

## COMMUNITY POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRO-TOURISM: A CASE IN DAORUANG SUB-DISTRICT, SARABURI PROVINCE, THAILAND

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to develop community potential for sustainable agro-tourism by community participation and develop training manual for community potential development. It showed that the people lacked knowledge on tourism management. They wanted to gain more income from selling agricultural products and also wanted to manage their household income. Hence, the implementation of training on packaging and household accounting for community people were conducted. Moreover, a training manual for community potential development was developed. It comprised the community potential development manual and the community tourism manual. It can be concluded that for sustainable tourism, economic growth together with conservation of local culture and environment with community participation and equitable distribution of income sharing should be considered. This small business will be developed to help people in the community to earn more income and be self-reliant.*

**Key words:** *Community potential development; Agro-tourism; Sustainable tourism; Community participation.*

**JEL Classification:** *Q01, Q16*

### INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, agriculture is considered as the backbone of the country. It helps generating national income but Thailand has recognized that the development of agriculture is a more difficult process as in many countries, unemployment and the number of landless laborers have grown and real wage rates in agriculture have fallen. The government continually tries to solve the problem. Hence, the most important national strategy at present is to eliminate poverty, especially that in the rural areas. In order to gain a great amount of income from tourism, locals have to set up the idea of agro-tourism which is a kind of ecotourism, based on a philosophy of sustainable development. Tourists will learn the way of life and culture of people living in communities through the agro-tourism. So agro-tourism is in trend of national strategy. In addition, it needs community involvement since it will enable participation from the local community in the development and operations of tourism with their consent and support. Another important feature is that a reasonable share of the revenues are enjoyed by the community. This type of tourism also maintains and respects the local culture, heritage and traditions.

Saraburi, one of the central provinces of Thailand, the province of historical sites, the holy footprint, the beauty of nature, and famous food, is

located on the east side of the Chao Phraya river valley which is 108 kilometers from Bangkok. Main agricultural products are rice, sugar cane, corn, sunflower, cattle and poultry. Travelling to and around Saraburi could be made in one day. Daoruang sub-district consists of 7 villages near Pasak River and has been developed to be an agro-touristic area in 2007. The chairman of the sub-district and the owner of cultural center worked together with the people in the community to develop a floating market during the weekend by asking some budget from the government in order to become a small tourist attraction in the community. It was found that the community members lacked knowledge in tourism services and management. In addition, there were several local products distributed to tourists that helped people to earn more income but they didn't know how to improve the quality of services for tourists. Therefore, training programs on how to develop and manage an agro-tourism to be sustainable agro-tourism should be offered (Nartsuda, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010).

This study has two main objectives:

- a. To develop community potential for sustainable agro-tourism by community participation; and
- b. To develop a training manual for community potential development.

### COMMUNITY POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRO-TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

There are three basic components of tourism. These are:

- Accessibility or reachability: means tourists can reach the places through various means of transportation.
- Accommodation and facilities: means lodging or board and lodging and something that contributes to physical or material comfort.
- Attraction: means anything that creates a desire in any person to travel and visit the tourist attractions. Accommodation and amenities are related with tourism service which can be developed by infrastructure construction and training people or develop potential of people.

Pimrawee (2010) concluded about the important factors of community tourism. They were:

- Potential of people: people in the community should know their potential in order to prepare themselves for tourism implementation,
- Potential of the area to be an attraction, including natural resource, culture, local wisdom,
- Management by community participation of people through discussions among community members and organizations from outside
- Preparation for the impacts that might be happened even positive or negative aspects.

Agro-tourism is a mild form of sustainable tourist development and multi-activity in rural areas through which the visitor has the opportunity to get acquainted with agricultural areas, agricultural occupations, local products, traditional cuisine and the daily life of people, as well as the cultural elements and the authentic features of the area, while showing respect for the environment and tradition. Moreover, this activity brings visitors closer to nature and rural activities in which they can participate, be entertained and feel the pleasure of touring, learning and discovering.

