

Local Resource Management to Strengthen the Economy of Agricultural Communities Ban Pok, Mae On District, Chiang Mai Province

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Abstract

This research was a part of a project to enhance the operational potential and participatory community enterprise marketing for sustainable agriculture. The objectives were to study 1) community context and social and economic conditions, 2) community capital building economic strength, and 3) guidelines for applying community capital to build economic strength in the community. The research was conducted using a qualitative research method to collect information from documents, in-depth interviews, and group discussions. The research is descriptive research with 20 farmers as a sample group.

The study found that the Ban Pok Agricultural Community, where Arabica coffee, Assam tea, and temperate and subtropical fruits are grown, is 1,200-1,550 meters from the average sea level and has a suitable temperature to grow plants. It is also a learning center for tourists and interested individuals. The five community capital are (1) human capital (knowledgeable members, local leaders, government leaders, educational institution leaders, private sector leaders, and community organization leaders or community enterprise group members), (2) social capital (knowledge exchange through community learning centers with farmers networks), (3) physical capital (universal access to basic infrastructure), (4) natural capital (an appropriate climate for planting crops and sufficient natural resources), and (5) financial capital (adequate funding sources inside and outside the community). Furthermore, the agriculture community at Ban Pok has been observed to practice the concept of self-reliance and to possess knowledge, community leaders, and strong local authorities. Therefore, the potential of community capital can be maximized.

Keywords: Community enterprise, community capital, local resources, the agriculture community

Introduction

The 20-year Agricultural and Cooperative Strategy (2017-2036) focuses on strengthening and resolving weaknesses to facilitate the long-term development of the agricultural sector. The weaknesses that should be tackled are mostly that of the agricultural land (119 million rai or about 80 percent) outside the irrigated area, so the area has to rely on rainwater for farming. For example, rice is planted in an unsuitable area (N) approximately 8 million rai. Moreover, many agricultural products sold in the primary stage, such as rice, rubber, oil palm, and cassavas, are sold at low prices. In addition, most of the farmers are smallholders, and many do not have their own arable land. They are poor and lack the technology to manage their own production. Even though there is a group in the form of a farmer's institution, there is not enough strength. Farmers are still unable to compete and they lack power in marketing negotiations to solve problems in the agricultural sector. Therefore, a vision has been set: "Stable farmers, Prosperous Agricultural Sectors, Sustainable Agricultural Resources." This could be achieved by strengthening production efficiency and raising standards of agricultural products, increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector with technology and innovation, and managing agricultural resources and the environment in a balanced and sustainable manner, including the development of government management systems (Office of Agricultural Economics, 2021).

Additionally, since the world is currently facing the crisis of the emerging COVID-19 virus, there is a great impact on the Thai agricultural sector as it relies on international trade for up to 80 percent of the agricultural GDP. Therefore, there is a high risk that farmers and agribusiness operators will lose revenue opportunities with less

market demand. This has resulted in a decline in agricultural prices in the world market. The trend of agricultural commodity price indexes in major world markets has declined. Food crops (wheat and corn), for example, decreased by 1.9 percent; oil crops (palm, soybean) decreased by 4.3 percent; sugar (sugarcane) significantly declined by 19 percent; dairy products fell by 3%. As it seems, the reduction in price will continue in the future (Agriculture and Cooperatives Commission, 2021: 23-28).

Local resources are important resources for human life. There are four main fundamental factors, namely food, clothing, and housing, to the generation of income for subsistence and industrial business operations. This includes everything that is locally available whether it be physical resources, biological resources, and cultural and intellectual resources including the representation in the form of community capital that consist of human, social, physical, natural, and financial capital. It plays an important role in reflecting the self-management potential of local communities and can lead to sustainable development by taking the potential of the community capital that exists in that local community to join in the conservation, rehabilitation, development and appropriate use. This can meet the needs and solve community problems through community self-reliance (Puangngam, 2010) so that agricultural communities can develop by adopting all 5 types of community capital and use them to their fullest potential. Therefore, it is essential people in the community take part in considering the community capital.

