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**Environmental Adult Education: Two Case Studies of
Thai Non-Governmental Organizations Promoting Green Consumerism**

by

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**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Adult Education, Community Development
and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto**

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**ENVIRONMENTAL ADULT EDUCATION: TWO CASE STUDIES OF
THAI NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS PROMOTING GREEN CONSUMERISM**
Noulmook Sutdhibhasilp, Doctor of Philosophy, 1999
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ABSTRACT

This research explored the nature of environmental adult education for urban consumers organized under two Thai non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to promote green consumerism. The *Project for Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers-Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand (PRO-CON Network)* and the *Traditional Medicine for Self-Reliance (TMSR) Project* were selected for the purpose of the study. Three main research objectives are as follows: 1) explore the underlying assumptions of NGOs regarding their promotion of green consumerism; 2) describe the characteristics of the environmental adult education programs provided for urban consumers within the context of the two NGO projects; 3) examine whether environmental adult education embedded in the two NGO projects help influence changes in the nature of the personal, social, and structural relations. A multiple-case study design was applied. Data, collected by various methods, i.e. semi-structured interview, participant observation, survey and documentary research, was analyzed and presented in the form of the two individual case studies.

The study found that green consumerism promoted by the two NGOs incorporates social dimensions which include farmers' economic self-reliance, care for the land and the environment, fair trade, farmers' and consumers' health and general well-being, and increasing environmental awareness among urban consumers.

Environmental adult education for urban consumers was organized on the basis of mutual benefits for consumers and farmers in green consumerism. It was used in an effort to create a network of alliances between urban consumers and farmers, who are both from differing socio-economic backgrounds, and to use the network as an opportunity to create learning moments for both groups. It was approached from a holistic point of view which sees all issues as interconnected and impacting on each other. It is a process of learning wherein one's self-interests are redefined to include other social dimensions.

The study also found that in the two projects urban consumers gained new understanding about farmers' lives and started to see the interconnections between their health, agriculture, and the farmers' overall well-being. Farmers began to ask critical questions about the benefits of modern farming methods and the role of experts in knowledge production. Learning tools in the form of printed materials and study tours appeared to work well for urban consumers. Farmers, on the other hand, learned primarily from horizontal learning networks and from study tours. Face-to-face, informal exchanges of knowledge between and within the two groups not only occurred on a frequent basis but proved to be fairly productive for both groups.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratefulness to *kalayanamitta* (good friends) at OISE. Budd Hall, my thesis supervisor and *khru* (teacher), has helped me navigate the long journey of dissertation writing and through severe personal storms. Margrit Eichler and Edmund O' Sullivan, thesis committee members offered valuable comments and advice. Special thanks to Allan Lauzon for his critical and constructive remarks, Angela Miles for her continuous support in my off-campus community service, and Alan Thomas for introducing me to the rich history of Canadian adult education.

In Chiangmai, Thailand, I would like to *kob koon pen yang ying kha* (gratefully thank), first of all, members of the farmers and consumers clubs, Chomchuan Boonrahong, Prasong Yusuksamran, Thatsanee Palee, Somphit Joompha, and the Northnet Foundation staff, for sharing their insights, time, and friendship with me. In Bangkok, many thanks to Rosana Tositrakul, Verapong Kriengsinyos, Opas Chettakul, and other TMSR staff who were very supportive and helpful.

My doctoral study would never have been completed without the kind assistance from *kalayanamitta* outside OISE. Hans-Peter Kohnke, my intimate housemate and a critical editor, spent many hours editing the final manuscript of my dissertation. Arlene Schenke helped edit the first draft. Amelia Nanni, Marilyn Proctor, and Chris Fung at OISE helped with my school logistics. My four sisters, two brothers, Meao and other nieces and nephews showed their support in our traditional family way through their affectionate teasing. Pa Hom, my aunt, shared her life experience as a farmer with me. Sui Yung Tung, my close friend, patiently listened to new topics of my research topic for months. Miya Narushima, Chutima Sirisamatakarn, Nutiniphan Tantivejakul, Nan

Barikara, Wantanee Kriengsinyos, Nalinee Kangsirikul, M.L. Wannamart Thongtham, Joylaxmi Saiga, Bonita Lawrence, Kim Sherin and her parents, and Joan Harkness who shared their friendship and lent me moral support when it was needed. I also would like to give special thanks to two good friends, Hilda Tiessen and Rongruja Sirsunakorn, who passed away during the writing of my dissertation and, when they were still alive, were there to encourage me in my work. Lastly, I wish to thank the Canadian International Development Agency for granting me a scholarship to come to Canada to pursue my study at OISE.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Research Questions

Introduction

At the core of this dissertation is my interest in the contribution of environmental adult education to the process of social transformation. More specifically, this study concentrates on those aspects of environmental adult education organized for urban consumers through development projects initiated and operated by Thai non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with the promotion of green consumerism. The study attempts to describe the characteristics of environmental adult education as carried out by two NGO projects: the *Project for Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers-Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand (PRO-CON Network)* and the *Traditional Medicine for Self-reliance Project (TMSR)*. Of particular interest is how these two projects have brought together people from different socio-economic backgrounds and roles to work cooperatively in promoting people's health, sustainable farming practices, green consumption, local economy, environmental awareness, and a new relationship between farmers and urban consumers.

Getting Focused

In the past few years, Buddhist scholars and social activists in Thailand have appealed to the middle class to work in solidarity with the poor and other civic groups to create positive social change in Thai society. This appeal has been based on an assumption that the middle class, with its intellectual and economic resources and capacity to effectively challenge state hegemony, has an important social and ethical role to play in both the democratic and the overall social transformation processes. The social and moral

plea to the middle class has not been in vain. In May 1992, middle class groups actively collaborated with grass-roots groups of rural and urban poor in the pro-democracy movement to challenge unjust state power. They organized a massive non-violent, street demonstration against the military leader Suchinda which was later recognized as a middle class uprising.

The May 1992 event led many people, including myself as a middle class person, to believe that the Thai middle class had developed into a powerful force that could play a prominent role in producing political change for democratic reform. Nevertheless, time has shown that after the event, the middle class returned to its usual passivity and failed to show its continuous strength and cohesion to help consolidate democracy (Bunbongkarn, 1996). Since then, I started to question whether there was a way to encourage the middle class to participate more fully in social movements for a just and sustainable society,¹ not only at a time of political crisis, but also on an on-going basis. As an adult educator, I believe that an alternative educational strategy is required that would assist the middle class to be critically aware of the structural problems affecting the poor and would encourage them to participate and take action in the social transformation process. I wanted to find out what an alternative adult education for the middle class would look like and in what context it would take place, but at that time I did not know how and where to start.

In the summer of 1992, I had the opportunity to participate in a workshop organized by the Canada-Asean Partnership Program (CAP) of the University of Calgary.² I learned from the workshop that in Canada there has been a broad movement of many small

¹ See, for example, Sivaraksa (1986; 1990) and Wasi (1987), for the meaning of a just and sustainable society in the Thai context.

² In the workshop, a group of NGO and governmental organization (GO) representatives from Thailand, the Philippines and Canada, travelled together for a month throughout Alberta to meet with various community-based, environmental action groups who were protesting against development projects such as the Old Man River Dam project and a pulp mill project in Athabasca.

community action groups working to participate in the decision-making process of development projects which affect their communities and the environment. I started to see that many informal learning initiatives happened within these environmental action movements. In these movements, environmental adult education has been redefined and reshaped by newly emerging concerns within communities across Canada to address the root economic, social, and political causes of the environmental crisis.

In the workshop, I was introduced to a new agricultural model called *Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)*. CSA is an initiative aimed at building relationships among urban people, their food, the land and farmers (Guenther, 1992). In CSA, urban consumers make a commitment to a farmer by buying a share in a farm that uses sustainable farming practices. This share entitles the shareholder to a guaranteed supply of local, organically grown produce during the annual growing season. This shared farming concept financially and socially incorporates urban consumers into local farming operations. The shareholders may assist farmers on a voluntary basis with farming chores, handling food distribution, workdays or special educational events and festivals on the farm. They share recipes, nutritional knowledge and information about organic farming techniques. In CSA, there were opportunities for "education, of rebuilding the city-country, consumer-producer relationship" (Petkau, 1992, p. 12). Born and raised in a big city like Bangkok, I learned that small actions like CSA provide opportunities for urban people to participate in alternative environmental education and lifestyle.

At the end of the CAP workshop, all participants were asked to write their future plan and how they would utilize what they learned in the workshop in their everyday life. I decided to explore the idea of CSA in more detail. I thought that CSA and its opportunity for environmental education might give me a clue to my question about alternative educational strategies for the urban middle class in Thailand. The study of CSA directed me to explore

broader issues of green consumerism, local economy, and sustainable use of land in agriculture. Like Donahue had commented (1994), environmental education in the context of CSA might help create environmental awareness about, and encourage action on, critical but often overlooked environmental issues related to agriculture such as safe food production, soil conservation, loss of family farms, and so on.

During this time, I started to concentrate on developing research problems for my dissertation. While I was trying to put bits and pieces together, I discovered that in Thailand, there were local development projects organized by NGOs which had a philosophy similar to CSA. I wanted to learn more about these Thai initiatives. The opportunity came when, in the summer of 1993, as part of my home-summer field work sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), I had an opportunity to do short term field work with TMSR. TMSR is one of the very first projects attempting to connect rural and urban middle class people through their complementary interest in organic food consumption and production. I visited organic rice farmers at their farms and later participated in educational activities organized for urban consumers. In one of the TMSR educational workshops held in Bangkok, I met Chomchuan Boonrahong, coordinator of the PRO-CON Network Project located in Chiangmai province. As with CSA principles, the PRO-CON Network Project worked with urban consumers and rural farmers to promote consumption and production of organic food and to strengthen networking between these two groups. Chomchuan and I started to discuss the possibility of doing research work focusing on the project's educational strategies. After returning to Toronto, we continued to correspond regarding the project and how it might fit into my own research work. At that time, the project was in the early stages of implementation, which suited my interests as I thought that it would be helpful to follow the process of environmental adult education from the very beginning. These interests, which I was later able to fit together into the following

research study, include: alternative learning for the Thai urban middle class, CSA and its attempt to create a rural-urban network together with a sustainable food system, and learning in the context of a grass-roots environmental action movement. I then returned to Thailand in February 1995 to do the field research of my first case study with the PRO-CON Network in February 1995. A year later, I contacted Rosana Toesitrakul, key staff of TMSR Project, to see if it was possible for me to use the TMSR Project as the second case study in my research study. TMSR has been implementing their educational activities for almost two decades and I anticipated that a TMSR case study might illustrate long-term educational strategies and their results. Rosana agreed to the research idea and I went back to Thailand again in December 1996 to do my second field research.

Background of Research Problems

This dissertation originated with my interest in the adult learning and educational aspects of social movements working toward social, economic, and environmental justices. In any social movement, education becomes a political act, and development and action are held to be interwoven as part of a broader movement for social justice (Brookfield, 1984). Within these movements, both women and men are learning new ways of understanding the world and their relation to others. They also learn to acquire new sensibilities and skills. Michael Welton (1987) sees that social movements are, perhaps, “the most significant sites for adult learning” (p. 64-65). However, significant as adult learning is in social movements, research on it remains under developed.

In Thailand, NGOs play a crucial role in social movements whose principal aim is to work toward the social transformation of growth-based, global market economic development into need-based and nature-centred development. Thai NGOs function as catalysts and mediators for rural farmers and the urban poor as they are most marginalized

and/or victimized by both the development and political processes. In this regard, NGOs have helped these groups alleviate some of their immediate social and economic problems through community development work. They have also provided learning opportunities to help empower poor rural farmers and urban poor to organize and work as collective groups in asserting their right to participate in those decision-making processes that have effects on their lives. As a result, several civic groups and grass-roots organizations have emerged. In addition, NGOs have worked to raise public awareness on development issues and campaign for legislative and policy reform.

Although NGOs working for social, economic and environmental justices are considered to be urban middle class based, most of them do not work in the interests of the urban middle class. Their policy and ideology in empowering the poor and challenging the state's status quo have been considered by the majority of the middle class as too progressive, further distancing the urban middle class in general from accepting the work of NGOs and the civic and grass-roots groups of the Thai social movements. Only a few NGOs were able to gain wide support and participation from the middle class (Bunbongkarn, 1996).

In recent years, there have been efforts from NGOs in making connections with the urban middle class. One of the well-accepted strategies of NGOs in working with the urban middle class is to promote *green consumerism* which entails the production and consumption of environmentally-friendly products, especially organic food and traditional medicines. The short term goal of the NGOs' green consumerism is to establish groups of health-conscious consumers who will regularly patronize green products and be aware of the negative effects brought about through the industrialization of food, health, and agriculture. It is hoped that such awareness can initiate and enable them to take collective action to solve these environmental problems. On the other hand, the long-term goal of NGOs is to establish a network composed of people from different socio-economic backgrounds to form a new

alliance that will work toward attaining a non-class based network dedicated to a just and sustainable society.

The NGOs' green consumerism campaign seems to be an effective strategy because it responds to a growing concern among urban consumers, mostly middle class, and farmers over the safety of people's food supply, the need for long-term sustainable use of farmland, and the increasing difficulty for farmers to continue to farm as a living. The NGOs' green consumerism campaign is also seen as a combination of a growing grass-roots food movement that tries to rebuild the farmers' livelihood, and relationships among people and the earth.

The green consumerism campaign has led NGOs, for the first time, to work extensively with the urban middle class and provide them with opportunities to learn about food for health, sustainable agriculture, and farmers' problems resulting from modern development. This means that many new learning endeavors, which might enable the urban middle class to gain awareness of the negative impacts of modern development on Thai society, were initiated and developed in these Thai social movements. It also means that processes emphasizing continuity of learning and actions, important elements to social transformation, can occur within and between rural farmers and urban middle class groups in the Thai social transformation process.

Any single individual or segment in society alone cannot do the process of social transformation, an enormous undertaking. Rather, it requires the integration and co-participation of diverse groups who not only see their concerns as interconnected, but understand the need to create meaningful roles and actions in the process of social transformation. The NGO strategy to move toward the establishment of non-class based networks of allies from the disadvantaged and the urban middle class groups in fact coincides with a call from Buddhist scholars and NGO leaders for the middle class to work

collaboratively with, as well as to learn from, the urban poor and rural farmers. It is a fight against what Prawes Wasi ("Reform Of", 1998), an NGO elder and social scholar, calls the *culture of none-of-my-business*. He proposes that

all segments in society must come together to think and take action. Individuals and different sectors in the bureaucracy, politics, business, academics, religion, non-governmental organizations and the mass media must all take part in the process. This requires Thais to change their old mentality from a none-of-my-business attitude to civil-mindedness, that is, empathy for others' problems and teaming up to solve problems together (no page).

The two NGO development projects, PRO-CON Network and TMSR, provide important case studies and a focus for researching issues of environmental adult education aimed at urban consumers of mostly middle class background. Both projects, which have pioneered the promotion of green consumerism and organizing of education for urban consumers, emphasize active participation of urban consumers in project activities. They also see the importance of creating a network of rural farmers and urban consumers who are interested in the health and economic benefits of organic food.

