound of the college.

The information was mostly obtained through conversations, often with people from the college itself, such as the director or assistant-director(s) and the teachers. Most of those teachers were teachers in the English language. Whenever available, internal reports about the structure of the colleges were gladly provided. Sometimes useful information was obtained from research-workers from several agricultural research-institutes that were visited.

The conversations were informal in character. The atmosphere during the conversations was very friendly and the people were very helpful and polite. Sometimes the information was difficult to evaluate because of the different cultural norms in Thailand as compared with the Netherlands.

The intention was, also to have some conversations with the female students on the agricultural colleges to get an idea of their aims and ideals and how they thought their future would look like. Unfortunately this seemed to be unsuccessful because of their limited knowledge of the English language. The language barrier sometimes also occurred to be a problem in conversations with other people.

### 4.2 Agricultural colleges

The agricultural colleges are part of the Department of Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education. They belong to the vocational stream of secondary education. Thailand has 46 agricultural colleges. Three of these colleges are different from the rest. One of them for instance, is specialised in fisheries only while another is functioning as an agricultural engineering training centre. The other 43 colleges are quite similar and teach the students about a broad spectrum of agricultural and basic subjects. They are evenly spread over the country.

The colleges have three objectives. The first objective is to provide formal education. Agricultural vocational education is provided at three levels with an emphasis on learning of practical skills:

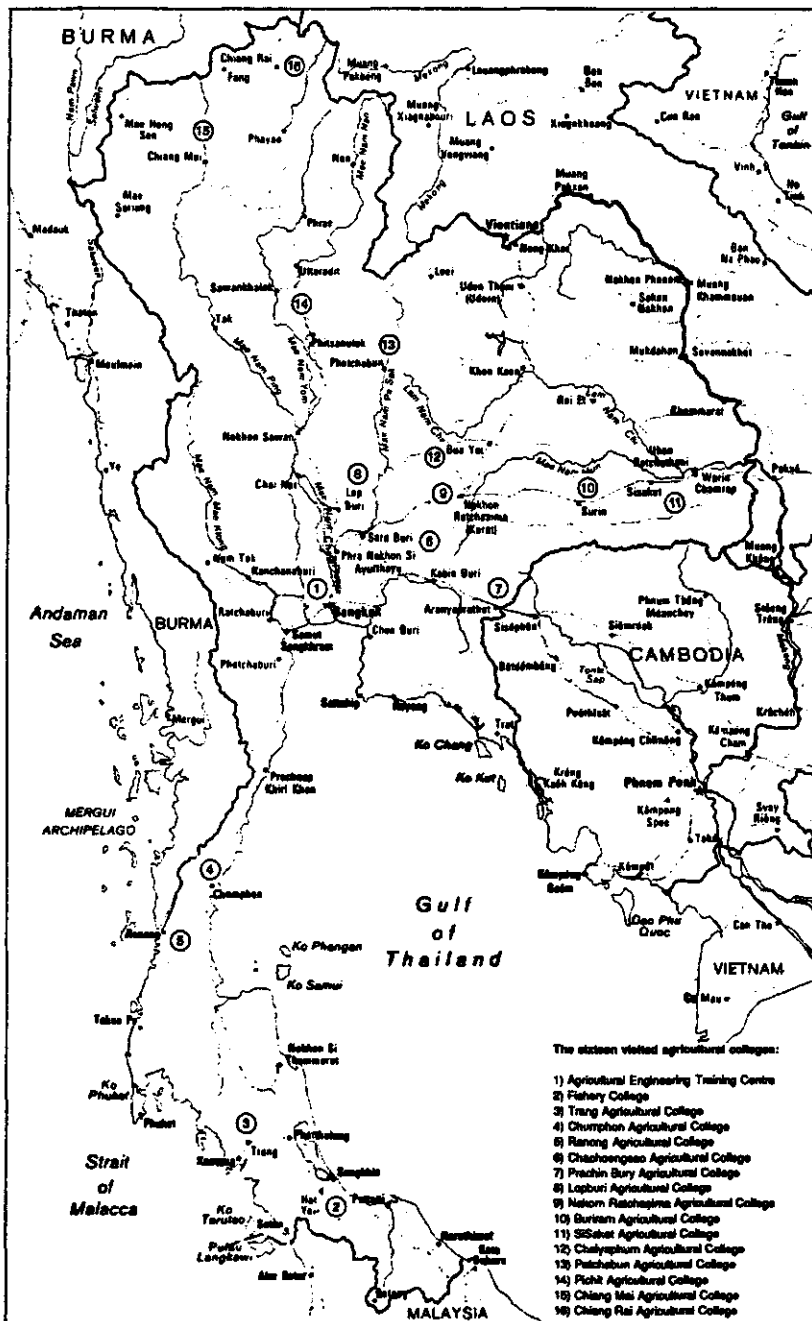


Figure 4.1 Situation of the sixteen visited agricultural colleges

1. certificate level; a three years course open to secondary school graduates from the lower level (age 15 years or older);
2. higher certificate level; a two years course open to graduates of the certificate level;
3. technical level; a two years course open to graduates of the certificate level and secondary school graduates from the upper level (age 18 years or older).

The second objective of the colleges is to provide non-formal education for farmers in the surrounding area. The farmers can get a ten day training course with a strong practical basis. Also 'Mobile Unit' courses are organised, where college staff and staff from other government institutions travel around to instruct farmers in their own area (mostly remote areas). In poor regions like the north-east, the colleges also provide vocational education to decrease poverty. Young people who only had primary school can receive a five year course free of charge.

The third and last objective of the agricultural colleges is to be the centre of vocational education for the community that lives nearby the compound of the college. The college co-operates with and helps the community in agriculture. Classes of students sometimes spend days working for the community in activities such as tidying the ground of temples. Farmers are encouraged to seek advice from specialists at the college. The college also distributes improved or new varieties of plants and animals to local farmers or gives some money to very poor farmers.

The formal courses for students provide a wide field of subjects. The three year course for certificate level comprises 4.800 lessons of fifty minutes each, called periods. The following courses are given:

1. foundation (basic) course	1.140 periods
2. vocational course	960 periods
3. elective course	2.480 periods
4. activities	220 periods
	-----
Total	4.800 periods

The foundation course contains basic subjects as Thai, agricultural science, agricultural mathematics, agricultural English, social studies and physical education. Besides that, students also learn about rover scouting and about the F.F.T. The F.F.T. are the Future Farmers of Thailand. This is an organisation of which all the students are member. Every college has its own board. The F.F.T. organises several activities. An important activity is earning money for the F.F.T. by growing, buying and selling agricultural products. Other activities are cleaning public places, skills and sports. The colleges also compete with each other in some of those fields.



The subjects of the vocational course are plant science, soil & fertilizers, principles of animal husbandry, fundamentals of farm machines, farm machineries, principles of agribusiness, agricultural products management, natural resource and environment. About half of the total periods for the vocational course is for agricultural practice.

For the elective course the students can specialise in some fields of agriculture. There are ten different fields;

- a. vegetable crops;
- b. agronomy;
- c. pomology;
- d. ornamental horticulture;
- e. poultry;
- f. small animals;
- g. livestock;
- h. fishery;
- i. agro-industry;
- j. agricultural mechanics.

Each field contains about fifteen different subjects. For instance the first field, vegetable crops, consists of the following group of subjects: principles of vegetable crops, cold season and sub-tropical vegetables, industrial vegetable crops, tropical vegetable crops, commercial vegetable production, vegetable seed production, pest control and eradication, post harvest management, general farm shop skills, irrigation and drainage control, principles of farm management, principles of cooperatives, principles of agricultural marketing, vegetable crop products. In every field the practical skills are emphasized. On the college grounds the students can practise many aspects of agriculture.

The activities for the F.F.T. take about 220 periods in the first three years. The students also often work in the field of the college before and after schooltime.

Of the 46 agricultural colleges in Thailand 16 have been visited. Two of the visited colleges are specialised in one specific field: respectively Fisheries and Agricultural Engineering. The Fishery College comprises 890 students: 50% are girls. According to the director of this college, all the students could find a job after they graduated. The college had a contract with a fish canning factory for this purpose. Some girls find a job in fish hatchery. The Agricultural Engineering Training Centre only has about fifty students of which hardly any girls.