Ban Pok is located in Huay Kaew subdistrict, Mae On district, Chiang Mai province. The occupation of the people in the village is still based on the traditional occupation, which is growing Miang. Currently, there are additional occupations such as growing coffee and tea,

beekeeping, growing organic vegetables, making brooms and turning the area into attractions. The famous products of the village are tea and coffee produced in the name of “Ban Pok quality tea and coffee growers community enterprise” located at an altitude of 1,200-1,500 meters above sea level, with cold weather throughout the year. The average temperature is 24-28 degrees celsius. The group’s products include tea leaf pillows, herbal coffee and tea, ready-to-drink herbal coffee, roasted and ground coffee beans, coffee husk tea, drip coffee, which has been certified by GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) and FDA (Food and Drug Administration). The group’s operations are in the area close to the Mae Kampong village tourist attraction, regarded as one of the most important and famous tourist attractions of Chiang Mai. Its features are nature, agriculture, health and culture, but collectively it is known as “conservation tourism.” Moreover, there are homestays as accommodations for tourists. When entering this village, people will be able to see the living conditions of the village as the villagers have a simple way of life. There are various activities of the locals to be seen, such as making tea leaf pillows, making basketry, rare medicinal herbs, etc. There is also a hiking trail called a nature trail leading tourists to see Miang coffee plantations and the water sources and to relax at the waterfall as well. In the past, the community enterprise of Ban Pok quality coffee and tea growers distributed products to tourist customers who visited these attractions, making them the primary source of income for the group. Overall, it can be seen that the Ban Pok community employs all five types of community capital facilitating them in their career and the community.

Therefore, the researcher was interested in studying local resource management as it will strengthen the economy of the agricultural community at Ban Pok, Huay Kaew subdistrict,

Mae On district, Chiang Mai province. The study identified the overview of the community context, social and economic conditions, community capital that build economic strength, and guidelines for using community capital to build economic strength in agricultural communities. Besides, the research could potentially be utilized as a useful case study or model for interested researchers in the future.

Research Methodology

The target audience size, the study area scope, the operation procedure, and the analysis of the study results (Figure 1) have been set as follows:

This research is qualitative research collecting information from documents, in-depth interview, and group discussion, and it was also descriptive research with the target group being 20 farmers and the steps in the study are as follows.

Data Collection

Step 1: The activity areas of the project were observed to enhance the operational capacity and the participatory community enterprise marketing for sustainable agriculture. Participant and non-participant observation methods were used. All activities were observed during the research field visit to study the context, social and economic conditions, and components of community capital.

Step 2: In-depth interviews and group discussion questions were set to identify the context, social and economic conditions, and community capital through community study tools, including Venn Diagrams and livelihood assets, which are the five community capital.

Step 3: In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 key informants, including community leaders and farmers, to study the context and social and economic conditions.

Step 4: Group discussions were initiated using the PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) technique, where the researcher questioned, brainstormed, and reflected on the composition of the community with 10 of the community leaders, farmers, district agricultural officials, and community development officers in Mae On district. The issues discussed are as follows: stakeholders or agencies involved and the use of agricultural support and resources in the community for agricultural purposes. The researchers summarized the data and checked the accuracy of the data to study the guidelines of community capital to strengthen the economy of agricultural communities.

The data was analyzed using a triangular method. The researchers chose the method of collection by considering people, places, and time sources, along with different data collection methods, including participant and non-participant observations, in-depth interviews, and group discussions. The team used the content analysis of the study in the context of the area by rationalizing both the interpretation of the content from the context and the community capital. The descriptive analysis (mean value and percentage) was also used to analyze the opinions about the community capital on the economic enhancement of the community.