Though this study is primarily about the educational process as it involves the urban middle class, it does not undermine the educational values of the impoverished groups. Both the urban middle class and rural farmers are affected and influenced, though differently, by modern development and the market based economy. Bookchin (1987) sees that the marketplace mentality, embedded in our everyday interaction, constructs all of us to relate to each other and nature solely from an economic standpoint. Nature, work, and relationships, which cannot be figured in terms of monetary value, are reduced to economic terms. The commodification of people, places and ideas constrains people from seeing how their actions can affect others. As Turner (1996) points out,

there is a powerful tendency for market and cash relations to destroy social relations, since they focus attention on the pursuit of individual gain and advantage and not only invoke no concern for the welfare of the other or of

society as a whole, but directly encourage the disadvantaging of the other (p. 6).

For rural communities, modern development has destroyed their subsistence mode of economy and their sense of self-reliance. The rapid economic changes have also created conflicts over the allocation of natural resources, such as land, water and forests, between the industrial sector, the service sector, and the agricultural sector (Bunbongkarn, 1996). For rural communities their struggles are primarily concerned with learning to regain self-confidence and to organize themselves to fight for their right for fair access to natural resources and government services. In the long run, it is gaining full participation in any decision-making that will have effect on their lives. However, it is also important to note that these struggles of farmers are not only political and economic, but also social and cultural.

The Thai urban middle class, like many others in urban centres around the world, “are now dependent upon a technologically driven division of labor that has left most people lacking in the basic skills and knowledge essential to a bioregional and community-centered life style” (Bowers, 1995, p. 5). They have been disconnected from the land and agriculture, regardless of physical distances, owing to a mix of modern lifestyle changes and modern agricultural practices (Kneen, 1993). Further, many urban dwellers feel increasingly alienated from the processes of production. Their alienation also appeared to be the outcome of living in a fragmented, depersonalized and bureaucratized society where “there is no comprehensible connection between the various parts and the whole” (Nozick, 1992, p. 153). Alienation is further reinforced when people feel powerless to alter the course of events that affect their lives or to influence political decisions at the top. In addition, Sulak Sivaraksa (1992), the Thai Buddhist scholar and social critic, points out that people materialism, conspicuous consumption, and competition have influenced both in rural and urban areas brought about by modern development. These values are now

replacing the traditional Thai beliefs and values of living cooperatively, simply and harmoniously with nature. The “era of mass consumerism is upon us. . . .The globalization of consumerism transcends cultural differences and leaves the value of restraints as expounded by Buddhism a relic of the past” (Hewison, 1996, p.149). Therefore, both urban people and rural farmers need to learn the more positive, as well as unlearn the more negative, aspects of how to relate to nature, work, and each other. Hence, the challenge of environmental adult education is “one of learning but also one of unlearning” (Lauzon, 1995 p.332).

Research Questions and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature and role of Thai environmental adult education as developed and practiced by two NGOs working to promote green consumerism. The study’s main focus is on aspects of environmental adult education for urban consumers participating in these two projects. The study also examines whether environmental adult education, as undertaken by the two projects, can contribute to the social transformation process for a more equitable and sustainable society.

These objectives are guided by three principal research questions:

1. What are the underlying assumptions of NGOs in their promotion of green consumerism?
2. What are the characteristics of the environmental adult education programs provided for urban consumers within the context of
 - the Project for Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers-Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand (PRO-CON Network). Chiangmai, Thailand; and

- the Traditional Medicine for Self-reliance (TMSR) Project, Bangkok, Thailand?

3. Does environmental adult education help influence changes in personal, social, and structural relations within the context of the projects? If so, what are those changes?

Significance of the Study

There is a need for research work that examines the role of learning and education within various collective efforts to challenge dominant cultural orientations and to transform these aspects of our world (Welton, 1987). The educational component of development work undertaken by various NGOs and other community-based organizations in Thailand in general is still under researched. The significance of this study is based on the fact that there is an urgent need to explore the new educational dimensions of the Thai social movements in order to determine how the learning and education components organized within the movements can be further strengthened so as to be an effective tool to secure social transformation.

A literature search did not reveal any detailed case studies of environmental adult education for urban consumers in the Thai social movements. Since it has been only recently that NGOs, normally working with small-scale rural farmers and urban poor, have broadened their scope of concern to include urban consumers, the learning component organized for urban consumers has yet to be researched. The closest any study has come to describing participation of urban consumers in NGO projects is by Chomchuan Boonrahong (1994) although the descriptions remained fairly marginal with respect to the study as a whole. Chomchuan researched the thoughts, beliefs, and values of groups, civil organizations, and alternative marketing networks involved in the PRO-CON Network Project. Chomchuan studied one specific producer group, the project marketing board, and

a consumer group in the Chiangmai area. He used participant observation and focus group techniques to collect data. The study gave a descriptive background of the PRO-CON Network Project but did not fully provide detailed information on environmental adult education for consumers.

At most, relevant studies and related documents (Nakabutra & Yaimuang, 1994; Panyakul & Trimanka, 1996; Phongphit, 1993; Project for Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers-Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand [PRO-CON Network], 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996) have focused primarily on farmers or villagers and how *poompanya chaobarn* (local wisdom)³ was utilized in the development process. Further, most studies were content to only describe innovative and experimental farming techniques farmers attempted to implement on their fields; why and how farmers convert to alternative farming practices. Other studies would describe the farmers' learning process and the changes it brought. Some, such as Odormpanich and Yaimuang (1996), studied the *alternative marketing* of green products and mentioned that green consumers were integrated to its promotion. However, the study did not give any details on the consumers' learning process or how education for urban consumers was organized.

Since environmental action at the point of consumption is a recent phenomenon in Thailand, research work in this area is rare. Consumer behaviour and values have been studied primarily in business and marketing schools, focusing on consumers' purchasing behaviours, their values and economic status. Some studies discussed Thai consumers from the consumer rights perspective. For example, Sentell (1982) studied the problems of Thai consumers and how consumer rights could be protected in the existing marketing system. However, the study did not explore the potential of consumers to take

³ *Poompanya chaobarn* or local wisdom is a term NGOs and academics use to describe farmers' essential, traditional knowledge, which has been disregarded in the modern development scheme. See, for example, Phongphit (1993) for details.

environmental action at the point of consumption or see them as part of a wider movement for social transformation.

With these concerns in mind, I would like to explore, record, and reflect on environmental adult education as it is developed and implemented for Thai urban consumers in the Thai social movements for social transformation. It is expected that the study will provide a descriptive, holistic picture of environmental adult education for urban consumers and how learning can possibly raise urban consumers' awareness and stimulate actions in the social transformation process. Since there are differential educational challenges for environmental adult education in different global locations (Hall and Sullivan, 1994), the findings of the study are specific to a local Thai context. However, it may be a reflection and example of how environmental adult education based on local wisdom has been utilized in a movement dedicated to the need to transform society to one that is more ecological, just and participatory. Above all, the research undertaken will be a small voice from a group of people from a non-dominant country like Thailand. It is important to acknowledge this as there is a need to balance uneven power relations in the adult education field where people in dominant parts of the world can make their views better known than those from non-dominant regions. Finally, it is hoped that the findings of the study will contribute to the development of pertinent propositions for further inquiry in the field of environmental adult education.

Definition of Key Terms

Environmental Crisis and Solutions

Concerns over the environment have been present in Thailand for more than two decades (Stott, cited in Chitkasem & Turton, 1991, p. 144). Indeed there is growing recognition that the quality of life and the health of people and of the environment are suffering

as a result of Thailand's headlong rush for economic development (Ross & Thandinitti, 1992 cited in Girling, 1996, p.70). For some, this has led to a need to critique and reevaluate the dominant industrialized values and institutions brought to Thai society by modern development policies and how these values and institutions have contributed to environmental and social crises.

Environmental solutions require more than simply a shift in priorities or technological repair, and that fundamental changes are required if we are to survive growing threats to the environment and the exhaustion of materials which result from a growth-centred, energy-consuming and environmentally-damaging way of life (Cotgrove & Duff, 1980). The central values and ideology of industrialized society imposed on countries in the South through modern development processes need to be challenged and transformed. New kinds of social organizations and appropriate technologies need to be developed along with the spiritual dimension. This study is sensitive to the need to find environmental solutions within this broader scope.

Environmental Adult Education

The major task of education today is "to address the present planetary crisis with the intention of formulating educational goals, consciousness, and strategies for dealing with the crisis" (Berry & Sullivan, 1992, p.6). With the supposition that a sustainable future cannot be achieved without addressing the relationship between environmental problems and current development paradigm, education which promotes an ecologically sustainable future needs to be understood in the context of power and domination over nature, women, and marginalized groups.

Education, which I refer to more specifically as environmental adult education in this study, is

a process of learning, whether formal, non-formal or informal which begins with the daily lived experiences of women and men living in communities. It aims to bring about change in the quality of life and a greater consciousness of personal conduct, as well as harmony between people and other forms of life. It affirms values and actions which contribute to human and social transformation and ecological preservation ("The Officials", 1995, p.3).

Environmental adult education, as it is understood in the context of this study, will be exclusive to informal and non-formal educational settings. It is the process of learning, which relates personal and structural perspectives, and seeks understanding of relationships of power and knowledge (Hall & Sullivan, 1994). It is a transformative form of education, which is geared to personal as well as social transformation. It aims to help us to "become aware of cultural assumptions and social practices that are ecologically disruptive and to bring our cultural practices into balance with the life-sustaining capacities of natural systems" (Bowers, 1993, p.145). In the long run, environmental adult education should encourage us to take action to restructure society to become ecological, just and participatory.

Green Consumerism

Green consumerism used in this study has a broad definition covering the production, consumption, promotion, and distribution of green products. Green products are products that were produced with the least negative effect to the environment , which includes humans, plants, and animals. In this study, green products refer mainly to fruit and vegetable produce.

Urban Consumers

Throughout this study, I deliberately use the term *urban consumers* to signify a certain group of people in modern Thailand. The term urban consumers will refer to people

who live in urban areas and work in the institutionalized and professionalized structures of society as civil servants, doctors, managers, teachers, and others. As a group, they can be considered the middle-strata of Thai society. Though heterogeneous in nature, this middle strata group has commonly been generated out of expanded capitalist production. Urban consumers in this study will also refer to individuals who do not produce basic essentials - food, shelter, clothes and medicine - but acquire them mainly through purchase.

Farmers

Farmers in this study refers to both female and male small-scale rural farmers who grow crops such as rice, corn, tobacco, and fruit trees regardless of whether they own the land or rent it. They participate or used to participate in cash crop production as part of the global system of agri-business. Many of these farmers have been altering their farming practices to accommodate the production of organic food. Organic farmers are also the key participants in the two NGO projects under study in this dissertation.

Organization of the Study

The study was organized into eight chapters as follows:

Chapter one is an introduction to the research problem, research objectives and overall significance of the study.

Chapter two describes environmental adult education and its goal to help urban consumers discover the interconnections between consumption patterns and health, agriculture, environmental degradation, modern development, and social justice issues. Environmental adult education for urban consumer is also presented in the form of a variety of alternative models, i.e. from a transformative perspective, a Feminist perspective, a

Buddhist perspective, as consumer education from a global perspective, and as a consumer education perspective brought forward by Maria Mies (1986).

Chapter three describes the research methodology used in this study, including the research study design, the process of data collection, field research, the method used to analyze the data, and limitations of the study.

Chapter four is organized to provide the readers with a brief description of Thailand and its political-economy, which will then become the context for the research study. The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, a profile of Thailand is presented, followed by descriptions of how Thailand's economy has been tied to the global market economy through colonial and neo-colonial development projects. The Thai political-economy of agriculture and healthcare systems are presented to illustrate the effects of modern development and the global economy on these two systems. The second part is regarding the role played by both the middle class and NGOs as it pertains to the social transformation process.

Chapter five examines the underlying assumptions of green consumerism and the significant ramifications these assumptions have on the NGOs' understanding of the role of urban people in environmentally-friendly food production and consumption, and consequently, on the direction of environmental adult education for consumers. The chapter first introduces the concept and examples of green consumerism developed in Western industrialized countries. The brief history of Thai green consumerism as it has been promoted by business enterprises, government agencies, religious groups, and NGOs is presented at the end of the chapter.

Chapters six and seven present descriptive and analytical case studies of environmental adult education for urban consumers. They include a comprehensive description of two NGO projects from the beginning of their implementation up to the end of

1996. Environmental adult education events involving urban consumers and experienced individually, in a group setting, and across groups are examined. The first case study, the Project for Development of Producers-Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand, is presented in chapter six. The second case study, Traditional Medicine for Self-Reliance Project, is presented in chapter seven.

Chapter eight presents the summary of research problems and method, research findings, implications of environmental adult education, and final conclusion.

Chapter 2

Environmental Adult Education for Urban Consumers

Environmental Education

If educators lack the courage to call for a fundamental transformation, others are less expected to have it (Barzel, 1991, p. 63)

The theory and practice of environmental education have been developed from rural studies and science based disciplines (Sterling, 1996a). In the 1960s and '70s, literature on the subject of environmental issues often highlighted the concern and need for grass-roots groups to challenge the accountability of scientists and experts in dealing with environmental problems (Tilbury, 1994). Since then, environmental education has progressively shifted from a predominantly natural science framework to one that is more complex, emphasizing and stressing instead a more participative, holistic and political education (Sterling, 1992 cited in Sterling, 1996a, p.28). However, in the formal school setting, the emphasis remains on grounding environmental education within the scientific domain (Palmer, 1998). Today, for many people, the perception is that environmental education is limited to environmental protection, involving only nature and wildlife conservation (Apel, & Camozzi, 1996).

Vinke (1992) reports that in so-called Third World countries there has been a gradual shift in environmental education from an emphasis on plant and species conservation to wider issues on sustainable use of resources, pollution prevention, recycling and energy conservation, and in some cases ozone depletion and global warming. Governmental agencies, the media, and NGOs play crucial roles in the promotion of environmental education. NGOs focus their environmental education activities on either one particular target group or a wider audience or both. Most of them

promote environmental education with the goal to stimulate ecologically sound behaviour. Some use environmental education as a means to accomplish some level of environmental justice, e.g. to encourage those who were most affected by environmental degradation to undertake action against those who have caused these problems.

The most common forms of environmental education are awareness-building campaigns and transfers of environmental knowledge (Apei & Camozzi, 1996; Sterling, 1996a). In this predominant mode of environmental education, the public or target group will receive knowledge or information generated by professionals with the intent to create awareness and eventually, it is hoped, to induce behavioural change. Sterling (1996a) sees that this kind of environmental education is “essentially technocratic and transmissive, centreing on awareness and behavioural change, and is most commonly associated with a top-down process with intended and preconceived outcomes” (p. 209). He points out that the weakness of this kind of environmental education is that the power of knowledge creation is still with those who are already in power. The locus of change is therefore outside target groups. Sterling further criticizes the predominant mode of environmental education as a depoliticized educational strategy which does not go far enough to create ecological sustainability. Fundamentally, environmental issues are also political struggles (Robottom & Hart, 1995). Political, economic, legal, social, cultural, and technological questions should become the central themes of environmental education. Thus, environmental education has to be “ideological and critical, opposing the domination of the ethos of consumption and of acquisition and also opposing politics which maintains them” (Barzel, 1991, p. 61).