The other fourteen visited colleges belong to the universal type of agricultural colleges, of which 43 exist in Thailand. The following information is based on these fourteen colleges. Three are situated in the south, three in the central part, four in the north and four in the north-east (see figure 4.1).

The areas of the agricultural colleges always are very large; more than 100 hectares. The teachers, the director and the

assistant-directors live on the area of the colleges with their families. Part of the students also live on the college grounds in special 'villages'. These are the students whose parents either live far away from the college or are very poor.

The number of students varies from 80 to 560. The average number of students is 285. The age of the students varies from 15 to 22.

On all the colleges the number of students has decreased substantially in the last few years. The main reason is the fast growing industry in Thailand. In the industrial sector the number of jobs is increasing and the salaries are generally better. Many parents therefore prefer to send their children to technical colleges rather than agricultural colleges.

Nearly all the students of the agricultural colleges come from a farm. Compared to the average income, farmers are poor in Thailand. Students from very poor families can live on the college grounds without charge in return for some labour on the college, for instance feeding chickens or milking cows. Sometimes farmers have to borrow money to let their son or daughter attend an agricultural college.

The various agricultural colleges are very similar. Only the equipment sometimes is different. For instance, some colleges have a co-operation project with Denmark for dairy farming. Denmark thus subsidises a rather modern milking equipment. The practical part of education also can be different because of the fact that the crops that can be grown on the college fields are typical for the agro-ecological zone in which the college is situated. For instance in the north they can not grow rubber-trees. The theoretical part of education on the several colleges is more similar than the practical part.

The curricula concern a wide field of subjects from basic subjects to specific agricultural subjects. Students obviously prefer the agricultural subjects, especially the practical part. They are not much interested in learning basic subjects such as Thai, English and mathematics.

The commercial aspects of agriculture on the colleges are emphasized. The students learn how to get high yields through fertilizers and pesticides. They do not learn about other methods of agriculture like the integrated system. Besides the commercial aspects of agriculture students learn how to manage a home-garden.

The number of students in one class is not high. Some classrooms were visited comprising on about fifteen students. Girls and boys are mixed in one class, so they receive the same education. Every college has a large teacher staff. The number of female teachers is about one third of the total staff on several colleges.

#### 4.3 The position of girls on the agricultural colleges

All the agricultural colleges have more male than female students. The number of girls varies from fifteen per cent to one-third of the total number of students. There are no great differences between the four regions in the percentage of girls on the various colleges.

Compared to other countries in Asia, the number of girls on the agricultural colleges is high. The percentage of girls is comparable with the situation on agricultural schools of the same level in the Netherlands. This is in accordance with the high literacy rate of women in Thailand and the high percentage of women in the total enrolment at different levels of education.

Why are there fewer girls than boys on the agricultural colleges? Results of some interviews showed that the attitude of the parents and the girls themselves is important in this matter. They think the kind of work is too hard for a girl and they earn too little. Girls rarely start their own farm and it is more difficult for them to find a good job in the agricultural sector after they have graduated from college. Many big companies prefer boys because they are stronger, they can work longer and they think girls cannot handle the people who work for them.

What will happen with the girls once they have finished college? Many female students of the agricultural colleges come from a farm. Some of them will work on the farm of their parents after they have finished school. Some can get a job with a big company, mostly in agro-industry like foodprocessing, or they get administrative jobs. Some can obtain a government job such as teacher or extension worker.

Because direct conversations with the girls themselves was unsuccessful, it was difficult to enquire after ideals and plans for the future. The impression one gets is that the girls in general do not have a real idea of what they want to do when they have finished college. It was noticed that girls kept themselves more on the background in school activities than boys. For instance the most important tasks in the FFT-board such as president and vice-president always were executed by a boy.

According to some teachers, most students do not want to become a farmer, especially in the poorest areas of Thailand. They would like to find a good job, for instance with the government, instead of being poor like most farmers. But there are very few jobs left with the government and many big companies prefer boys, so many girls will have to stay on the farm of their parents to work.