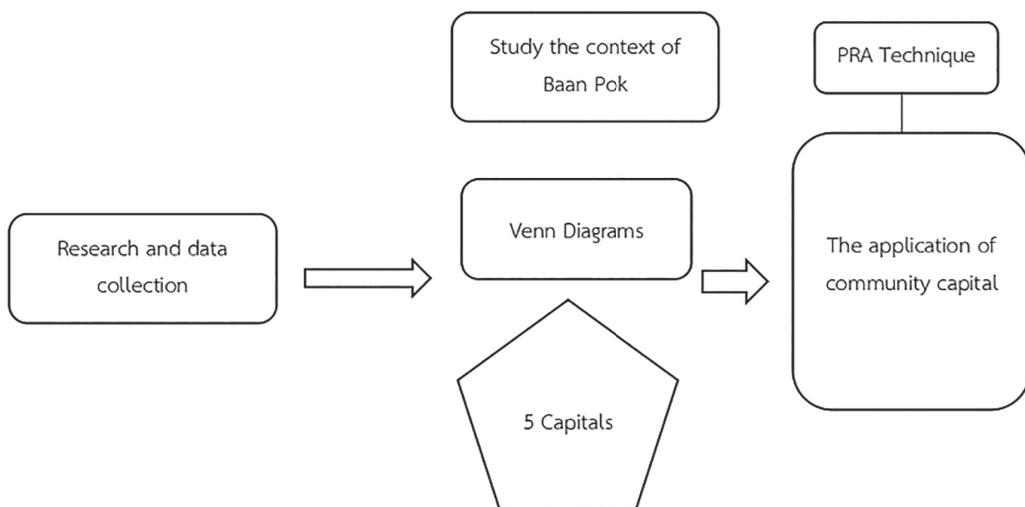


Figure 1 Research Framework

Results and Discussion

1. Community context and social and economic conditions

History of Ban Pok Community

Ban Pok is a village that has been known as a Hundred Year village full of charms and provides an opportunity for everyone to experience true happiness. Located at an altitude of 1,200-1,500

meters above sea level, with cold weather all year round, Ban Pok is fertile with forests and mountains. About 200 years ago, the Lua natives came to live first. After that, they migrated to other places and some indigenous people migrated from Ban Pa Ngeu, Pong Fang, Doi Saket district and came to settle here. Their career included gardening and planting rice and shifting farming.

In the past, transportation was very difficult. They had to use different means of commuting, such as walking or riding horses or cows. In fact, the village is called according to the nature of the group of people in the village who are in 3 groups of Pok, namely Pok Nok (Inner part), Pok Klang (Middle part), and Pok Nai (Outer part).

The occupation of the people in the village is still based on the traditional occupation, which is growing Miang. At present, there are additional occupations such as growing coffee, making tea leaf pillows, beekeeping, making brooms, growing organic vegetables, and opening tourist attractions (Mae On District Community Development Office, 2020). The famous products of the village are tea and coffee products, produced under the name "Ban Pok quality tea and coffee growers community enterprise". The village began to grow coffee in 1979 with the support of the Royal Project. However, villagers began to seriously plant in 1996-1997 and started to operate in the form of a community enterprise in 2014. Products produced on behalf of the enterprise group include a variety of herbal teas (Rang Jued or Jiao Phu Lan), orange tea, roasted coffee beans, coffee beans, mixed coffee (Jiao Phu Lan in the form of coffee 3 in 1), and drip coffee.

Social Condition

Based on the basic information interview, it was found that the target group of 20 people, consisting of 10 males (50%) and 10 females (50%), aged 50 to 72, all of who lived in the same community, at village No. 1, Ban Pok, Huay Kaew Subdistrict, Mae On district, Chiang Mai province. For their education levels, 12 people completed a primary school level (60%), six people completed a lower secondary level (30%), and the rest completed an upper secondary level or vocational certificate (10%). There is a community business,

"Ban Pok quality tea and coffee growers community enterprise", which has 1 group chairman (5%), 10 committee (50%), and 9 group members (45%).

Economic Condition

The main occupations were found to be agricultural occupations, (100%) by growing Arabica coffee, Assam tea, vegetable crops, and raising bee stalks or hollow bees. 10 people are engaged in general employment (50%); five people are merchants (25%); one is a government official or a state enterprise employee (5%); and four people work in other secondary occupations, such as masseuses or handicrafts (20%).

Members have a monthly income (Baht). 8 of them earn less than 5,000 baht, (40%); 8 of them earn in the range of 5,001-10,000 baht/month (40%); 3 earn around 10,001-15,000 baht (15%); only 1 earns 15,001-20,000 baht/month (5%).

The products produced and distributed are diverse. The focus is on beverages such as roasted coffee beans, beans, drip coffee, herbal coffee, Jiaogulan herbal tea, black tea, white tea, kra chai tea, tangerine tea, Sam-yod tea, honey, and other products, such as Ban Pok liquid soap, woven basket, and tea leaf pillows.