At the same time, it mobilizes the productive, cultural and developmental forces of an area, contributing in this way to the sustainable environmental, economic and social development of the rural area. (<http://odyssey.gr>) Agro-tourism has two dimensions: one can be classified as a forward linkage, meaning that the agricultural sector is part of the destination's tourism appeal. In this context, it is of special interest to visitors and forms part of their itinerary. The other dimension involves a backward linkage where by the agricultural sector provides the raw material for the food and beverage required by the

hospitality industry. Certainly, before there can be any forward linkages we must develop the backward ones ([www.orton.catie.ac.cr](http://www.orton.catie.ac.cr)). On the other hand, it is indicated that agro-tourism is an alternative activity in the rural development process. The concept of agro-tourism is a direct expansion of ecotourism, which encourages visitors to experience agricultural life at first hand. Agro-tourism is gathering strong support from small communities as rural people have realized the benefits of sustainable development brought about by similar forms of nature travel. ([www.ecotourdirectory.com/agrotourism.htm](http://www.ecotourdirectory.com/agrotourism.htm))

Rural tourism focuses on participating in a rural lifestyle, while eco-tourism emphasized the responsibility in traveling to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. Agro-tourism is a form of tourism that involves visiting agricultural area or farm visiting and also participating in farm activities. These can lead to sustainability if there is participation of people and gaining mutual benefit (Martha Honey, 2008; Merriam-Webster, 2012; Wikipedia, 2012).

Rural tourism, the agro-tourism and the ecotourism proved to be effective and efficient tools of sustainable development for the economy in transition. The development of rural tourism, agro-tourism, and ecotourism will lead to a sustainable economical development of the rural localities due to the multiple effects of these activities. The positive influences on the environment, agriculture, transports, constructions, on the alimentation and processing industries and on the services from the most diverse fields will be felt (GMO Project Concept, 2005). Sustainable tourism is a tourism that is: long-lasting (economically viable in the long-term, planned and well managed, which implies avoidance of mass tourism and a low impact), environment friendly (adapted to the carrying capacity of the natural and cultural spaces, minimizing seasonal effects), diversified (in relation to the hinterland, adapted to the site's personality, based on local enterprises and avoiding total dedication to tourism), participatory (with the participation of the local towns and villages) (Mediterranean NGO Network for Ecology and Sustainable Development, 2007).

Jamieson, Walter and Alix Noble (2000) indicated that "Increasing evidence shows that an integrated approach to tourism planning and management is now required to achieve sustainable tourism. It is only recently that there has been a growing recognition of the importance of combining the needs of traditional urban management (transportation, land use planning, marketing, economic development, fire and safety etc.) with the need to plan for tourism." He concluded that some of the most important principles of sustainable tourism development include: 1) tourism should be initiated with the help of broad-based community-inputs and

the community should maintain control of tourism development, 2) tourism should provide quality employment to its community residents and a linkage between the local businesses and tourism should be established, 3) a code of practice should be established for tourism at all levels - national, regional, and local - based on internationally accepted standards. Guidelines for tourism operations, impact assessment, monitoring cumulative impacts, and limits to acceptable change should be established, and 4) education and training programs to improve and manage heritage and natural resources should be established.

In addition, UNESCO's World Conference on Sustainable Tourism held in Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain in 1995 developed sustainable tourism specific framework which comprised criteria as follows (Kern, 2012):

- It should be ecologically bearable, economically and socially equitable for local communities;
- Tourism should be integrated with all aspects of the environments, respecting fragile areas and promoting the assimilation of impacts;
- The effects on the cultural heritage and traditions of local communities should be considered;
- Participation of the stakeholders which are the local economy (businesses), the local community (residents), and the local ecology (environmental resource managers) is essential.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Participants

- Groups of farmers and farmers' housewives in Daoruang Sub-district, Saraburi Province;
- Thai tourists;
- Community leaders and community members.

### Instruments

The researcher constructed two questionnaires and one semi-structured interview. The first questionnaire aimed at obtaining tourists' opinions about their interests, behaviors and requirements in agro-tourism. A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agreed, agreed, were uncertain, disagreed and strongly disagreed was used to measure tourist's opinion. The second is an evaluating form for farmers and farmers' housewives which is a five-point Likert scale questionnaire to evaluate training activities which aimed to develop farmers and farmers' housewives for agro-tourism management in the community. The last was a semi-structured interview.

It was designed to elicit farmers and farmers' housewives requirements for agro-tourism management in the community.