In the poorest regions in the north and the north-east, the girls who will help their parents on the farm after college hardly seem to use their agricultural knowledge. The main reason for this is the poverty. The parents can not afford to invest in new machinery or techniques. The financial risk would be too high. Another reason is the attitude of the parents towards new methods. It is very hard to convince the elder generation that

those new methods are better than the methods they have always been using. Since new agricultural knowledge is hardly applied, people in the poor rural areas keep on working on the farm, practicing old methods.

Girls from the poor regions, who graduate from college, will probably not enter into prostitution because their education level is rather high. More likely they will migrate to the city because of lack of work in the rural areas. The impact of this migration on the village where the girls live, is unlikely to be negative. The girls will send remittances back to their parents which will help with home improvements, the education expenses of siblings and the daily subsistence expenses of the family.

Another possibility after college is to continue study on a university. This will increase the girl's chance to find a good job in the future. However, this possibility seems to be hardly realistic for most girls. At present there is a great shortage of university places. The universities often use severe qualification criteria. The students have to take a difficult entrance examination first. Only the very bright students can pass these exams. For most girls graduated from agricultural college those exams will be too difficult. Besides that, the schooling on a university is too expensive for most rural families. Most students in universities are daughters from businessmen or civil officials. Those from farm families comprise only a small portion, despite the fact that most Thai are farmers.

Here the remark should be made, that the Thai government has instituted some so called open universities to accommodate the increasing number of people finishing secondary school and unable to qualify for one of the traditional universities (Danskin, 1983). Those universities are less expensive and the entrance examination is less difficult. But the impression is, that still very few graduates from agricultural colleges enter these institutions.

## 5. Conclusion and final remarks

The aim of this study was to gain an insight into the current educational system on agricultural colleges in Thailand and into the attendance of and prospects for female students.

The percentage of female students in the total number of students at different levels of education in Thailand is high as compared to other Asian or developing countries. The existing position of men and women within the social structure of Thailand permits equal access to education for both boys and girls. Girls are not only seen as child bearers but also as supporters of parents in their old age and responsible for the family earnings.

On the agricultural colleges, about one quarter of the students are girls, which is relatively high. The agricultural colleges in Thailand provide agricultural vocational education at three levels. The learning of practical skills is emphasized. The courses provide a very wide field of subjects from basic fields like Thai and mathematics to specialised agricultural fields like pest control and seed production. The students can specialise in some fields of agriculture. The study focuses on commercial agriculture, but the students also learn about home gardening.

The various agricultural colleges are very similar. Nearly all the colleges teach their students about the same agricultural subjects and in the same way. The average number of students has decreased substantially in the last few years because of the growing industry. The possibilities for students to get a good job are better in the industrial sector so students increasingly prefer technical colleges.

Most of the girls on the agricultural colleges come from a farm. After they have graduated, some will work on the farm of their parents. In the poor regions girls can hardly use their agricultural knowledge because their parents are too poor to invest in new techniques and because of the negative attitude of the parents against new methods. For most girls, the best way to be sure of an income is to find an off-farm job. Many girls from rural areas migrate to the cities because the opportunities for finding a job are better there. It is doubtful whether all the girls can find a suitable job in the field they have been studying. Besides, it is more difficult for girls to find a job since many big companies prefer boys.

The limited scope of this study makes it difficult to formulate recommendations for improvement of the situation for girls, especially in the poorest areas. One recommendation could be to enlarge the job opportunities for girls. This could be realised by stimulating big companies to contract girls and by enlarging the possibilities to continue study on a university, for instance through provision of scholarships. The situation for girls working on the farm of their parents could be improved by taking away

the constraints to use new, modern methods. For instance by setting up cooperatives for machines, so people can start working with these new methods. Then the gained knowledge of the girls could better be utilized. Another possibility to take away the financial constraints for investment is to provide special credit facilities for those farmers.

It would be interesting to know from the aims and ideals of the girls and in what way those ideals were established. To achieve this, more information is necessary. To be able to provide this information it would be necessary learning to speak Thai fluently or to use an interpreter to have a real conversation with the girls themselves.

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