According to the survey of Pok Village with data recording using a questionnaire and observation in tourism, it was found that 2 tourist attractions held by the private sector, namely The Giant Chiangmai Coffee Shop and Lanna Wild, are surrounded by beautiful natural resources. Therefore, there are trekking activities, a hiking trail, 2 natural waterfalls, namely Ya Chan Waterfall and Ban Pok Waterfall, and agricultural activities such as planting coffee, collecting Assam tea, beekeeping, and making the traditional Miang At Ban Pok community. Therefore, the community enterprise is a learning center for tourists and those interested in studying.

2. Community capital that drives the economic strength of the Ban Pok agricultural community

The target group agreed that the community capital contributed to the community economy at a high level, with a total average of 4.10, classified into 5 aspects (Figure 2) as follows:

2.1 Human Capital

It was found that the target group agreed to contribute to the economy of the agricultural community at the highest level, averaging 4.25. In this local community, human capital is a supporting factor for self-management for sustainable development. Its roles and duties are consistent with their status and social structure which include (1) a village philosopher in agriculture, (2) a local leader and a village headman, (3) a local leader and a member of a subdistrict administrative organization, (4) a leader of a government organization and educational institutes and related agricultural organizations (5) leaders of private sectors and community merchants, and (6) community organization leaders, members of Ban Pok quality tea and coffee growers community enterprise, and members of Ban Pok Coffee Big Plot who were hired to harvest coffee. The researcher has shown the relationship between the Ban Pok agricultural community and other organizations in the form of a Venn Diagram (Figure 2). The details are as follows.

(1) Mae On District Agriculture Office provided composting soil, water conservation plots, fruit tree saplings, and the management of agricultural plots.

(2) Mae On District Community Development Office provided the production of processed agricultural products.

(3) Teen Tok Royal Project Development Center provided fruit seedlings, coffee seedlings, and knowledge of coffee plantations and winter fruit plant management.

(4) Huay Kaew Subdistrict Service Organization provided utilities such as roads, electricity, and water supply.

(5) The Giant Chiang Mai shop provided a place to sell agricultural trade and other processed products.

(6) The Royal Forest Department permitted to use the area.

(7) Chiang Mai University Group provided group management support, social service and knowledge of quality coffee production.

(8) Maejo University provided knowledge training.

(9) Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna Chiang Mai knowledge trainin

From the Venn Diagrams (Figure 2), according to the size of the circles, organizations that have the most to the least role and participation in the community are in order: (1) Mae On District Agriculture Office (2) Mae On District Community Development Office (3) Teen Tok Royal Project Development Center (4) Huay Kaew Subdistrict Service Organization (5) The Giant Shop Chiang Mai (6) Royal Forest Department (7) Chiang Mai University (8) Maejo University and (9) Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna Chiang Mai.

The human capital, important to drive society and the local economy, includes the strength of community leaders and knowledge about agricultural production at the upstream level, such as the Arabica coffee certified by GAP standards, organic coffee growing system, Assam tea cultivation, and medicinal plants (Wan Rang Jued, Dragon Blood Tea), and of other midstream products, such as roasted coffee, tea, and other handicrafts (tea leaf pillows and basketry).

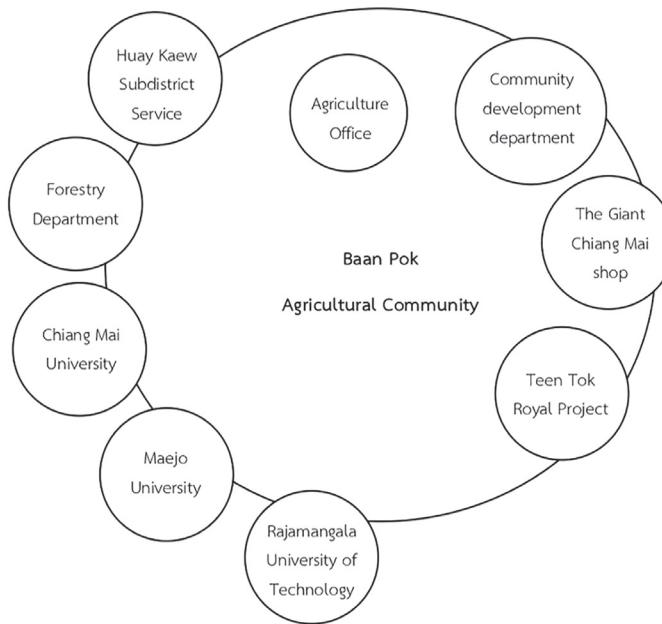


Figure 2 The relationship between the Ban Pok Agricultural Community and other organizations