Education for Sustainability¹

Sterling (1996b) proposes the concept of *Education for Sustainability* or education with an ecological context which has a potential to create ecological sustainability. He sees that education that would play a role in transforming a society to an ecological one is influenced by the interplay of many radical ideas and traditions of the *new environmental paradigm*.² For Sterling, education for sustainability is purposive and indicative but there is no prescription for it. It is essentially a *participative* and *transformative* form of education built on existing transformative practices in education geared toward personal and social transformation. There are a wide range of experiences here, relating for example to progressive, experiential, human-scale, gender and critical education. Others educational practices include indigenous ways of learning, popular education, holistic education, global education, Buddhist education, and participatory research.

In addition, Sterling (1996a) emphasizes that education for sustainability needs to be based on a constructive educational approach which is bottom-up and centres on capacity building, self-organization and determination. It requires the active participation of people in the solution and prevention of environmental problems. The approach is in tune with a democratic process and community building, a pre-requisite for sustainability. Sterling concludes that learning needs to be an integral, intrinsic and

¹ In this study, sustainability refers to nature's and people's sustainability which involves a recognition that nature is the primary source of sustenance (Shiva, 1992). Sustainability is a deeply cultural issue rather than a technical challenge. It requires a fundamental rethinking of world view, and patterns of activity which integrate ecological sustainability with social justice (Sterling, 1996b).

² According to Milbrath (1989 cited in Sterling, 1996b, p.19-20), this new environmental paradigm seeks to counter and offer alternatives to the dominant social paradigm. Broadly speaking, it is democratic, more ecocentric, socially concerned and integrative. Though different in their ideological stance, these alternative ideas have some commonalities in their critique of existing society and their visions of alternative values, social relationships, and institutional forms.

continuous part of the social transformation process because of its essential role in changing modern consciousness to an ecological one.

Environmental Adult Education from a Transformative Perspective

Our current time constitutes a transformative moment demanding a learning context which begins to take into account the limitations and sustainable possibilities of the natural world (Berry & Sullivan, 1992, p. 6).

Currently, the ecological crisis is considered to be a major challenge in the field of adult education (Chapman, 1993; Clover, 1998; Hall, 1996; Lauzon, 1995). This challenge is based on the fact that the environment and our common future depend on the decisions of adults and that we cannot afford to wait for the next generation to address the pressing environmental problems we now face ("The Environment", 1997). According to Youngman (1996), politically, adults have full rights and responsibilities as citizens and, economically, they are involved in some way or other in the world of work. They are citizens, consumers, employees, and parents. This distinctive character of adults in terms of their political and economic situation opens up possibilities for forms of education which are less subordinate to the dominant ideology than those of children and which may openly challenge the dominant capitalist status quo. Youngman sees that adult education can potentially contribute to a model which challenges the predominant social relations of production and proposes an alternative approach to development. However, there are currently two traditions which co-exist side by side in adult education: on the one hand, adult education as a force for social transformation and, on the other hand, as a profession which concentrates on the delivery of expert services (Selman, 1995). It is adult education from the social transformation view, defined in terms of "the action of people directed to develop their individual and

collective intellectual capacity to direct and control the transformation process“ (“Europe Moves”, 1995 p.7), which this research work is based on.

In response to the ecological challenge, Hall and Sullivan (1994) see that the educational framework appropriate for the ecological movement must be visionary and transformative and must clearly go beyond the conventional educational outlooks we have cultivated for many centuries. They explore adult education within an ecological context and have developed the term *Transformative Learning*. This term encompasses various concepts rather than displacing other work. Transformative learning draws on the entire range of learning processes including the wealth of thinking of educators working in adult education, community-based literacy, popular education, feminist education or other social movement locations.

Transformative learning supports a shift away from the dominant global market myth, which glorifies the accumulation of personal wealth without concern for the environment, toward alternative visions of ecological sustainability. It is about contributing to the transformation of structures of power and domination and a vision of what an alternative might look like (Hall & Sullivan, 1994). Clover (1998) adds that the vision of transformative learning revolves around building economic prosperity, health and social justice as well as the protection of the environment. It is about self-awareness, critique, and creation which work together as three simultaneous moments.

Transformative learning , according to Hall and Sullivan, is defined as

a process of learning, whether formal, non-formal or informal which begins with the daily lived experiences of women and men living in communities and is linked to changing the root causes of environmental destruction or damage. Transformative learning relates personal and structural perspectives and seeks understanding of relationships of power and knowledge. It is also concerned with knowing ourselves as a mammalian species trying to live more lightly, cooperatively and

creatively in the biosphere. Learning implies dynamic, life-long processes of discovering and re-discovering what we know about nature, and how we live and teach and learn from one another within our differing environments (p.2).

Clover, Follen, and Hall (1998) further propose some guidelines for environmental adult education which should

- critically examine the root causes of the environmental crisis;
- make links between environmental and other social issues;
- be experiential, active and fun;
- analyse the social construction of nature;
- begin from people's experiences, emotions and locations;
- draw on people's own potential to address and find solutions to their own problems;
- contain an analysis of gender and other issues of power;
- make links between the local and the global;
- encourage people to re-connect with the natural world and stimulate a deeper understanding of home and place by using nature and the community as teachers and sites of learning;
- encourage reflection and personal and collective evaluation;
- promote concrete action (p.2)

Feminist Approach to Environmental Adult Education

The development of women's power as subjects in the historical process and as active citizens of the world have significantly contributed to the environmental, anticolonial, antiracist, and social justice movements (Miles, 1996). It is women, globally, who, because of their socialized roles as sustainers of families, are usually the first to become environmentalists (Seager, 1993). According to Tilbury (1994), women's contribution to environmental education has come from two sources. First, women are predominant in the transmission of environmental knowledge and values via their role in nurturing and taking care of the family well-being. Secondly, their unique feminist

perspective takes a different environmental outlook and approach to dealing with environmental problems.

In many countries both in the North and the South, women are working to challenge assumptions and meanings about knowledge, language, power and education (Clover, 1995). They have contributed a great deal to the development of alternative educational strategies and practices. A reclamation of emotion and subjectivity, for example, is an important feminist contribution to environmental education (Booth, 1998). It challenges the assumptions that rationality and objectivity are the only ways of knowing and thus exclude other forms of knowledge. Women's way of knowing, which emphasizes experience, feeling, and subjectivity as legitimate ways of knowing, is adopted and effectively integrated in environmental education programs.

In the South, women have actively participated in ecological struggles to conserve forests, land and water. They have demonstrated through their actions for survival that nature is the foundation of economic life through its function in life-support and livelihood. They have shown that modern development is another form of patriarchy's economic vision based on the exploitation, destruction, or exclusion of women, nature, and other cultures (Shiva, 1989). In other words, they have struggled against and challenged the most fundamental categories of Western patriarchy, its concepts of nature and women, and of science and development. Shiva concludes that women in the South and their ecological struggles have contributed to two central shifts in thinking related to knowledge and wealth. In Shiva's own words,

the first relates to our understanding of what constitutes knowledge, and who the knowers and producers of intellectual values are. The second involves concepts of wealth and economic value and who the producers of wealth and economic value are (p. 224).

In addition, women's knowledge of ecological struggle and survival, according to Shiva (1989, 1992), is inclusive. She explains that reclaiming the feminine principle as a non-violent, non-gendered and humanly inclusive alternative can be applied as the category of liberation for all. "In recovering the chances for the survival of all life, they are laying the foundations for the recovery of the feminine principle in nature and society, and through it the recovery of the earth as sustainer and provider" (Shiva, 1989, p.224).

Ecofeminists see the domination of both nature and women by a masculinistic principle that tends to favour men (Androcentrism) as the root cause of the modern crisis (Merchant, 1992). Hence, non-sexist education and environmental education need to go hand in hand.

When one speaks of feminist education or environmental education, the point of departure will always be the same: the proposal's thrust is education for new relationship to be established between men and women in societies and between societies and nature. Every[thing] occurs holistically. There is no way of fragmenting and separating the proposals (Viezzer, 1995, p. 3).

Some ecofeminists have employed the feminist ethic of care as a way to resolve the crisis in the relationship between humanity and the natural world. The feminist ethic of care is based on the assumption that women's nature and socialization produce a person more likely to identify with others and to care about those others. The feeling of caring and a sense of personal connection posits a person within all the linkages of relationships. This sense of personal connection and caring about objects and actions is essential in order for people to act in an ethically sound manner to others and the natural world. This principle of care and personal connection should be cultivated for both women and men (Booth, 1998).

Education from a Buddhist Perspective

Buddhism,³ manifest in the Thai context, is the most fundamental source in providing a profound critique of modern industrial development for Thai society. While the modern development model tries to construct a competitive society with a greed-based, growth economy, Buddhism promotes a partnership society with a need-based, sustainable economy (Badiner, 1990). From a Buddhist standpoint, humanity must cultivate awareness and less self-centred attempts to master nature. Moreover, cultivation must develop from within (Sivaraksa, 1990).

Education from a Buddhist perspective means learning to develop ourselves to become fully human. It is an on-going process which happens throughout our lives. Educated people, according to Buddhist principles, are those who are already well advanced or, to use the modern term with a different sense and meaning, *developed* (Phra Thammapidok, 1996a). The major task of Buddhist education is to assist a person to develop herself to reach absolute goodness and to develop a sustainable civilization of a society that supports systems of relationships in which all things relate to each other in reciprocal and productive ways. Developing oneself and society are thus seen as interrelated and interdependent (Phra Rajavaramuni, 1983).

A good education according to Buddhism is holistic in nature (Phra Rajavaramuni, 1983). The three aspects of life which education should help develop in a person are:

³ According to Bobilin (1988), **Buddhism in Thailand** operates at two levels: as ideology and as a utopia. It is ideological when it “legitimizes the existing social order, defends the dominant values, and enhances the authority of the dominant class” (p. 1). Buddhism is considered as utopian when it “reveals the ills of the social order, evokes criticism of the dominant groups, and releases energy for social change” (p. 1).

1) *Sila* or moral responsibility towards others and society. *Sila* governs a person's behaviour related to her physical and social environments. It comprises an expression of social responsibility of the individual.

2) *Samadhi* or the development of mental qualities. *Samadhi* accounts for earnestness, resolution and steady progress in a journey to ethical path.

3) *Panya* or the wisdom of an enlightened world view. It includes an enlightened world view based on the insights into the reality of life (the impermanence and not-self nature of things, and the original dependency of all phenomena which implies that all changes are subject to causes and conditions resulting in an ethics of action with knowledge and effort which should not be confused with accidentalism or fatalism) and wisdom to use these insights to organize one's life and society according to this reality of life (Phra Rajavaramuni, 1983, p. 32, 39)

In his attempt to apply Buddhism to current social conditions, Phra Thammapidok (1996a), a critical Thai Buddhist monk, points out that the capitalist economic system brought by modern development is the most powerful, external force imposed by the West onto Thailand. It is one-sided development emphasizing only unlimited economic growth and material success. As a result, it has created negative environmental and social impacts.

Hence, at this critical period of time, education has two major roles to play. First, to question whether the existing economic system (capitalism) will bring about the prosperity and common good for all as it claims. Education should assist people to realize whether, in the long run, the present economic system should be continued or whether we want to find alternatives. Secondly, to stimulate people to be aware of the negative effects of the capitalist economy and to develop themselves to be

unsusceptible to its negative force or to at least deal with these negative impacts in a constructive way.

In order for education to counter the forces of capitalism, people need to regain equilibrium in relation to the material world. For this purpose, education should help a person develop three main things:

First, how can a person use her senses (perception of eyes, ears, tongue, body) appropriately to understand issues/information accurately and rightly, and to apply what they learn in a useful way? Since the present time is the age of information, educated persons from a Buddhist point of view are those who are able to distinguish between bad, misleading information (i.e. advertising that induces us to buy more) and good information in order to gain appropriate understanding that benefits themselves and others (Phra Thammapidok, 1996a, p.37).

Second, how does a person learn to consume with wisdom or *Panya*? It is to discover how we can have a proper relationship with our surrounding environment or with the four basic essentials in life (food, shelter, medicine, and clothes) and technology. In a consumer-driven society, people desire to consume excessively and indulge themselves in material possession. Excessive consumption creates problems for people's health and environment. People therefore should consume with wisdom and in equilibrium by consuming according to their true needs to improve quality of life (Phra Thammapidok, 1996a, p. 38-39).

Third, how does a person balance herself in a material world through the act of *giving* and *taking*? In order not to be influenced by the existing economic system which induces people to take more than what they really need, we should follow the natural law which is based on a balanced process of giving and taking. Relating to the material world by merely taking without limit will make people lose equilibrium. They will compete

with and take advantage of others and create trouble and unhappiness for themselves. *Dana*, or giving, will make both individual and society gain equilibrium and therefore there will be less exploitation. When we set our minds to give, our minds and our relationships with others will change qualitatively. We will start to understand the meaning of being human, and the moral code of compassion and sympathy will follow as we focus on another person outside ourselves and see her happiness, suffering, and needs. Practicing giving is therefore a basis to help us develop happiness and freedom in ourselves. Freedom means we can be happy without depending on material consumption (Phra Thammapidok, 1996a, p. 61-64).

Buddhist education also helps a person to develop the wisdom to know, to understand, and be able to distinguish different kinds of *self-interest*. An educated person is one who understands self-interest in a broader framework than her own interest. Phra Thammapidok (1996b, p.1-3) says that interests can be identified as:

1) *Primary self-interest*. This is an interest a person gains when her sensory perceptions (eyes, ears, tongue, body) are satisfied. A person who sees interest at this stage will see things on a basis of like or dislike.

2) *Instrumental self-interest*. This is the interest which is based on utility purpose. A person will do things according to what is useful and effective for her, i.e. to eat properly out of concern for one's health.

3) *Self-interest that encompasses others*. At this point, a person sees her interests more in depth and refined. She will see the inter-relationship of her interest with others' and with all beings in the ecological system. When a person sees interest in this perspective, she will deal with problems for the sake of the well-being of the overall life system. She will have achieved human happiness through gaining equilibrium in her relationships.

Phra Thammapidok (1996b) adds that a person's altruistic happiness is related to solutions to environmental problems. To realize the inter-relationship of one's interest with the interest of others will help people learn to give and be willing to trade their (claimed to be) happiness (relating to material possession and consumption) for the survival of the planet without conflicts in their minds.

Consumer Education with an Environmental Concern

Consumer education in general shares with the rest of the consumer movement the improvement of material standards of living and quality of life for all citizens.

Bannister (1997) defines consumer education as

the process of gaining knowledge and skills to manage personal resources and to participate in social, political, and economic decisions that affect individual well-being and the public good (p.139).

Consumer education normally takes place in formal school systems, workplaces, communities and at home. Consumer educators are parents, teachers, community leaders, consumer advocates, governmental agencies, business consumer representatives, academics, and the media. Government agencies, for example, organize consumer education activities with the primary aim of disseminating information. Some agencies offer workshops, seminars, press releases, and media appearances on current consumer issues.

Consumer education is multidisciplinary in nature and mostly combines relevant information with action-oriented participation to effect change. The overall curriculum is normally designed to increase consumers' problem solving skills to cope with conditions of the marketplace and to participate as citizens in influencing change in the political, economic, and social arenas. Four areas which are normally included in consumer

education are consumer decision-making, economics, personal finance, and consumer rights and responsibilities (Knapp, 1991).