### Data collection

The data collection was done in daoruang sub-district, Saraburi Province during September 2010 to August 2011. The following steps were carried out in collecting the data:

- a. Thirty farmers and farmers' housewives were interviewed by accidental sampling to explore their requirements for agro-tourism management in the community in Daoruang Sub-district.
- b. A total of three hundred Thai tourists were asked by accidental sampling to indicate their opinions about their interests, behaviors and requirements in agro-tourism in the community through the questionnaires.
- c. Sixty community people including farmers and farmers' housewives; the interested group; were trained on tourism service together with packaging and household accounting.
- d. Two community leaders, eight community members and a researcher discussed together to develop a training manual for community potential development.

### Data analysis

As for qualitative data, the analysis was carried out to answer the first research objective. So, the qualitative data from interviewing were grouped under three headings. Then described and arranged in descending order:

- General information of the respondents;
- Community information about agri cultural products and the readiness to be sustainable agro-tourism;
- Farmers and farmers' housewives requirements for agro-tourism management in the community.

Moreover, the quantitative data about Thai tourists' opinions on their interests, behaviors and requirements in agro-tourism and the training activities evaluation were analyzed by a computer program to determine the mean and standard deviation.

Concerning the second objective, community leaders and researchers discussed together to develop a training manual for community potential development. So the qualitative data were grouped into four parts:

- History of the community;
- General information of the community;
- The requirements for community potential development for sustainable agro-tourism;
- Steps of implementation.

## RESULT FINDINGS

### Develop community potential for sustainable agro-tourism by community participation.

Concerning the developing community potential for sustainable agro-tourism by community participation, farmers and farmers' housewives were interviewed to explore their requirements for agro-tourism management in the community in Daoruang Sub-district. The study showed that there is already infrastructure and enough places for display and conducting agricultural activities for tourists. But the people in the community needed to be trained about

tourism management about packaging and household accounting. They wanted to practice how to make different packages which were suitable for different agricultural products. Moreover, they wanted portable household accounting book from the government instead of the latest design to record how much they earned and spent daily. The senior local people told the history of the community which was different from the details that posted on the province's website. About the tourists' behaviors and requirements, the results of the tourists' interests, behaviors and requirements in agro-tourism showed positive answers at the high level in most of the questions in questionnaires as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 - The tourists' interests, behaviors and requirements**

No	OPINIONS	Mean	S.D.
1	Interested in agro-tourism	3.70	.61
2	There are many interesting agro-tourism attractions in Saraburi	3.82	.61
3	Your interest in visiting the following agricultural places:		
	3.1 Visiting orchard	4.16	.66
	3.2 Products processing of dried roll banana	4.11	.71
	3.3 Basketry	3.87	.74
	3.4 Mushroom cultivation	3.82	.80
	3.5 Field crops growing	2.92	.90
	3.6 Rice growing	2.89	.78
4	During visiting, the following activities should provide for tourists		
	4.1 Cooking or eating farm products	4.21	.60
	4.2 Products distribution	4.10	.75
	4.3 Local cultural performing	4.09	.65
5	Your expectation in visiting agricultural places		
	5.1 Good quality and reasonable price of distributing products	4.29	.62
	5.2 Knowledge of local culture	4.28	.67
	5.3 Good environment	4.22	.61
	5.4 Its scenic environment	4.17	.67
	5.5 Friendship and good services	4.13	.68
6	The best media of tourism public relations		
	7.1 Television	4.11	.75
	7.2 Radio	3.90	.76
	7.3 Internet	3.78	.80

In Table 1, the tourists showed their positive interest in agro-tourism ( $\bar{X}=3.70$ ). They also agreed that there were many interesting places of agro-tourism attractions in Saraburi ( $\bar{X}=3.82$ ). They were interested in visiting orchard ( $\bar{X}=4.16$ ) and products processing of dried roll banana ( $\bar{X}=4.11$ ). During their visit, they wanted to have a chance in participating in cooking and tasting of agricultural products ( $\bar{X}=4.21$ ), products distributions ( $\bar{X}=4.10$ ), and local cultural performing ( $\bar{X}=4.09$ ). Their expectation in visiting was good quality and reasonable price of distributing products, knowledge of local culture and good environment ( $\bar{X}=4.29, 4.28$  and  $4.22$ , respectively). Moreover, they agreed that the best media of tourism public relations was television ( $\bar{X}=4.11$ ).