2.2 Social Capital

It was found that the target group agreed that the capital contributed to the economy of the agricultural community at a high level, averaging 4.00. The Ban Pok agricultural community's connection is closed-knitted, in a kinship manner, since they trade and share agricultural knowledge, such as passing on the knowledge of plant varieties from seeds and seedlings to other farmers, as well as to other communities who need for household and commercial cultivation. They also opened a learning center where they provide information about Arabica and Assam tea from planting to interested people and farmers who grow coffee and tea.

2.3 Physical Capital

It was found that the target group agreed that the capital contributed to the economy of the agricultural community at a high level, averaging 3.95. Even though the area is in a high

area and traveling is quite difficult, due to the support of local authorities, such as Huay Kaew Subdistrict Administrative Organization, roads are accessible to communities, and electricity and water supply are available. Thus, various activities in the community can be carried out more comfortably. This is to meet the basic needs and strengthen the welfare of the community. In addition, there is access to mobile phone signals and Internet networks. This allows the Ban Pok agricultural community to communicate with staff and customers easily and promptly when there is a problem and to inform them of various news.

2.4 Natural Capital

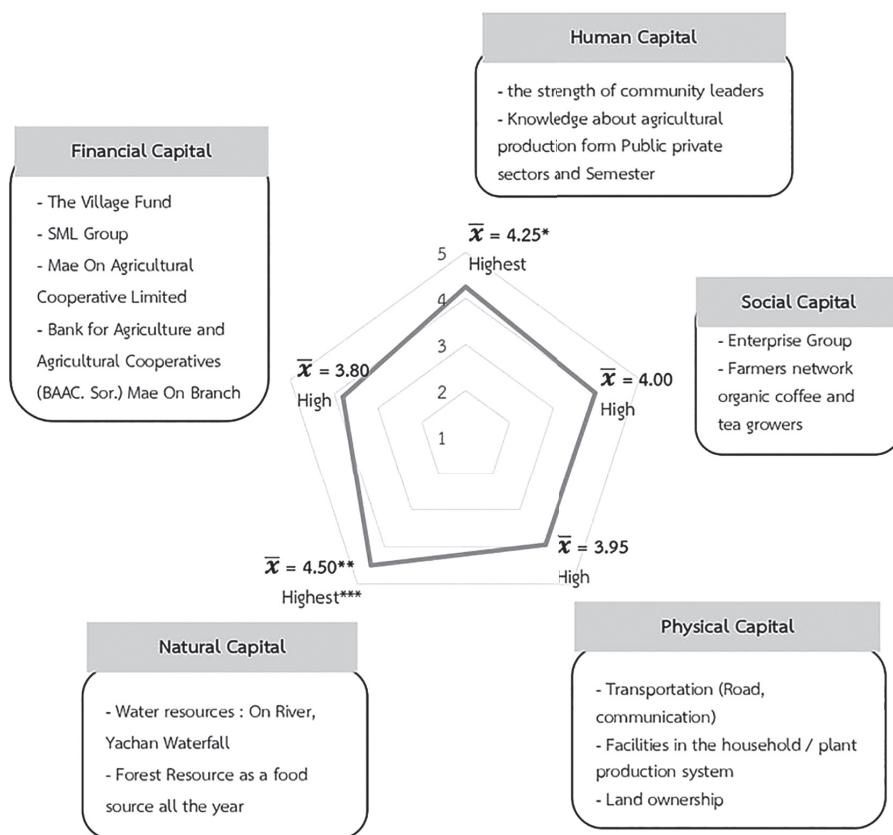
It was found that the target group agreed that the capital contributed to the economy of the agricultural community at the highest level, averaging 4.50. The Ban Pok community area, 1,200-1,500 meters above sea level, has cool weather all year round. This is an important factor that promotes the quality of Arabica coffee and

Assam tea, as well as being suitable for growing other temperate fruit trees that farmers can plant as both their main income and supplementary income. They grow persimmons, plums, macadamias, and other subtropical fruit trees, such as avocados. There are also natural water sources, such as Ya Chan waterfall, used in agriculture throughout the year, and the waterfall is an agricultural tourist attraction. As a result, this community is not encountering a shortage of water for both consumption and agriculture.