Currently, some consumer organizations extend their traditional activities to include environmental and social considerations as areas of work. In Australia, for example, many consumer organizations, whether working in testing or campaigns, have picked up the challenge and attempted to provide information, advice and education to individual consumers. One of these educational programs, for example, provides general educational materials on how to behave in greener ways (recycling, composting, etc.) and how to determine misleading green advertising claims (Sylvan, 1997).

However, these educational efforts have limitations. In fact, providing information or helping consumers to know what they should do from a green perspective does not necessarily mean that they would choose to do what is good for the environment. In many cases, there is also a problem in acquiring accurate information on the environmental friendliness of products. Information on environmental friendliness is not always understandable, accessible or reliable (Martell, 1994). On many of the key issues, consumers will never really have all of the information. For example, it is difficult to find out where the food we eat comes from and how it was produced can be totally unclear. Given time constraints, not many consumers can, or are willing to, research in detail every single item they buy.

In addition, Wagner (1997), in his cognitive study on environmentally oriented consumption regarding how successful learning can be achieved among green consumers, gives recommendations for consumer education. He suggested that learning about environmentally oriented consumption should be organized on a step-by-step basis; educational processes should include good examples of green behaviour to

green consumers. For Wagner, green behaviours should be directed towards pragmatism rather than scientific correctness.

Jackson and Wasnich (1997) discuss in *Consumer Choice in an Ecological Context*, a course designed for undergraduate students. The course aimed to help students 1) gain information on the environmental consequences of certain consumption patterns or behaviours; and 2) develop analysis and implementation skills to shape environmentally friendly consumer choices. The overall course activities were designed to encourage students to use a holistic approach to environmental problems by integrating information from other courses they studied and learning to apply strategies to change general attitudes and behaviours.

Jackson and Wasnich adopted Uusitalo's way-of-life model, described as "being indicative of the 'whole of activities and interests of a group or a person living under certain living conditions'" (Uusitalo, 1986 cited in Jackson & Wasnich, 1997, p.20), as a general framework in the course. The way-of-life approach sees consumption patterns as a value-laden product of social beliefs, norms, and values that are reproduced as general societal patterns. For example, when society gives greater value to more efficient uses of time, consumers will prefer fast food consumption to save on preparation time so that they can spend their time at other activities deemed to be more productive. Consumption patterns or decisions are therefore seen as tradeoffs. Fast food consumption increases more waste and overall energy use in its production, but as long as time is more greatly valued than the natural environment, consumers will be less likely to change their consumption pattern.

The course encourages students' learning by considering factors that affect consumer choice or input, and then applying them to the way-of-life model. These

factors, which include economics, technology, culture, and psychology, exert an external influence on household resource allocation. Students are assigned to investigate and analyze how these factors are linked and influence each other. At the end of the course, the students then design behavioural change strategies which would help to minimize environmental impacts that may arise from their consumer choices. They then evaluate the various methods as a means to promote environmentally oriented consumer behaviours.

Consumer Education with a Global Perspective

Consumer education with a global perspective is based on a method that applies global education to consumer education in a formal school system. Global education, as elaborated by Greig, Pike and Selby (cited in Hall & Sullivan, 1994), refers to “an integrative educational process which draws together the complementary, interdependent and mutually illuminating principles of development, environment, human rights and peace education” (p.6).

The underlying assumption of consumer education with a global perspective, according to Engberg (cited in McGregor, 1996, p. 14), is that it considers the family or household as an ecosystem or an environment where decisions are made that can lead to a better quality of life for individuals and for all. Consumer education with a global perspective will assist individuals and families to critically question consumption, production, distribution and institutional practices that shape the world, and take action to better it. The production and consumption patterns in industrialized countries, which have been designated to satisfy human needs with little or no considerations of the long term effects on the environment, need to be challenged and transformed. In addition,

global consumer education would help students challenge materialism and commercialism by questioning material accumulation as a major driving force in their lives.

Consumer education with a global perspective involves consumer ethics, an ecosystem perspective, a cradle to grave product and service perspective, and concepts of local, domestic and global marketplaces. McGregor (1996) concludes that global consumer education is “holistic in its approach; macro in scope; and advocates for ecological responsibility, humanitarianism and doing things in context ” (p.15).

Maria Mies' Consumer Education

Maria Mies (1986), in her book, *Patriarchy and the Accumulation on a World Scale* , explored the possibility for a *Consumer Liberation Movement*, where women from industrialized countries would attempt to liberate themselves from being passive consumers. This consumer liberation scheme can be applied to middle-class women worldwide as they are often the important agents of consumption, which places them as unwitting collaborators with the capitalist-patriarchal system.⁴

Mies' consumer liberation calls for women consumers to become aware of how the destruction of nature and people in the South has been incorporated and materialized into commodities, i.e. how the ecology of the producing areas and countries has become unbalanced and the increasing degree to which labour exploitation of Third

⁴ The ideological debates regarding the image of the First World housewife in regard to consumption and power, and projected onto her, are both negative and positive. As Miller (1995) says, “She commands the fate of developing countries as one of poverty or relative affluence. But she also commands the progressive activity by which consumption is used to extract culture as the self-construction of humanity from the intractable but essential institutions of the modern world, such as the market or bureaucracy” (p.34). In any case, the First World women continue to carry the image of consumer decision-makers.

World women and children has occurred. Women consumers should try to work collectively to trace back and find out in what working and environmental conditions goods are produced. This collective action by consumers, in Mies' opinion, can then be used as an educational tool to contest the hegemony of big business.

Further, Mies proposes that women should boycott products which are basically harmful, superfluous, and luxurious including all items which reinforce the tendency to define women as sex-objects and super-mothers. Women's groups and organizations must work to establish a wider public forum for their boycott campaign. They should start by publicly announcing their boycott campaign, accompanying their actions with information and analysis of the exploitative relations engendered in the products and respective corporations they have selected as the targets of their campaign. To accomplish this, Mies also calls for solidarity between so-called First and Third world women to study certain products selected according to the ecological and social criteria spelt out above and to conduct a thorough examination of the origin of these products and the conditions under which they were produced.

However, Mies thinks that to know or gain information about the production process in an international, social and sexist division of labour is not an easy task. The division of the production and consumption process in the global economy has served to "mystify almost totally the exploitative relations incorporated in the commodities" (Mies, 1986, p. 227). A feminist consumer liberation movement, in Mies' opinion, therefore, has to start with

1. a de-mystification of the commodities, a re-discovery of the exploitation of women, nature, colonies, inherent in these commodities.
2. an effort to transform the market relations which link us *de facto* to women, men, animals, plants, the earth, etc., into *true human relations*. This means to re-discover concrete people behind the abstract commodities (p.227).

Mies believes that this learning process, or *conscientization* as she calls it, would clarify the actual existing relations within which we live and work, both as objects and as subjects. It is much more powerful than any knowledge we have learned from secondary sources or so-called experts. Conscientization would increase the learners' autonomy regarding knowledge about nature, nonwestern peoples and their lives and struggles, and enable learners to decide what they need and what they do not need. It would help individuals and groups extend their subjective freedom once they had gained social awareness of all the exploitative relations inherent in commodity production. The formation of action-and-reflection-groups would then help liberate women in affluent societies or classes from patterns of over-consumption which engender exploitative practices and relationships endemic in a global capitalist economy. Mies' model of consumer liberation could quite possibly create such significant personal and social transformations that it just might have the capacity to undermine the capitalist-patriarchal system. It has the added advantage that it can be implemented immediately by just about anyone.

Mies recognizes that the products of the new growth-industries are no longer meant to satisfy basic human needs. In this sense, she proposes that people begin to choose different satisfiers from what the industry tells us. These true satisfiers, in Mies' opinion, neither further deteriorate the relationship between human beings and the ecology, nor perpetuate the existing patriarchal relationship between men and women. The final goal is to restore a truly needs-based consumption pattern (Mies, 1991).

The implication of Mies' consumer liberation for consumer education and environmental adult education is profound. It uses the educational strategy of

information provision as well as critical reflection to help people become aware of the inherent exploitation of nature and people in the South in the production process and to take collective action to change it. Any boycott campaign should be articulated collectively from among the networks of women both in the North and the South. Mies' consumer liberation also requires that people consider altruism and non-material possession as their central values.

Conclusion

Environmental adult education that pertains to issues of the survival of the earth should be transformative as well as visionary. It should challenge the predominant social relations of production and propose an alternative approach to development.

Environmental adult education should include a process to increase "awareness of how the assumptions, values, technologies, and categories of thinking of a culture influence how humans relate to the environment" (Bowers, 1996, p. 5). It should help a learner to assess ecologically the role of popular lifestyles as well as specific institutions and policies which guide our harmful choices and behaviour. It should help to promote a shift in knowledge creation and include various forms of knowledge. It should help to sensitize and mobilize citizens and communities from different sectors of society and decision-makers towards sustained environmental action and to live harmoniously with the natural world. It should be the kind of education which prepares people to learn to live as part of the natural world, rather than above it.

Adult consumer education needs to go beyond the narrow self-interest of consumers concerned only with choosing good quality products and the best purchases. It should be taught in a more critical way by examining our personal consumption

patterns in relation to a wider context of environmental, social, economic and sexual exploitation. Environmental adult education for urban consumers should start from individuals and their personal experiences and should eventually influence values and behavioural changes in both the person and the group.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Research Design

A case study design was chosen for this research because it was determined to be appropriate for the recording of information rich in real life events. According to Merriam (1988), case study research design is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (p.16).

Yin (1989) further elaborates that a case study is an empirical inquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life contexts; when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are used (p.23).

The use of a case study research design is justified by the fact that the boundaries of NGO project activities, the phenomenon of most interest to the researcher, are sometimes indistinguishable within real-life contexts. Its strength lies in its ability to deal with various sources of evidence such as documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations (Yin, 1989). It is also a suitable research design for presenting basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted (Merriam, 1988).

Since two case studies were being presented, a multiple-case study strategy was used. These two particular NGO projects were selected and presented because both projects promoted green consumerism and worked extensively with urban consumers. I made an attempt to compare their educational approach for urban consumers and drew conclusions from the case studies in a comprehensive way.

Data Collection Process

Multiple data gathering techniques were used in this research study: that is, semi-structured interviews, participant-observation, survey research, and a review of NGO project documents and materials such as progress and evaluation reports, newsletters, books, and training hand-outs. Multiple data gathering techniques help a researcher gain a better and more substantive picture of reality because each data gathering technique reveals slightly different aspects of the same social and symbolic reality (Berg, 1989)

Field Research

I made two trips to Thailand to conduct field research. The first field research, which involved the PRO-CON Network Project in Chiangmai province, was conducted from February to mid June, 1995. The second field research, this time involving the TMSR Project in Bangkok, was conducted from December, 1996 to February, 1997. Research participants were selected from those persons involved in project activities. They include organic farmers, urban consumers, NGO project staff, NGO workers from other projects, and green store owners.

The First Field Research

Making rapport

I spent the first month at the research site familiarizing myself with project staff, participants and the site. The PRO-CON Network Project office is located in downtown Chiangmai. Organic farmers groups and their farms, on the other hand, are spread throughout Chiangmai province. Most project activities took place in Chiangmai province.

In the first week of February, 1995, I had a meeting with Chomchuan (project coordinator), two project staff, and an NGO worker from Phayao province who is part of the Northern Network of Alternative Agriculture. This meeting was my formal introduction to the project staff. Since there were only five project staff,¹ it was not difficult to get accustomed to all of them. I told the group briefly about my project proposal and, at the meeting, handed out a summary of my research proposal translated into Thai. No questions were raised at that point, probably because this introduction was regarded as little more than a greeting or welcoming meeting.

In the first month of my stay in Chiangmai, I participated in project activities as an observer. Though I was invited to join preparation meetings for some training sessions and events they were organizing, I was hesitant to give any comments for fear of imposing myself on the group. I still felt like an outsider in the first few weeks. Some meetings were conducted in the northern dialect. I am from Bangkok and can understand about 80 per cent of this dialect. I did not ask for clarification of words I did not know in order to avoid unnecessary interruption of the meetings. Instead I jotted down words and learned their meaning later by asking a friend or I tried to guess from the context they used. It took me a few weeks to feel familiar with the basic vocabulary they used in the meetings, such as the names of vegetables, which often differed from Bangkok Thai. There was no language barrier when I spoke with the NGO staff or interviewed urban consumers, as all of them spoke to me in Bangkok Thai even if some spoke the northern dialect in everyday life.

Observing and participating in project activities

In mid February, I travelled with a group of organic farmers, NGO staff from the

¹ Two PRO-CON Network support staff did not attend the meeting that day but I had an opportunity to meet them later.

Northern Alternative Agriculture Network, urban consumers, and governmental agricultural extension workers for five days to visit organic farmer groups and farms in Northeast and Central Thailand. Again, I felt reluctant to perform the role of researcher - to inquire and ask people questions. To do so would have been as if I were intruding on their private lives. I could not help thinking that they were not merely there to *answer* my questions. I just talked to them as one of the participants in the group. Later, I realized that by not focusing on my research questions so much from the beginning or trying to *squeeze* as much as information as possible from project participants was somewhat helpful to me. It helped me to see people as people, not as my informants or subjects of inquiry. It also gave me a chance to experience the study tour as a participant. The study tour gave me an opportunity to develop a good rapport and to recognize the people involved in the PRO-CON Network Project by their faces and names.

From mid February onward, there were a few activities organized by the project and the Northern Network of Alternative Agriculture. Chomchuan would tell me the schedule a week or two in advance. I was invited to participate in all activities and soon realized how tight the work schedule of the NGO staff was. Most of the time, they worked six or seven days a week, depending on the farmers schedule and what kind of activities they had organized. I had to adjust to this on-going schedule. Some of the activities I participated in were, for example, Producers Meet Consumers Day Seminar; an evaluation session of the Producers Meet Consumers Day; Organic Vegetable Production, Marketing and Promotion Seminar; an annual meeting of the Northern Alternative Agriculture Network; Training of Organic Farmer Trainers; and meeting with international NGO guests.

After having participated in several of the activities, I started to feel familiar with the NGO work routine and began seeing myself as part of the group. I was encouraged

to give comments but I still felt restrained to talk. I helped with some errands, but most of the time, each day was occupied with meetings, seminars, training, study tours and so forth. From time to time, I met organic farmers and NGO workers from the National Alternative Agriculture Network. In one meeting, I met organic farmer representatives from all over Thailand. I also met members of the consumers club at these meetings. Whenever possible, I visited the Kamtieng organic farmers market which is held every Saturday morning.