From the results mentioned above, it can be concluded that the people in the community needed to be trained about packaging and household accounting,

and the tourists expected good quality and reasonable price of distributing products so the implementation of a one day training on tourism service for community people were conducted together with training on packaging and household accounting. The evaluation of the training programs showed that the participants satisfied the training activities and agreed that they gained knowledge from training program and could utilize it in community agro-tourism.

### Develop training manual for community potential development

Concerning the development of a training manual for community potential development two community leaders, eight community members and a researcher discussed together to develop this training manual. The senior local people told the history of the community which was different from the details that posted on the province's website. As exposed on the website, it indicated that Daoruang Sub-district was surrounded by marigold flowers so sub-district was

named after it because in Thai daoruang means marigold flowers. On the other hand, senior local people told that since they were young they were told that name Daoruang came from the star that went up from Wat Sadet, a temple near this sub-district and fell down in this sub-district. So, in this case, Daoruang means the star. Ever since this community was located beside Pasak River, the people worrying about flood which yearly occur.

A training manual for the community potential was developed. There were four parts as follows:

- History of the community which was about the background of the community;
- General information of the community which was about the location, people, occupation of the people, climate, and nearby tourism attractions;
- The requirements for community potential development for sustainable agro-tourism, which included a questionnaire to survey need assessment for potential development and a semi-structured interview to explore the background of the community; and
- Steps of implementation which included preparation for training, training process, training evaluation.

After developing a training manual for community potential development, the community leaders, community members and a researcher discussed together and agreed that agro-tourism will be sustainable if most of the people in the community have a chance in participating in tourism services so that they will appreciate their own local culture. Moreover, people who got involved in agro-tourism activities in the community should earn income fairly. The community of agro-tourism will be a small business in the community which will help earning more income and can be expanded into medium business or can develop a network of agro-tourism in the future.

### Recommendations

According to the research results, several recommendations can be made:

- The community leaders should continually do the survey of need assessment of the community people and provide short course training for them to enhance their knowledge which will support agro-tourism in the community.
- Public relation via television program about this agro-tourism area and tourism activity planning with the province should be implemented.
- Flood preventive measures should be specified and should improve attractive scenic environment in case it gets flooded.

- The community should develop new agricultural products besides dried roll banana and distribute the products in and outside the province.
- The community should provide tourism activities with continuous community participation. For sustainable agro-tourism, people in the community should fairly gain benefit.

### CONCLUSIONS

Due to the implementation of this study, the farmers, the farmers' housewives and community members can be trained to manage agro-tourism and can earn more income. They can also sell their agricultural products to the tourists and know how to record their income and expenditure. Hence they will be self-reliant and can achieve happiness in their places.

*The training manual for community potential development which consisted of four parts, (part 1 and part 2 were about history and general information of the community), can be utilized to promote the community by publishing information in leaflets, folders or brochures and distribute them to tourists during their visit to the community, being also utilized as public relations. Moreover, part 3 and part 4 were about the requirements for community potential development for sustainable agro-tourism and steps of implementation. It can be distributed to other agro-tourism areas in order to develop or improve the community potential for agro-tourism.*

The results of this study also implied that development community potential for agro-tourism can fulfill community agro-tourism and it will be sustainable agro-tourism if this tourism brings about economic growth together with conservation of local culture and environment which will conduct people in the community, especially the young group, to cherish their own community. The study conformed to a specific framework for sustainable tourism developed by UNESCO's World Conference on sustainable tourism ([www.sustainabletourismmanagement.com](http://www.sustainabletourismmanagement.com)).

Moreover, agro-tourism can develop into a small business in the community, fact which helps people earn more income besides their main career. The most important for small business and sustainable tourism in the community is community participation and equitable distribution of income sharing.

It is in accordance with the philosophy of sufficiency economy which His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of Thailand constructed. He explained that economic development must be done step by step and should begin with strengthening of the economic foundation. When the

majority of the population has enough income to rely upon, next step can be done for achieving more advanced levels of economic development. In this case, the community people will gain more income from a small business of agro-tourism, they can sell their agricultural and community products without encountering the problem of middleman, the old and the young people having a chance in working together and sharing information of the community which will

bring about appreciation of their own culture and community. After the small business is achieved, it can be expanded into medium business or they can develop a network of agro-tourism so that other agricultural areas can be developed into agro-touristic areas which can strengthen their community and improve their quality of life. Hence, it does not only bring about sustainable tourism but also brings about sustainable development of the whole country.

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