2.5 Financial Capital

It was found that the target group agreed that the capital contributed to the economy of the agricultural community at a high level,

averaging 3.80. The Ban Pok agricultural community has established a community enterprise in which share is allocated to members who participate in group activities, such as when there is an event. Members who participate in group activities will receive their share since when the products are sold, profits will be shared among the members. Furthermore, within the community, there are various funds, such as the Village Fund, SML Group, Mae On Agricultural Cooperative Limited, and Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC. Sor.) Mae On Branch for people in the community to borrow. Therefore, it is a source of funds that farmers can use to buy equipment and other necessities, such as chemical fertilizers and biological substances to prevent pests, etc.



** The first-highest mean score

* The second-highest mean score

Figure 3 Five community capital of Ban Pok

Criteria

To classify the score ranges, the team employed the use of the presentation interval scale.

The score ranges are as follows:

The score range of 1.00 – 1.80 indicates the lowest level of agreement

The score range of 1.81 – 2.60 indicates a low level of agreement

The score range of 2.61 – 3.40 indicates a moderate level of agreement

The score range of 3.41 – 4.20 indicates a high level of agreement.

The score range of 4.21 – 5.00 indicates the highest level of agreement

3. Guidelines for applying community capital to build economic strength in the community

The research team studied the Ban Pok agricultural community by using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) technique to analyze the data in the community of the target group. This has been done by participating in the study, collecting, exchanging and studying the potential of the community in terms of its strength and using community capital as an important factor in how the target group was used to strengthen the economy. The guidelines for using community capital to build economic strength in agricultural communities showed that there is a community-level economic drive by creating a tangible network of community enterprises and groups with the same agricultural products, such as organic coffee and tea growers which will set up common rules and regulations. Public and private sectors also contribute to agricultural inputs and economic driving. In particular, they provided a place to sell products. For instance, the area in front of The Giant Chiang Mai and shops in the Ban Mae Kampong community are open to the

Ban Pok quality tea and coffee growers community enterprise. They can also have meetings to exchange ideas together so that the sales competition is equal and fair. Furthermore, people in the community can bring agricultural products to sell products as well. Therefore, the relationship can be seen as a business partnership.

Conclusion

From the study of local resource management to strengthen the economy of Ban Pok Agricultural Community, Mae On district, Chiang Mai province, the results and discussion of the research results are as follows:

1) Community context and social and economic conditions

It was found that the occupation of the people in the village was still based on traditional occupations, such as growing Miang. Currently, there are supplementary occupations such as growing coffee, making tea leaf pillows, beekeeping, planting organic vegetables, making brooms, and creating tourist attractions, which are the farmers' primary income. Therefore, in addition to agricultural production at the upstream level, there is also an agricultural tourism business as another source of income for the community because it is a cultural area with a simple lifestyle, natural resources, and abundant and beautiful water resources. This is consistent with the research of Tassanee and his team (2018). The spatial context of Ratchaburi province in certifying agrotourism with community participation found that agricultural areas in Ratchaburi province were outstanding and could allow farmers of Ratchaburi province to be sustainable and self-reliant. It is also a source of job creation, income generation, and production of pesticide-free crops, safe for the manufacturers, consumers, and environment.

2) The Community Capital

(1) Human capital It is an important part of driving society and the local economy from the strength of community leaders, agency support, and knowledge about agricultural production. These elements are deemed very important. In fact, the target group perceived it as an important factor in the community's economy at the highest level, consistent with Trongkamon and Nittaya's Guidelines for Strengthening Community Capital to Determine Success Factors at Uttaradit province (2022). It also revealed that both public and private network partners were aware of the community capital and started a campaign to instill outstanding community capital values. It aims to create awareness of cooperation and conservation for new generations. The factors that determine success are enhancing and developing the learning process of the community, building faith and developing the potential of community leaders, and transferring knowledge from practice to implementation and expansion. This is in line with the research of Preiyaporn, *et. al* (2562) whose research dealt with the upgrading of processed product standards of Huai Kan Bakery Participatory Community Enterprise. The paper demonstrated the successful implementation of the community comes from community involvement, so inclusion is still important as individuals can learn and solve problems together to drive the business and be self-reliant.