Interviewing urban consumers and NGO staff

In March, I started the interviews by interviewing eight members, four women and four men, of the *Chiangmai's Consumer and Environmental Protection Club*.² My criteria was to interview those who held key functions as well as were active in the consumers club. Some people I interviewed knew me from earlier field trip we had taken together and with them it was easy to make an appointment. The interviews took place at either the houses or offices of the participants. Before the interview began, I introduced myself and told them briefly the purpose of this research study. I asked their permission to tape record the interview and promised to send a copy of the transcription to them. To make them feel free to give comments without feeling concerned about the negative consequence of their remarks, I told them that their identity would not be revealed in the research report. They read the letter of consent (Appendix A) which I translated into Thai and they signed it afterwards. I had a set of guided questions (Appendix B) to ask participants. Some additional questions were asked at each interview for probing or when some answers led to new insights. Each interview took approximately 30 to 45 minutes. One interview was longer than an hour. All the

² I will refer to the Chiangmai's Consumer and Environmental Protection Club as the *consumes club*.

interviews were conducted in Thai and fully transcribed. Later, I sent a copy of the transcription to each of them for correction. I planned to conduct a second interview with each informant if time allowed, but did not have a chance to do so.

Five project staff were also interviewed. I had another set of guided questions (Appendix B) for the interview to be used with NGO staff. All interviews took place at the project office. I followed the same procedure as with members of the consumers club and tape recorded all the interviews. All the tapes were transcribed word by word and the transcription was sent to each participant to review.

Interviewing Farmers.

The interviews with farmers did not start till the third week of March. Since, at that time, there were nine farmers' groups who were members of the *Organic Food Producers for Health and Environment Club of Chiangmai*,³ with limited time and budget I decided to focus only on three groups. I discussed the matter with Chomchuan and he suggested that I should focus on farmers groups that were active and had been involved in organic farming for a significant period of time. This information would also be helpful to the project because they wanted to know why some groups were more active than others. I agreed with his suggestion and decided to interview nine farmers from three relatively active groups. The nine included five women and four men who are key persons in each organic farmers group and/or actively participate in group activities. I also visited each of the three villages, where the nine farmers lived at least once or twice, for a night or two and took time to visit organic farms and to develop a rapport with them. Interviews were done at the farmers' houses in the villages except for three

³ I The term *farmers club* will be used when referring to the Organic Food Producers for Health and Environment Club of Chiangmai.

interviews which took place at the organic farmers market in Chiangmai city. I used guided interview questions (Appendix B) which were slightly different from those I had used with urban consumers. I followed the interview procedure in the same way I did with urban consumers and NGO staff. All the interviews were conducted in Thai and fully transcribed. None of the farmers had problems understanding my Bangkok Thai. Most male farmers spoke to me in Bangkok Thai mixed with some northern Thai vocabulary. When there were some northern Thai words I was not sure of, I asked them to clarify. Female farmers spoke in northern Thai at all times in expressing their ideas. I was concerned whether I would get all the interviews transcribed correctly. I solved this problem by asking a friend of mine who speaks northern Thai fluently to transcribe the interview tapes of the farmers for me. I sent a copy of the transcription to each of them to be revised and corrected.

Assisting with training activities

In April, I became involved in the project, especially with training activities aiming at teaching organic farming techniques and marketing strategy to farmers in one of the villages. I worked with trainers, who are also farmers, and NGO staff to plan a *marketing strategy* training session. At this point in time, I felt much more comfortable with the project participants. I also had an opportunity to meet and informally talk with other NGO staff who are part of the National Alternative Agriculture Network. During the field research, I took notes on all the activities I attended and observed in the form of a log. I also reviewed project related documents while I was at their head office in Chiangmai.

Survey questionnaire.

In the first week of May, I mailed a survey questionnaire to members of the Chiangmai's Consumer and Environmental Protection Club, the focus group of my study. The questionnaire was used to obtain basic information about urban consumers. I pre-tested the questionnaire for wording with 20 Chiangmai university academic and administrative staff. The questionnaire was then adjusted after the pre-test. I obtained a list of members of the urban consumers club from the project. I decided to mail questionnaires to all of the individual members. The total number of questionnaires sent was 180. I received 66 questionnaires back within two weeks. I sent a letter to those who did not return the questionnaire and to those who missed filling out some part of the questionnaire. Altogether I received 110 questionnaires back, making the overall return rate 61 per cent. The result of the survey was later submitted to the PRO-CON Network Project for their record and only partial information from the questionnaire was used in this research work (Appendix D).

Reporting the preliminary findings to the PRO-CON Network Project.

In the second week of June before I left Chiangmai, there was an annual evaluation meeting of the project. The PRO-CON Network Project staff, the executive committee of the project (who are mostly NGO staff from other NGOs in northern Thailand), and representatives from the organic farmers club and the consumers club attended this meeting. I took this opportunity to present the preliminary findings of my research study. To my disappointment, the findings and conclusions were not new to the participants. However, it reconfirmed to me that my overall understanding of the PRO-CON Network Project was in the right direction.

The Second Field Research

When I came back to Canada in June 1995, I started to analyze my data. Though the findings from the PRO-CON Network Project informed me how environmental adult education was organized, I realized that the preliminary findings were not sufficient to answer the questions I still had in my mind: this is, what is the overall picture of green consumerism which NGOs promote, and does environmental adult education stimulate any changes? The original single case research design no longer seemed appropriate for the research questions being asked. I had an urge to go back to Thailand to collect additional data. It was my supervisor who told me to wait and start to write about the PRO-CON Network Project. I was determined to review more literature, especially in the area of green consumerism and environmental adult education from a transformative perspective.

Adding another case study.

Finally, I decided to adjust from the single case study to multiple-case studies. The evidence from multiple cases is often considered “more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust” (Yin, 1989, p. 52). Using two case studies would enable me to compare, to see some similarities and differences and give a better conclusion to the research questions. This means that another field research in Thailand was needed to collect data for the second case study. I then went back to Thailand in December 1996 to do a second field research which finished in February 1997.

I chose the TMSR Project as the second case study. The project is ideal for this purpose because it has been working with urban consumers for quite some time. I did not have to spend much time creating rapport with TMSR since I knew most of them from my field work in the summer of 1993. I was familiar with the main activities of

TMSR from that field work and I only had to update myself on some project changes and specific areas of progress.

Interviewing NGO workers.

I interviewed four women and two men who work for the TMSR Project using guided interview questions (Appendix B). I understood that, because rapport and trust had been established between us at one level in 1993, an assurance not to disclose their names and identities in the research report to help them feel free to talk to me was not necessary. In the letter of consent (Appendix A), however, I gave participants the option to use their real or pseudo names. All of them agreed to use their real names in the research report. I tape recorded all the interviews and only partial transcription was done this time due to time constraints. I did not participate in any of the TMSR educational activities except to help them with packaging herbal tea and collecting information on three green stores which had closed down the year before. TMSR wanted to know the factors related to the closing of the stores. This work gave me an opportunity to learn more about green consumerism in Thailand and to interview the key staff persons of these green stores. To that end, I interviewed five key persons who had been involved in these three green stores prior to closing down. They included three women and one man from the NGO staff, and a male professor who is a member of a community-based organization in Chiangmai. I used partial information from the interviews in this research study.

To gain a further perspective on green consumerism in Thailand, I also interviewed two women and one man working for NGOs involved in promoting green consumerism promotion in addition to two owners of green stores in Bangkok and Chiangmai. Finally, in the last week of my second field research, I had the opportunity to make a short visit to the PRO-CON Network project site in Chiangmai where I

interviewed the chairperson of the *Organic Food Consumers Club* (the new consumers club replacing the old Chiangmai's Consumer and Environmental Protection Club), two PRO-CON Network Project staff whom I previously interviewed, and one woman NGO staff person who works for an NGO partner of the PRO-CON Network Project (See Table 1).

Table 1

Number of People Interviewed in the Research Study

	PRO-CON Network Project	TMSR Project	Other NGOs / green stores
Consumers	4 women 5 men		
Farmers	5 women 4 men		
NGO workers	2 women 3 men	4 women 2 men	6 women 2 men
Green Store owners			3 men
Total:	23	6	11

Data Analysis

The case study data base was organized chronologically and according to units of analysis. In each case study, there were several subunits of analysis which served as important devices to focus the case study inquiry. The units of analysis in this research were categorized as

- a) the organization or the project as a whole.
- b) intermediary units - the organic farmers group, urban consumers group, and the NGO staff.
- c) individual members of each group

Since most data and data collection methods applied in this research study were qualitative in nature, the coding technique of qualitative research, a progressive process of sorting and defining collected data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), was applied. Interview transcripts, observation notes, documents, and notes from relevant literature were sorted and arranged into categories or themes.

The research results were interpreted at the single-case level and were compared across cases whenever possible. The conclusions drawn for the two cases became the conclusions for the overall study. The outcomes of the data analysis of the two NGO projects are presented in the form of two descriptive and analytical case study reports in Chapter Six and Seven. The conclusions of the overall study are presented in Chapter Eight.

Validity⁴ and Reliability

Construct validity, according to Yin (1989), is “a process to establish correct operational measures for the concepts being studied” (p.40). In order to increase

⁴ Only construct and external validity were considered here. Because this study is a descriptive case study, not explanatory or causal, internal validity, following Yin (1989), was not considered here.

construct validity, I used multiple sources of evidence (documents, observation notes, interview transcripts etc.) to provide multiple measures of the same phenomena. Using multiple sources of evidence allows researchers to corroborate emerging findings by comparing the data produced by different methods in order to increase the probability that credible findings will be produced (Denscombe, 1998). For example, I used documents and observations to clarify the interview data and to back-up the content of the interviews and vice versa. This helped me to see some consistency across methods which would lend support to the case study analysis.

External validity is a procedure to establish the domain to which a study's findings can be generalized beyond the immediate case study (Yin, 1989). From the perspective of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), external validity is considered to be the transferability of the research findings into another context. It is then about the degree of similarity in sending and receiving (or within the same or different time frame) contexts.

External validity, according to Lincoln & Guba (1985), can be increased by means of providing the data base or thick description necessary to enable someone to make transferability judgments possible. In this research study, most data was obtained by qualitative research methods, making Lincoln and Guba's meaning of external validity of research findings relevant. Therefore, I made an effort to provide as comprehensive a case study as possible for those who wish to transfer this research into another context.

Reliability of the research study or consistency means that research operations as described by earlier investigators can be repeated by other investigators with the same results. Yin (1989) suggests that one way to increase reliability of the research study is to document the research procedures or case study protocol to make as many

steps as possible. I documented the case study protocol and records of the research procedures including any modifications of the original research plan during the field research. A case study data base was also systematically arranged into a raw data file, field notes file, and analysis file for the purpose of auditing and increasing reliability of the study.

Limitations of the Study

One of major problems I encountered during the data collection process was the feeling that the phenomenon I was studying was bigger than I could understand. Although I used different kinds of data-collection tools, I still could not help feeling that I would never be able to grasp all the details and know everything about the projects. The dynamic of the NGO project interventions which change rapidly and involve many stakeholders made me feel discouraged. The feeling of inadequacy bothered me but was reduced as time went by. I realized that I would never understand the phenomenon I studied as the insiders do, and I had to take this as my limitation.

In the TMSR case study, data was mainly derived from NGO workers who organized educational activities and from related documents. The lack of information from urban consumers and farmers who were participants in the learning process may have resulted in a one-sided picture of the case study. However, I supplemented this limitation with some detailed information from the field work I did with TMSR in the summer of 1993.

Since the causal relationship between the educational activities and the changes they have brought about is not the major focus of the study, I explored and made an effort to describe changes as perceived by the research participants. The conclusions

then should be interpreted as assumptions for further examination of the causal relationship between environmental adult education and the changes it has created.

In my opinion, adjusting the research design by incorporating another case study into the study and doing a second field research was a plus for me and for the study. I felt that the additional TMSR case study helped me to place the phenomenon I tried to study, the environmental adult education for urban consumers, into the wider context of the NGOs' green consumerism campaign. In addition, the second field research was very helpful since it gave me an opportunity to collect additional information I needed or missed the first time. If I had a choice between doing field research for seven and a half months at a time or dividing the field research into two phases like I did, I would still prefer to do it in two phases. However, the drawback to this is that the cost of two field researches is higher than a one-shot field research.

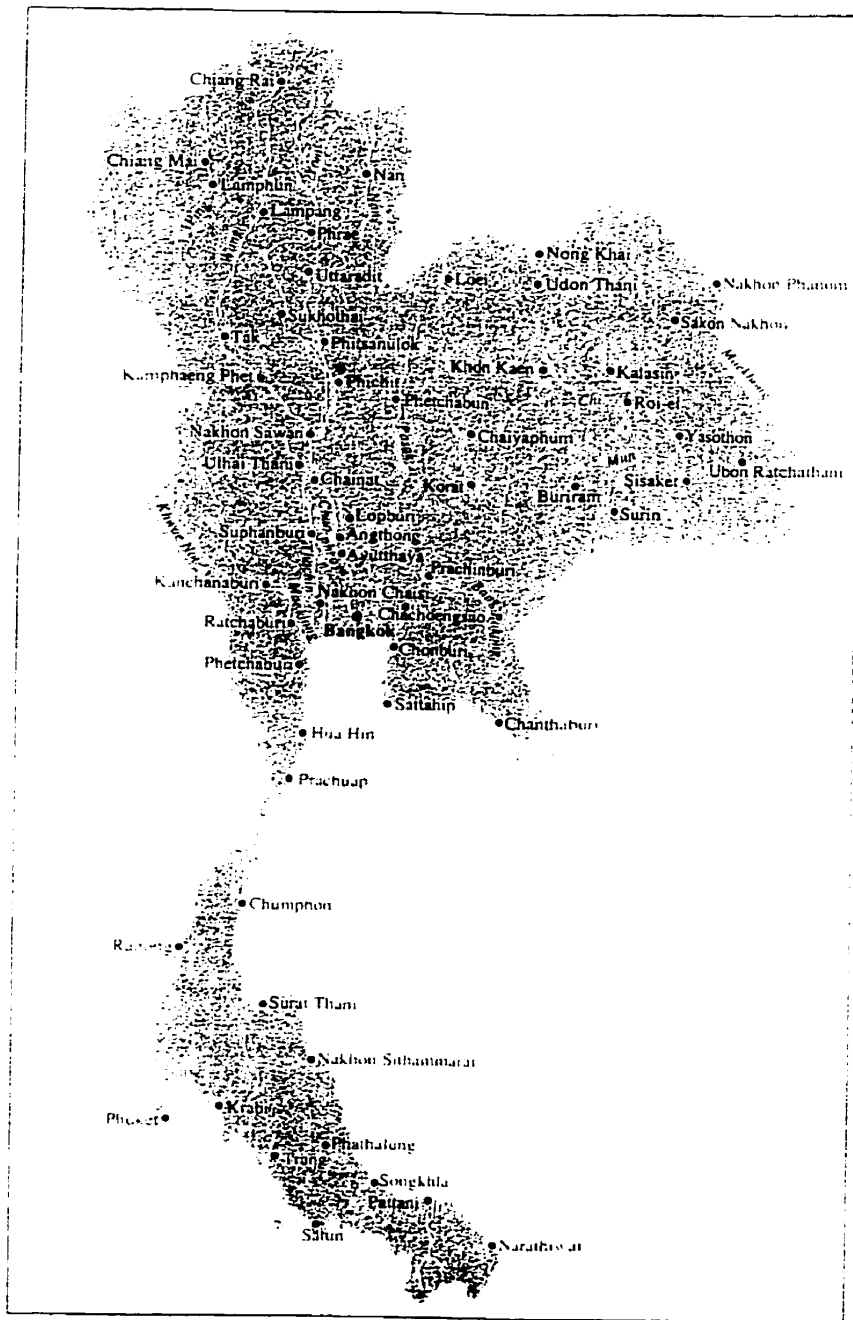
Chapter 4

Setting the Thai Context

Thailand's Country Profile

Thailand, or Siam as it was known until 1939 (Terwiel, 1991), is located in Southeast Asia on the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea. It shares borders with Myanmar on the west and northwest, Laos on the east and northeast, Kampuchea on the southeast, and Malaysia on the south. The country covers a land area of 513,115 square kilometers with 108,113 square kilometers or approximately 21 per cent of the total land covered with forest (Arbhaphirama & Chettharat, 1995). The total population in 1998 was 61 million of which approximately 35 per cent are urban population. Bangkok is the capital and the largest city with 6.2 million people. Chiangmai is the second largest city with a population of 1.5 million. The majority of Thais are Buddhists. The system of government is a Constitutional Monarchy with a prime minister as the head of government (Department of foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1999). Figure 1 shows the major cities of Thailand. Major economic indicators are shown in Table 2.

