

# **Organic rice**

## **A long and steep way for Sorkorpor members**

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### **Background**

The pilot project “Improvement of service to organic rice farmers who are member of Farmers Federation Association for Development Thailand ( SorKorPor) in North-East of Thailand” was initiated by SorKorPor together with ZLTO and Agriterra. ZLTO and Agriterra have financially supported Sorkorpor more than ten years and they have agreed to stop financial support in the future. Therefore, this project aims to develop business of local SorKorPor groups to allow Sorkorpor members to stand on their own feet. The field research was carried out in seven provinces in northeastern region of Thailand by two Larenstein students from May to August 2009. More than 50 organic farmers from 15 farmer groups were interviewed to know their needs. Moreover, other actors in the chain were interviewed as well including millers, exporter and supportive actors in order to draw the chain of organic rice in the northeast of Thailand.

### **Result**

The result of the study has shown that most rice farmers of Sorkorpor are not truly organic farmers. Some of them still use little amount of pesticide and seeds contaminated with pesticide. Importantly, they sell the paddy to the conventional market. Therefore, they are excluded from the organic rice chain in northeast of Thailand because they are still in conventional chain. Regarding the needs of Sorkorpor members, there are obviously three aspects that should be strengthened in order to improve position of the organic rice farmers of Sorkorpor. They are knowledge and technology transferring on organic rice production and marketing, input supply and pest and disease management. The needs of Sorkorpor members are very similar to non-Sorkorpor farmers because they share the same environment.

### **Discussion and Recommendation**

Growing organic rice is more sustainable for the farmers in this region where the soil is so infertile and has been suffered from poor maintenance and artificial fertilizer. But, it is a long and steep way for them. It is hardly possible to grow organic rice commercially, especially in middle northeast because most farmers are subsistent farmers. They do not have a large amount of organic rice for the market because of a low productivity. Besides, the demand in the market is Jasmine rice but, most farmers grow sticky rice for their household consumption. Importantly, most successful cooperatives for organic rice are supported by strong organization with access to the market. It is what Sorkorpor members are lacking. Therefore, SorKorPor should concentrate more to the production aspect rather than market position at this moment.

In order to fulfill the needs and services to the organic rice farmers, SorKorPor should play a role as an intermediary between farmers and other organizations to facilitate the farmers. The organizations are Offices of commercial affairs and Agricultural extension office, Asoke community network, Inpang Community Network ,department of Land Development, Sufficiency Economy Office for Community