(2) Social capital Knowledge was exchanged from the community to the organizational level. As a result, the Ban Pok agricultural community has developed its agricultural knowledge and is, therefore, able to continue agricultural activities. In particular, they have set the community as a learning center that is considered lifelong learning. According to Arthit and Supanni's The utilization of social capital of Ban Bang Phrai Community,

Bang Khonthi district, Samut Songkhram province (2012), it was found that Ban Bang Phrai community had the most prominent status of social capital, a strong "social network," resulting in several achievements and awards, followed by "knowledge and wisdom," especially in occupation, and by "sympathy, reciprocity, caring, helping each other," which has been shown from the past to the present. However, the study was in contrast to Nathitakan and Preeyaporn's Knowledge Management for Conserving Arabica Coffee production for sustainable agriculture in the Ban Huai Hom area Mae La Noi district Mae Hong Son province (2561) as this research mentioned that a group of coffee farmers in Ban Huai Hom area did not share knowledge. The target group lacked community participation in the decision-making process, lacked discussion of problems and solutions to farmers' planning process, and lacked the exchange of knowledge, skills, and experiences. In other words, they lacked knowledge management and did not know the characteristics of farmers' tacit knowledge.

(3) Physical capital It was found that the Ban Pok agricultural community had access to the basic utilization system thoroughly due to the support of local authorities including access to information media of the Internet signal that is an important part of the business from direct contact with consumers of agricultural products and processed products which is in line with Wanchai, *et al*'s Community capital and self-management potential for the sustainable development of local communities (2022). Physical capital is a supporting factor for self-management for sustainable development. It has been developed by villagers and government agencies to facilitate people living in the area. The amenities include sub-district health promotion hospitals, schools, non-formal and informal education centers, mosques, houses,

security centers, subdistrict administrative organization offices, sports fields, etc., which are physical capital that the local community has created to meet the needs and manage basic problems that strengthen the welfare system based on development.

(4) Natural capital Ban Pok is an area with a relatively high altitude from the average sea level, 1,200-1,500 meters, resulting in the area remaining cold throughout the year. Therefore, it is suitable for growing cold and subtropical plants, enhancing agricultural products' quality and extending harvest time.

(5) Financial capital In addition to external sources of funding for agriculture—such as BAAC, Mae On district Branch, SML Fund, and Village Fund, Ban Pok Agricultural Community has also created a source of funds within the community from the community enterprise fund which has allocated a share of profits when the group's products have been sold. It can be considered that the community is self-reliant, as Pringkajon's Social Capital Supporting Community Welfare Fund: a case study of Baanna Municipal Community welfare fund, Srinakarin district, Phatthalung province (2016). His study revealed that the community has strong community capital, an important cost that supports community welfare. The Baanna subdistrict Municipality Community Welfare Fund has a form of welfare provision from the community financial organization base. For instance, welfare work is a continuation of the village bank according to the royal initiative focusing on self-reliance. In other words, they managed the funds by themselves.

3) Guidelines to the use of social capital in building economic strength in the community

The Ban Pok tea and coffee growers enterprise group is a community-based business

that is the driving force of the economy from the upstream level. It grows fresh coffee and Assam tea to be processed and sold. For the midstream level, the products include roasted coffee, Assam tea, and ready-to-drink herbs and handicraft products such as tea leaf pillows, basketry, etc. For the downstream level, there are markets to distribute products such as shops in the community and nearby communities, and the markets are important tourist attractions. Consequently, it is determined that the business operation of this market channel is a business partner, in line with Suwanat and Phirakarn's Development of Marketing Channels for Salt Product of Tambon Bana, Pattani (2018). They found that building relationships with merchants and middlemen is important to help distribute products as they could make an agreement where they all can potentially reap the most benefits out of the products they sell. The relationship allows producers to decide the prices and quantities sold to the merchants and middlemen.

Recommendations

According to the study of local resource management, the research team, therefore, agreed that there should be a plan to transfer knowledge to new generations to further develop and create a learning process that can be adopted and used in agricultural activities in the future. In addition, there should be cooperation between community leaders and local authorities to drive community development and capitalization as the main issue leading to the community economy. Most importantly, it should be set as an important agenda in the community development plan to improve the potential of human capital for farmers to be self-reliant, so they can utilize other capitals for maximum benefit.

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