Figure. 1 Map of Thailand



Note. From Thailand Economy and Politics (p.2) by P. Phongpaichit, and C. Baker, 1995, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.

Table 2

Thailand's Major Economic Indicators

Major Economic Indicators	
GDP (1998)	US \$ 116.2 Billion
Per Capita GDP	US \$1,899
GDP Growth	-8.0 %
Unemployment	4 %

Note. From Fact Sheet - Kingdom of Thailand, April 1999 by Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1999, Ottawa.

Modern Development: Its Effects on People and the Environment

During the past few decades the essential links among forestry, animal husbandry, agriculture and other common resources from which the majority of the people in the South directly derive their sustenance have been largely disrupted and destroyed by the market-oriented, growth-based economic development or modern development scheme (Shiva, 1989). According to Shiva (1992), modern development is an unsustainable process since it can only be achieved through the destruction of two other economies, that is, of nature's own processes and local people's sustainable economies. With an organizing principle that relates to nature in terms of the maximization of profits and capital accumulation, nature's products are brought into the market economy as raw material for commodity production. It aggressively and

increasingly appropriates the very natural capital on which the rural poor depend. The result is that large numbers of people, especially in the South, are increasingly deprived of natural resources which they once had access to. Their livelihood has been shattered and their labour has been exploited for export-oriented industrial production. In addition, the market-oriented, growth-based economy results in widespread ecological degradation on a global scale.

Thailand is one of many countries which encounters the negative effects of modern development. The country's rush to industrialize along with the exploitation of natural resources for export under the modern development policies have created dramatic environmental and social costs. It has led to deforestation, depletion of mineral resources, and the pollution of waterways and the atmosphere as well as massive social dislocation of the rural population (Komin, 1993; Phongpaichit & Baker, 1996; Puntasen, 1992).

Western Colonization

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, Southeast Asia was, in general, a region in relative ecological balance or equilibrium (Trebuil, 1996). The impact on the environment by human activities in the region appeared to have been very limited. The traditional beliefs of the region emphasized that people were part of nature (McNeely & Wachtel, 1989) which would appear to have encouraged this limited impact. Berry (cited in Sponsel & Sponsel, 1996) seems to lend support to this view with his observation that

the smaller Buddhist countries of South and Southeast Asia, in their premodern period, have minimal impact upon the life systems of their regions because of limited populations, village modes of life, and few large urban centers - supported, of course, by a spirituality that exalted a lifestyle detached from earthly possessions (p. 27).

In Thailand, traditional agriculture, the basis of a subsistence economy, and Buddhism were widely practiced for many centuries and continue to be the fundamental foundations of Thai society (Wasi, 1987). The abundance of land and surrounding forest and the small population in pre-modern Siam made it possible for a subsistence economy¹ to exist. Whenever population increases placed additional pressure on the village's limited resources, some households would move out to establish new communities at the forest frontier (Hirsch, 1990; Puntasen, 1992).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Southeast Asian region was threatened by the colonial powers of Western industrialized countries (Fenny, 1982). A series of commercial agreements were imposed in the region by colonizing European countries. Nartsupha and Prasartsert (1981 cited in Trebuil, 1996, p. 67) explain that these commercial agreements were motivated by the need for raw materials for the expanding industries in Europe, while creating markets for their finished goods in Southeast Asia. Although Siam could maintain its formal national independence, it was subjected to this new economic order, like every country in the region (Trebuil, 1996). For Siam, the Bowring Treaty of 1855 with Britain marked the opening of the country to international trading relations. Since then, the Siam economy has undergone rapid commercialization and increased expansion of the rice economy as it became

¹ The subsistence economy of peasant society in Southeast Asia was governed by a subsistence ethic which was based on the apprehension of food scarcity. Technical and social arrangements (patterns of reciprocity, forced generosity, communal land, and work-sharing) were established to "produce enough rice to feed the household, buy a few necessities such as salt and cloth, and meet the irreducible claims of outsiders" (Scott, 1976, p.2). Scott, however, notes that these social arrangements were not absolutely egalitarian. In fact, they only guaranteed that all people were entitled to a living and that the standard of living did not exceed the limited resources of the village. In general, "It is the absence of the threat of individual starvation which makes primitive society, in a sense, more human than a market economy" (Polanyi, 1957 cited in Scott, 1976, p. 5). Shiva (1992) also notes that the principles of sustenance of countries in the South allow persons to derive their livelihoods directly from nature through a self-provisioning mechanism: "Limits in nature have been respected, and have guided the limits of human consumption" (p. 188).

increasingly integrated into the world economy² (Fenny, 1982; Pongsamlee & Ross, 1992). Rice was a major export along with tin, teak, and rubber. Later there were increased exports of other non-rice crops such as maize, cassava, and sugar-cane (Uhlig, 1984 cited in Hirsch, 1990, p.32).

The commercialization of agriculture for export over the past century has resulted in the steady expansion of cultivated areas at the expense of forested areas (Hirsch, 1990). The rapid disappearance of forest land contributed to the erosion and near disappearance of the subsistence economy and its guarantee of providing a minimal income adequate for comfortably sustaining all local people. According to Scott (1976), the commercialization of the agrarian economy in Southeast Asia was steadily stripping away most of the traditional forms of social insurance. This is because traditional farming requires the availability of forest products for the provision of basic essentials such as wood for shelter and fuel, herbal medicine and wild vegetation for food. Once the forest is gone, the basic needs of people in a subsistence economy can no longer be met. They can only be met through the market which requires cash (Puntasen, 1992; Shiva, 1989). As Parnwell & Bryant (1996) conclude the effect of colonization is such that

the colonial powers reorganized and expanded pre-colonial patterns of resource exploitation in such a way that by the end of colonial rule export-oriented commercial resource extraction was central to economic life in the region (p. 4).

² Hirsch (1990), in his study on Western development and its impact on Thai villages, noted that parallel to the integration of Siam's subsistence economy into the global economy was the expansion of the bureaucratic state system. For Hirsch, a common feature of Western development is to incorporate peripheral formations into the mainstream of a wider society, polity, and economy. A system called *bureaucratic capitalism* with its tight control exercised by the bureaucratic system on the economic and political lives of Thailand was then established (Pongsamlee & Ross, 1992).

Modern Development: The Neo-Colonial Project

After the Second World War, Thailand and many other so-called *underdeveloped* countries in the South undertook a neo-colonial project of development and justified this as a means of improving the population's well-being. This model of development and the unlimited exploitation of natural resources emerged within a specific context of capitalist growth and industrialization in Western countries only to be imposed on many of the so-called Third World countries as a universal model of progress (Shiva, 1989). The underlying assumption of development is that economic wealth for all people requires an economic revolution from an agricultural-based to an industrial-based economy (Ramitanondh, 1996). It has been argued that this economic framework is dependent upon the continued over-exploitation of the South's resources. More specifically, the South is the provider of resources for Northern industry which then imports both the finished products and the North's technology.

According to Apichai Puntasen (1992), the rapid economic changes in Thailand undertaken in the name of development unfolded in two phases. The first phase occurred in the early 1950's in an effort to integrate Thailand with the global Cold War strategy against communism. The United States orchestrated the build up of Thailand's military intervention, and economic intervention was planned and overseen by the World Bank's financial and planning instruments. Unlike the earlier periods, Thailand started to receive foreign loans and assistance in the form of experts and technology transfers in its efforts to modernize. Economic change in this period included diversification of agricultural exports, rapid growth in big-scale irrigation and road infrastructure, and the development of the manufacturing sector which was based in part on import substitution. Increasing agriculture output was still achieved mainly by the expansion of areas under cultivation into the forest frontier as in earlier periods (Fenny, 1982). From

the 1960s through the 1970s, a close link between rural development and counter-insurgency as well as more general aspects of *national security* was developed (Hirsch, 1990). Roads were built into sensitive areas especially in the Northeast under the Accelerated Rural Development Program. Official resettlement projects also encouraged villagers to clear forests for permanent cultivation as a means to fight against communist guerrillas (Trebuil, 1996).

A second phase of economic change in Thailand happened when the world economy began to revive from the second oil price crisis of 1979-80 and the years following 1985. The national economic and social policies had switched from import substitution to exports of raw materials for manufacture, mainly from agro-industries (Puntasen, 1992).³ Several incentive measures such as tax exemptions for imported machinery and raw materials and partial transfer of income out of the country were used to attract foreign investments (Ramitanondh, 1996). Foreign investments especially from Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong increased at an unprecedented rate. Because of cheap labour costs and a passive labour movement, Thai products from labour-intensive industries started to have an advantage over other products from other newly industrialized Asian countries. This advantage gave Thailand ten years of 7 per cent or higher economic growth per annum. However, economic progress of the country was tied to, and depended much on, foreign resources and markets (Ratanakul & Than, 1990). Puntasen (1992) concludes that the basic ingredients for the expansion of export industries in the mid 1980s were

the emergence of agro-industry in the mid-1970s, the transfer of technological processes from the import-substitution industries, the large pool of high quality, cheap labour following the rapid expansion of education and the gaining of work experience, and finally, the supply of

³ Puntasen (1992) also pointed out that another significant economic change at this period of time was the considerable growth of tourism in Thailand.

cheap raw materials from the increasing practice of monoculture among the peasant farmers (p. 98-99).

Rural Exploitation

The promotion of the export industry in Thailand was in fact achieved through the exploitation of agriculture and the rural sector. Government policies have ensured that agricultural surpluses are used in industrial development, through taxation and depressing farm pricing policies, and through the provision of an unlimited supply of cheap labour moving from the rural to urban areas (Hewison, 1996). There was also a trade monopoly on agricultural inputs, especially fertilizers. In addition, the benefits of economic growth were not usually shared with the poor and the people living in rural areas. As a result, economic growth widened the income gap between the rich and the poor and worsened rural and urban polarities (Ratanakul & Than, 1990). Apparently, income disparities between the different socio-economic groups in urban and rural areas have widened. In 1995, the richest 40 per cent of the population accounted for 77 per cent of the country's total income and the poorest 60 per cent accounted for the remaining 23 per cent (Thai Development Support Committee, 1995b).

Urbanization

Thailand's development policies, which are urban-biased, have also resulted in growing urban concentration and a proliferation of associated problems. Resources were allocated from around the country and concentrated in the Bangkok area to construct the economic infrastructures and services that serve the industrial and commercial sectors (Thanaphornphan, 1982 cited in Ramitanondh, 1996). Financial, commercial, educational, industrial, and administrative institutions as well as political

power are all concentrated in Bangkok. The city is also the disseminator of those lifestyles, customs, tastes, fashions and consumer habits considered to be integral to a modern industrial society (Armstrong & McGee, 1985 cited in Pounsamlee & Ross, 1992, p.11). In addition, many rural people migrated to the larger cities to look for factory or service work resulting in the rapid increase in urban population. Due to the uncoordinated and somewhat disorganized growth of the cities, the quality of life in the urban areas, especially in Bangkok, is worsening (Pfifferman & Kron, 1992).

Bangkokians are increasingly faced with problems of worsening traffic congestion, water, air and noise pollution, housing shortages for low-income people, household and hazardous industrial waste problems and many other problems. Other cities such as Chiangmai, the second largest city, are almost on a par with Bangkok regarding traffic and household waste problems.

Environmental Impacts

Parnwell and Bryant (1996) see that the increasing integration into the world economy through international trading has added to the pressures being placed on the country's natural resources and environment. Forests and other natural resources have become depleted at an accelerated rate and on a very large scale. In 1976, the forested area was approximately 39 per cent of the total land base in Thailand. In 1991, as mentioned earlier, the forested area had shrunk to 21 per cent (Arbhaphirama & Chettharat, 1995). Furthermore, through logging operations and other activities of economic development, the biological capital of the forests has been nearly destroyed (Sponsel & Sponsel, 1996). Other natural resources are traded for profits such as the selling of fertile farmlands for resorts and golf courses, and the killing and selling of wildlife and coral (Komin, 1993). Longer periods of drought and sudden floods are

becoming increasingly common and more frequent in Thailand.

Health Impacts from Unsafe Industrial Practices

The rush towards industrialization and the free market economy created new risks for the health and safety of industrial workers as well as for the environment. Manufacturing companies were motivated to move to Thailand because of the cheap pool of labour, and in part also to avoid the tough environmental regulations in their own countries (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1996). Komin (1993) in her study on industrialization and its impacts on the environment in Thailand found that the need to manage hazardous waste generated by the unlimited and uncontrolled use of chemical products by industry was ignored, or at best played down by both the private and public sectors. In most cases, industrial waste treatment facilities were either not installed or not operated, largely as a result of lax law enforcement, corruption, and the ignorance of local and multi-national companies. Safety measures at the work place such as fire regulations were often not followed, resulting in the 1993 Kader toy factory fire, the most tragic accident in recent global labour history, which killed 188 workers, of which 159 were women (Centre for Labour Information Service and Training, 1993).

Agri-Business: The Industrialization of Agriculture

In the rural areas, the subsistence mode of production and agriculture were gradually transformed into agri-business or agro-industry. The agro-industry is a form of non-traditional agriculture which is relatively technological and/or capital-intensive. It is also land-intensive, usually in the form of monoculture. Crops such as cassava, tobacco, sugar, pineapples, and corn, as well as kenaf, poultry and dairy farming, and aquaculture are some examples of agro-industry (Puntasen, 1992). It is considered to

be a profit and market-oriented, environmentally destructive form of intensive agriculture (Glaeser, 1995). With its narrow vision of maximum production and profit directed towards external markets, it does not interest itself with sustainable food production.

Agro-industry was introduced to Thai farmers with technical support from central government agencies as part of the so-called *Green Revolution* scheme. The Green Revolution, first introduced to Thailand through the First National Economic and Social Development Plan in 1961, promotes increasing the harvest through the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, high yield varieties of plants, irrigation and a high increase in mechanization and energy consumption (Fernandez, 1994; Ratanakul & Than, 1990). Though there has been an increase in farm produce, the Green Revolution has led to the deterioration of the quality of soil and water, salinization, a loss of genetic diversity, and yield plateaux. There were also direct effects on people's health from contact with agricultural chemicals, and the consumption of chemical residues in the food. Recent studies have shown that about 27 per cent of agricultural products were found to be contaminated and unsafe for consumption because of detectable levels of toxic substances, mainly Dieldrin and DDT insecticides (Komin, 1993).

Puntasen (1992) points out that the major economic impact of agro-industry is that most farmers become dependent on agri-business companies which use their farm produce as raw materials. Decision-making power in production has significantly shifted away from farmers into the hands of big corporations, agricultural traders, experts, and creditors. The nature of technological and capital-intensive agriculture also compels farmers to become increasingly dependent on supplies of capital, non-renewable energy, technical inputs, and on export markets for their products. In most cases, farmers become *subcontractors* for the agri-business companies which control the business and production process (Ramitanondh, 1996). Companies would offer seeds,

fertilizer, labour cost and a guaranteed price for selected crops. These companies also reserved the right to refuse to buy crops if they were deemed to be of low quality or did not meet the high quality standards demanded for export ("Analysis Urged", 1998). In these subcontractor relationships, many farmers ended up in serious debt because they were unable to pay back their entire loan to the companies. The government offered no viable alternatives for small-scale farmers in debt except to continue their participation in the contract farming system, selling their land to larger agri-businesses, encroaching upon new forest frontiers or migrating to the larger cities and entering the cheap labour workforce (Shari, 1988; Tribuil, 1996). As Thai farmers became dependent on and hostage to fluctuating market forces, high-energy agriculture technology, and the unmet needs brought by the consumerism of a modern lifestyle imposed on them through the media, they became increasingly marginalized and vulnerable.

Effects on Women

Women in the South have played a major role in food production, particularly in work linked to maintaining the food cycle. Modern agriculture introduced by the Green Revolution replaced renewable input from the farm with non-renewable inputs from the factories. It also displaced women's work in providing sustainable input with the work of men and machines to produce hazardous agri-chemicals as input to green revolution agriculture. Farming as a business concerned primarily with the process of profit making then excludes large numbers of women from subsistence food production (Shiva, 1989).

In the local Thai context, the Green Revolution and modern development have had a significant impact on farm women. Traditionally, Thai women had a say in both farm and family matters because women shared the farm work equally with men. They played a significant role in the household economies. The land normally belonged to the

wives' families and were passed on through the women. Women in the global market economy lost their roles, for example, as developers of plant varieties to agro-industry. They lost their control and management of land to men because of the government's gender-biased policies in agricultural loans or training which assumed that the men were the heads of the household. Their contribution to farm work is also no longer recognized since their domestic and farm chores are not considered as financially productive (Ekachai, 1997).

However, despite the gender-bias of policies, Thai rural women are still tied to their traditional role as the family's economic supporters and caregivers. In addition to farm work, women still have to work long hours doing house chores. When income from farming is insufficient for survival, women are usually the ones who are then forced by financial need to leave their homes and families to take jobs in industrialized farms or factories in nearby rural areas or in big cities where they are given marginal wages. Many women end up working as prostitutes in big cities or abroad because they are able to earn better income than when they work in factories or on large agro-industrial farms as cheap labours. It is ironic then that the recognition, welfare and security women have had in traditional agricultural society has been shattered by modern development, while at the same time they are obliged to maintain their traditional roles as providers in the family economy (Aewsriwongse, 1992).

The Influence of Western Medicine in the Thai Healthcare System

Before the introduction of Western medicine to Thailand, traditional medicine was widely practised by traditional healers. Little is known about the history of Thai traditional medicine up until the mid-nineteenth century. At that time, there were two traditions and divisions in medicine: the *Royal Tradition* and the *Rural or Village*

Tradition. The Royal Tradition of Royal medicine is based on the Indian Ayurvedic system and controlled by a royal practitioner of the court in major cities. The Rural or Village Tradition of the lower class of commoners, peasants and slaves, was practised in rural areas, and comprised a configuration of beliefs and practices which combined elements from spiritual incantation and magic.⁴ Still today, most traditional healers of all types are essentially part-time and earn their money in other pursuits. They include farmers, Buddhist monks, housewives, storekeepers and others. The majority charge for their services, either in money or in barter, but their charges are low compared to those of modern private clinics and hospitals.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Western medicine was introduced in the cities of Siam while indigenous traditions remained dominant in the rural areas. The introduction of Western medicine was seen to be associated with cultural imperialism -- a belief in the superiority of Western culture as manifested in scientific medicine (Cohen, 1989). The first Western-trained physicians and missionaries appeared in Siam in 1820. In 1887, Siriraj hospital, the first Western medical hospital, was established. At the beginning, the curriculum of the Siriraj medical school accepted a parallel, symbiotic development between Western and traditional types of medicine. However, by 1913 the teaching of traditional medicine was officially eliminated and the official medical school was totally dominated by Western medicine (Brun & Schumacher, 1987).

Since then, Thailand has fully adopted the Western model of healthcare, which includes the patient-doctor relationship related scientific advances and bio-technology, performed by health professionals. Official recognition of traditional Thai medicine has been on the basis of its subordination to Western medicine, which regards it as a non-

⁴ Needless to say, the distinction between the urban and the rural traditions is not clear-cut. The two traditions were not isolated but actually influenced each other (Cohen & Purcal, 1989; Brun & Schumacher, 1987).

scientific, unreliable, and underrated system. Nevertheless, during this period of time, the Thai government did not suppress traditional medicine outright, but continued in fact to issue licenses to traditional doctors. However, its role in national healthcare provision became neglected.

During the 1960s, a shortage of qualified medical professionals, especially in rural areas, prevailed throughout Southeast Asian countries, including Thailand (Jaspan, 1969). This created a widening gap in the provision of medical services, with an abundance of medical facilities and professionals clustered in big cities and an inadequate number of professionals in the rural areas. Although during the period of 1977-1987, the Ministry of Public Health used increased revenues from the country's economic growth to expand rural health facilities, the gap between the rural and urban health facilities was intensified by the explosion of private hospitals in big cities in the 1980s. The boom in private hospitals was due to the state's pro-privatization policies to encourage private investment in all sectors of the economy including healthcare (Bennett & Tangcharoensathien, 1994). In 1962, there were only four private hospitals registered with the Ministry of Public Health. The number of private hospitals increased to 479 in 1997 and were mostly located in larger urban centres (Rungfapaisarn, 1997).

The recent increase in the number of private hospitals and clinics have eroded even further the resources and chronically scarce pool of doctors of the public healthcare system. For some time already, doctors in the public hospitals would work after hours in private clinics in order to supplement their income with more lucrative earnings (Roemer, 1982). However, this situation intensified during the boom in private hospitals so that not only did more doctors work after hours in private clinics, but many began to increasingly neglect their duties at public hospitals (such as leaving 1-2 hours earlier than they were supposed to) by devoting more time to private care. Others went

so far so to use the public hospitals for their own personal use by referring patients from their private practices to use the publicly paid facilities. Eventually, many physicians quit their government jobs as public health practitioners to work full-time in private hospitals. Not only did this place additional strain on the public healthcare system and create a two-tiered healthcare system, but only that small minority of patients who could afford the high costs of private care were adequately serviced. A market-based, profit-driven healthcare sector along with a government promoting private hospitals without intense regulation and strong voice from consumers' organizations, encouraged private hospitals to overcharge, provide many unnecessary treatments, and provide low-quality services (Rungfapaisarn, 1997).

In addition, most drugs used by Thai consumers were imported. In 1995, according to government statistics, Thais spent about 222.5 billion Baht⁵ on healthcare, much of which went to imported medicine. The consumption ratio between imported medicine from the so-called developed countries and locally-produced medicine has increased from 1:3 in 1987 to 1:2 at 1997 (Rungfapaisarn, 1997). The country has increasingly depended upon imported Western drugs.

Disregarding Traditional Knowledge

Nithi Aewsriwongse (1992) points out that modern development has affected people's attitudes towards their traditional knowledge, leading to world views that have increasingly alienated individuals from their traditions. Modern development has brought powerful economic and technological forces which work towards domination and inequality rather than towards social welfare and sustenance needs (Chamarik, 1990).

⁵ The 1990 exchange rate was approximately Cdn. \$1 = Baht 24. In 1995, the exchange rate was approximately Cdn. \$1 = Baht 22.

Traditional knowledge of agriculture and medicine were discredited for not being scientific, modern and efficient. Farmers thus lost their confidence in the traditional knowledge that had been passed on between generations (Senakham, 1992).

Moreover, women's knowledge of holistic and ecological processes are not given recognition by the scientific, reductionist paradigm of modern agriculture which has a tendency to exclude other ways of knowing (Shiva, 1989). The highly-centralized model of government that Thailand has been following over the past 100 years has also served to undermine the local community's self-confidence. The top-down process of development dominated rural people by assuming that government knows best what rural people's needs are, what they should learn, and how they should think ("Say Goodbye", 1998). Furthermore, the marginalization of the farmers' knowledge in agriculture and traditional medicine is partly brought on by the formal educational system. With its urban and industrial bias, schools and universities teach the young to admire urban life, the civil service, reductionist scientific knowledge and the business world (Sivaraksa, 1992).

Material possessions are also widely perceived by Thais as symbols of being *modern* and of conveying high status. Those who do not possess material wealth are perceived as being backward and poor. This emphasis on materialism and commercialization surfaced in every area, including the religious sector. Furthermore, the concept of *development* held by government officials contributes to this increasing materialism and bias toward the modern as it often equates development only with the obsessive and uncritical production of modern facilities such as roads, electricity, motorcycles, cars, and machines (Komin, 1993). Communities that do not meet these material standards the central government defined are considered to be underdeveloped.

Alienated and Unequal Relationship Between Rural Farmers and Urban People

The modern industrial development model has turned food into a product and the farm operation into a commodity system. The land is viewed as a resource to be exploited. Farmers are reduced to mere producers of raw materials who force the soil to overproduce for maximum yield for the industrial food system. At the same time, urban people are reduced simply to consumers of the farmers' end product. Consumers, especially the urban population, are "separated from the farms that produce the food they eat by great distances that are not only geographical but economic and political as well" (Lehman, 1995, p. 2). As most food is sold in an impersonal market system, farmers and people who eat their food continue to remain alienated from each other. Furthermore, the impersonality of the market makes it almost impossible for buyer and seller to have an interchange that can lend itself to *ethical* guidance (Bookchin, 1987). As a result, neither group perceives their mutual responsibility. Farmers, for example, do not realize how their excessive use of pesticides affects urban people's health. At the same time, urban people who consume farm produce are not concerned with the farmers' hardship and difficulty (Panyakul & Siriphat, 1993). They also tend to look down on farmers and farming as backward and unsophisticated.

The 1997 Economic Crisis

In mid 1997, Thailand encountered a severe economic crisis when the financial and property sectors ran into major trouble and foreign investments and exports declined. According to Vithayakorn Chiangkul, renowned writer and economist,

development policy has been entirely on the wrong track, aimed at mobilising foreign investment without proper attention given to building up a domestic capital base. The local private sector has also focused on quick investment returns rather than emphasising sustained business

development, leading to high-speed, if not reckless, expansions or diversification (Taptim, 1998, no page).

As a result, the number of bad debts increased, a severe stock market crisis ensued, and a skyrocketing rise in unemployment occurred. It was estimated that up to 600,000 workers have been laid off since the economic downturn (Bhaopichitr, 1998). The government's solutions to the economic crisis were to integrate themselves more fully with the global economy by seeking foreign aid to help boost the economy. However, almost all government measures in restoring the Thai economy benefited the affluent Thais and foreigners rather than assisting those hurt most by the crisis, mainly the urban and rural poor. Recently, a US\$17.2 billion bail-out package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was given to the Thai government attached to a tough austerity program. The main stringent condition of the package was that the government's revenues had to exceed its expenditure by a budget surplus of Baht 160 billion.⁶ This led to huge cutbacks in government expenditure and an increase in taxes (Bhaopichitr, 1998). The rise in taxes and the high cost of imported fertilizers and other farming inputs had a direct negative impact on many of the poorer farmers ("Say Goodbye", 1998).

Some scholars and social critics see the positive side of the economic downturn as providing a valuable lesson that should help open people's minds and prompt them to question and change the present system of development which primarily hurts the poor (Chinvarakorn, 1998). Sulak Sivaraksa (Vanaspong, 1997), a Buddhist scholar and social critic, sees that Thailand needs new kinds of economic and political strategies which are more human centred. He emphasizes the role of the middle class, in

⁶ In 1998, the exchange rate was fluctuated from S Cdn. 1 = Baht 32 to 24.

particular to help the poor by stepping down from their place of arrogant indifference and uniting with the lower classes to put consorted pressure on the government as part of a democratic movement to create fundamental change.

The Thai Middle Class: Urban Allies with the Poor

In recent years, a growing number of academic studies have been published regarding the role of the middle class in Thai politics. In May 1992, the people's uprising against the military leader Suchinda and the ensuing street fighting between the military and the demonstrators was widely recognized as a *revolt of the middle class* (Samudavanija, 1992). Despite the growing number of studies on the middle class, there has yet to be general agreement on the precise definition of the term middle class. The term is difficult to define mainly because, given the heterogeneity of its composition, the middle class compose a diversity of relationships with the means of production. These relationships are the basis from which Marx's classical definition of social classes can be determined. As Lomnitz and Melnick (1991) point out, "Its existence is recognized, but the terminology varies" (p. 9).

Researchers studying the Thai middle class (Aewsriwongse, 1993; Hewison, 1996; Girling, 1996; Laothammathat, 1993; Samudavanija, 1992) seem to agree that this social strata has both come into being and expanded alongside with industrialization, urbanization and public education, its development having subsequently been linked with these processes. Expanding capitalist production followed by the emergence of industrial corporations created a demand for professionals. The middle class is thus seen as the skilled workforce of capitalism (Robinson & Goodman, 1996). Hewison (1996) also notes that the demand for

professionals and other such middle class employees in Thai society occurs in the public sector as well.

Table 3 shows that increases in those categories classified as middle class, namely professional and technical, administrative, executive and managerial, clerical, services and sales, went from about 10 per cent of the economically active population in 1960 to 21 per cent in 1990.

Table 3

Work Status of the Economically Active Population in Thailand, 1960 and 1990 (%)

Category	1960	1990
Professional and technical	1.3	3.3
Administrative, executive and managerial	0.2	1.5
Clerical	1.1	2.8
Sales	5.3	8.7
Service industries	2.0	6.3
Agriculture and fishing	82.3	64.0
Production and related workers	7.0	13.2
Other	0.7	0.1

Note. From Statistical Yearbook, Thailand 1967-1969 and Statistical Yearbook, Thailand, 1992 (cited in Hewison, 1996, p. 143).

The Role of the Middle Class

In Buddhism, teachers and friends (*kalayanamitta*) are very important. . . Having good friends, one would have good company, one would have friendship, with love, which will lead to a favorable social environment (Sivaraksa, 1986, p.171).

As mentioned above, Sivaraksa emphasizes that the role of the middle class is to collaborate with both rural farmers and urban poor in such a way as to synchronize their efforts to strengthen the bargaining power of the poor in the democratic process. Based on Buddhist teachings, Sivaraksa (1988) explains that a person has duties towards oneself as well as towards all other beings because “we are all fellow sufferers and are bound by birth, old age, sickness, and death” (p. 130). He sees that people, especially those who are not the poorest of the poor, should work to develop their social rather than physical growth. Social growth in Buddhism is neither social recognition nor socialization: “It means that one cares about social justice—that is, one does not want to exploit oneself or others”, said Sivaraksa (1988, p. 132). To grow socially and spiritually thus means to care for the others’ physical and social growth. He proposes that the middle class should learn to understand their own lives and the lives of farmers and the urban poor.

Sivaraksa also calls for broadening the network of people beyond just those who are less privileged to include those who are committed to social transformation. He used the Buddhist concept of *kalayanamitta*⁷ to convey this message by translating

⁷ In Buddhist social ethics, having good friends is considered to be conducive to a good social environment or, in other words, a good society is the society where people are good friends to one another. According to Phra Thepwethi (1995), traditional Buddhist teaching does not refer to *kalayanamitta* directly as *good friend* in the usual sense; rather it refers to a person with certain qualities to teach, suggest, point out, encourage, assist, and provide guidance for getting started on the Path of Buddhist training. The Buddha himself is considered to be the utmost *kalayanamitta* of Buddhists. While Phra Thepwethi emphasized the meaning of *kalayanamitta* as spiritual friend, Phra Rajavaramuni (1983) gave emphasis to *kalayanamitta*, the good people and the association with the good people, both at the level of the individual’s spiritual development and at the level of the daily life of the common people.

kalayanamitta as allies in the striving for concurrent social justice.

In Buddhism we speak of *kalayanamitta*, good friends. We must understand and help each other. If we want social justice, one village has to be linked with other villages. One country has to be linked with other countries. The Third World has to be linked with the First World. Poor fishermen must help working women, and working women must help industrial workers (Sivaraksa, 1992, p.50).

As such, Sivaraksa's idea implies an issues-based rather than traditional class-based political movement. He contends that fighting against social injustice and environmental destruction must be the tasks of modern Buddhists. By connecting environmental issues together with social justice issues, he believes that Buddhism can initiate a broader transformation of social, cultural and personal relations for Thai society.

In similar fashion, Chatthip Nartsupha (1991) sees that an alliance between disadvantaged groups, such as poor farmers, and a progressive middle class will strengthen the people's movement for social transformation as a whole. Nartsupha argues that the alliance can be fruitful only on the condition that the middle class is ready to share power with the common people. In other words, when they become equal allies. However, it is not easy for these two disparate groups to become equal counterparts since the overall urban-biased social structure privileges the middle class rather than the poor. In fact, the existence of the poor and the middle class appears to be solely dependent upon an exploitative relationship. Dej Phoomkhacha, director of the Thai Volunteer Service, an NGO which trains graduates from universities to work with NGOs throughout Thailand, seems to support this assertion when he comments that,

the lifestyle of the middle class is such that it takes advantage of the lower class [rural farmers and urban poor]. The lower class are the construction workers who build homes and department stores and night clubs for the middle class. Most middle class consume more electricity, tap water and they use more roads. They also heavily deplete natural resources and generate even more garbage (Thai Development Support Committee, 1995b, p. 70).

This exploitative relationship experientially distances the urban middle class, and therefore contributes to the apparent lack of critical understanding that would otherwise allow them to acknowledge the connections of social and environmental issues they have with the less-privileged. In this regard, Rane Hassarangsi, a long time NGO worker, brilliantly used an example of a river to illustrate the mutual interests of rural and urban people. She said,

when a river is dying, who should take up the task of reviving it? The people who live at the watershed and depend directly on the river for their livelihood? Or those who live in cities and benefit indirectly from the water? (Thai Development Support Committee, 1994, p. 87).

For Hassarangsi, however, it is almost impossible for urban people who live comfortably in the modern sector of the country in their air-conditioned cars and concrete buildings to understand how a river or forest affects their survival and, as a result, most of the time the burden to take action on environmental issues falls on the rural poor. Sivaraksa (1990) agrees that it is quite common for people that once they have become more comfortably situated, even though they may be aware of the injustices, they do not get excited about those problems that do not affect them directly, closely or immediately.

Bamrung Bunpanya (Nartsupha, 1991), who criticized the middle class for acting as agents and disseminators of imported Western values and a profit-oriented lifestyle⁸

⁸ Aewsriwong (1993) explains that the Thai middle class shares some cultural aspects of individualism and rationality with the middle class in other countries. They are generally committed to economic development and to technological innovation and tend to build relationships based on modern market exchange. He concludes that the Thai middle class tends to adopt the values inscribed in global capitalism rather than those values held by rural farmers.

in part supports Sivaraksa's argument when he proposes that they should instead orient themselves toward the villagers' lifestyle, interests and concerns.⁹ The goal of the middle class, in Bunpanya's point of view,¹⁰ should be to develop relationships that allow for the exchange of knowledge and encourage a deepening regard for, and understanding of, the lives of villagers (farmers). The middle class should not impose their Westernized ideas on the villagers' way of thinking but, instead, they should learn to be more open to the villagers' lifestyle; integrate themselves somewhat to the villagers' culture, knowledge and thought systems; and disseminate this understanding more widely among the middle class itself. He also calls for the middle class to support fair distribution of resources from urban to rural areas and to oppose state pressures placed upon the rural poor. According to Nartsupha (1991), Boonpanya's aim is to join together people from various classes to resist the state.

NGOs: Middle Class Efforts at Linking with the Poor

In the late 1960s, development NGOs, which were oriented towards small-scale, self-reliant local development activities, emerged. During the 1970s these NGOs increased in number in spite of a repressive political atmosphere and the anti-communism scheme ensuring that most NGOs existed primarily as relief and welfare-oriented organizations (Farrington & Lewis, 1993). In the 1980s, development NGOs that

⁹ According to Nartsupha (1991), the Thai traditional village is an idyllic community setting, with villagers displaying positive characteristics such as kind-heartedness, brother/sisterhood, generosity, mutual help, unambitiousness, non-violence, and self-reliance.

¹⁰ Boonpanya's idea originated partly in light of NGOs' earlier experiences working with rural farmers. Most NGO workers were from a middle class background. When they first worked with farmers, some tended to construct farmers as being passive or helpless. Some accepted the modern development model uncritically and tended to impose it on farmers. Boonpanya tried to alter these misconceptions by using *farmers'* or *village culture* to counteract modern development and the thinking processes it encouraged. He attempted to shift the power of knowledge production from the hands of urban people to farmers - the knowers of the development process.

distinguished themselves from charitable or philanthropic organizations started to gain momentum and flourished. However, most development NGOs that were established during the 1980s remained unregistered and small. Recently, the National NGO Coordinating Committee, one of the biggest umbrella organizations of development NGOs, reported that there were 220 development NGOs involved in rural development covering every region of Thailand (Pongsapich, 1996).

In contrast to the philanthropic and charitable NGOs established earlier by members of the upper class, those that were established in the 1980s were middle class organizations (Hewison, 1993; Hirsch, 1990; Pongsapich, 1996; Thai Development Support Committee, 1995b). Their political or humanitarian conviction, or a mixture of both, motivated them to work with, or form, NGOs. Many committed persons, mostly university graduates, were aware of the problems arising from, or related to, the modern development process and wished to see some changes. They found that NGOs served as common venues within which they could work together with the poor for social transformation.¹¹

Many NGO workers had been student activists in 1973-6. Others were motivated by a simple sense of equity and humanism. Many were affected by a historically ingrained belief that the peasantry was the true Thailand and that the peasants deserved sympathy and help (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1996, p. 158-159).

The NGO development approach is relatively bottom-up and differs from the top-down development promoted by the government. In fact, there is the sense of a strong oppositional consciousness against state-directed rural development (Callahan, 1995; Hirsch, 1990). They believe that the government's top-down strategy of development in

¹¹ According to Clarke (1998), the rapid economic growth in Southeast Asia has promoted a rather complex process of social differentiation. Traditional institutions, which facilitated participation such as political parties and trade unions, have failed to respond effectively to the new concerns of the disparate social sector constituencies. As a result a variety of social forces have flourished, notably the middle class, i.e. lawyers, left-wing political activists, and ex-civil servants etc.. This is also true in Thailand's case.

effect supports exploitation of the rural sector by the urban sector. Instead, they attempt to find alternative development models¹² based on respect toward peasant needs, and built at a grass-roots level on a foundation of traditional knowledge and local technology (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1996).

At the beginning, NGO work focused primarily on providing direct services such as income generating activities and healthcare services to improve the quality of life of the farmers. Later on, NGO work strategies emphasized group formation and networking among farmers or other related target groups (Nakabutr, 1990). Popular grass-roots movements in the form of people's organizations began to flourish around such environmental issues as forest protection, marine resource preservation and land rights (Farrington & Lewis, 1993). In light of this, increasing the bargaining power and participation of farmers in the decision-making process, often through the bureaucratic structure (Callahan, 1995; Hirsch, 1990; "Analysis Urged", 1998) is a major goal of NGOs.

Development NGOs, or *urban allies* as they are referred to by Phongpaichit and Baker (1996), function as catalysts and mediators for rural farmers to bargain with government agencies to solve problems faced by the majority of farmers, such as poverty, discrimination, and uneven distribution of natural resources. They have brought together numerous small-scale, fragmented, and dispersed groups into a single, broad-

¹² See, for example, the work of Chatthip Nartsupha (1991) in *The Community Culture School of Thought* and the work of Hewison (1993) in *Thai Non-Governmental Organizations and the Cultural Development Perspectives*.

based protest movement.¹³ By working collaboratively with academics and the media, they were able to provide otherwise inaccessible information on the negative impacts of modern development to the public and policy makers. They have played an essential role in initiating as well as sustaining these protest movements (Clarke, 1998).

More recently, NGOs work primarily to raise public awareness regarding the negative impacts of modern development, and to campaign for legislation and policy reform. NGO umbrella organizations and research-oriented NGOs were formed at the national level to work on policy campaigning and reform. Throughout the 1990s, NGOs have achieved some formal representation on a number of government agencies' advisory boards of decision-making bodies at the local and national levels. Some have successfully challenged government policy and created policy impacts on certain issues such as the quality of the environment.¹⁴ However, most NGOs prefer the politically low-profile strategy of supporting small-scale farmers and other grass-roots organizations in such specific issues as agricultural production, and working directly with government officials mainly at a

¹³ In the 1970s, rural farmers especially those from Northeastern Thailand's poorest villages, revolted against increasing exploitation justified in the name of modern development. Some farmers joined the communist insurgency which took hold of much of Indochina. Other farmers in the North and central Thailand formed a Peasants Federation which protested the government through petition writing and demonstrations. The Thai government took tough measures to suppress both the insurgency and the farmers movement. In recent years, there have been other kinds of protests related to conflicts over the unsustainable practices of resource use or health and environmental effects from hazardous waste in local communities. These protests were normally localized but some took on a broader meaning and became a public issue (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1996).

¹⁴ As mentioned in Chapter One, the revolt against the Suchinda government in 1992 saw NGOs and grass-roots people's organizations working in concert with the urban middle class in an effort to reclaim some modicum of democracy. The relation between NGOs, people's organizations, and the state is such that, as Callahan (1995, p. 112) concludes, "NGOs use both macro and micro strategies where grass-roots organizations can both work with the state and capital through policy advocacy, and can work against them through mass mobilization".

local level (Farrington & Lewis, 1993; Hirsch, 1990).¹⁵

NGOs and Their Work in Providing Alternative Learning
for the Urban Middle Class

In addition to the community development activities and work in support of the poor to have a say in development policy, NGOs also make direct attempts to deepen the understanding and strengthen the mutual-help relationship between the urban middle class and rural people. Though the urban middle class are not the direct targets of NGO development work, they were included in some NGO project activities. For example, some of the work undertaken by NGOs throughout the 1980s attempted to modify some religious ceremonies such as the Buddhist's *Phapa*¹⁶ ritual to make it relevant and meaningful to the rural farmers' present conditions. Urban people from outside the rural communities normally attended these *Phapa* rituals. The presence of urban people and the resources they brought to the communities gave the villagers a sense of being part of a concerned community, which also helped overcome their sense of isolation (Bobilin, 1988). Urban people also had an opportunity to learn about the plight of farmers through

¹⁵ Recently, there has been an increasing degree of coordination between state, business and NGO communities due to the liberalization of the economy by state authorities as well as the NGOs' realization of the necessity of working within the existing political framework. Prawes Wasi further proposed the idea of encouraging five social groups: the state, academic, NGOs, business sector, and the community (people's organizations, family institutions, religious institutions, volunteers and the public in general) to work in co-operation with one another in the process of social transformation (Thailand Environment Institute, 1996). In my opinion, this kind of co-operation can happen but depending on the issues being raised and the degree of conflicts or confrontation arising from the issues among these groups. Green consumerism promotion, for example, can bring the five social groups to work collaboratively together.

¹⁶ The *Phapa* (wilderness robe) ceremony is traditionally an offering of robes and essential things to the monks for their daily use. The NGOs reinterpreted the ritual and used it as an opportunity to give donations of rice to villagers. The donated rice would be used to establish rice banks or rice cooperatives for self-help. Villagers can borrow rice from the rice bank when in need, such as in drought years or as a form of emergency relief and return rice the year after or whenever they can (Bobilin, 1988).

such direct participation. The opportunity for this kind of learning probably would not have occurred had they merely donated money to them.

Other learning endeavors organized for the urban middle class include such activities as field trips and workshops concerned with environmental and social justice issues that farmers must contend with. These efforts include eco-tours such as a *guided walking ecological tour* in the neighbouring forests to teach urban people some of the traditional knowledge on and use of herbal and medicinal plants (Staff, 1995). The purpose of the tour is to inform urban people, through a direct learning experience, of the forest's bio-diversity, of how modern development destroys this diversity; and how villagers preserve and utilize their biological resources, as well as other related topics. The tours use villagers as local experts to explain and teach aspects of rural life to urban people.

Conclusion

Currently, the explosive mix of rapid but uneven economic growth and widespread environmental degradation are characteristic of development in Thailand (Parnwell & Bryant, 1996; Komin, 1993; Pfirrmann, 1992; Rigg, 1996). The social and ecological impacts brought about by the country's integration into the global economy through export-oriented industrialization became more visible once Thailand adopted a neo-colonial development scheme. Deforestation, the degradation of the top soils and water resources, and the production and disposal of industrial hazards are major environmental problems. In rural areas, rural communities are under pressure from the penetration of capitalism and its repertoire of values that are influencing their self-concept and general livelihood (Puntasen, 1992). Agriculture as a means for subsistence has been transformed into agri-business for exports. In joining agri-business production, many farmers fail to maintain their own sustenance. As a result, in

an effort to find supplementary income to buy those necessities they could no longer produce for themselves, they entered the industrial sector as a source of cheap labour. The country's healthcare policy has also been tied to the Western model of healthcare, neglecting the self-care, preventative healthcare elements of the traditional medical system.

The economic turmoil in Thailand in mid 1997 clearly demonstrates how fragile the growing economies, very much dependent on foreign investment, are. It also shows the powerful force of international capital which can further hurt the country's economy (Gan, 1997). Nevertheless, the recommendations to alleviate the economic crisis proposed by 50 leading academics and business people at a two-day *Nation Forum* in early July 1998 are still directed towards further progress in economic growth. The group proposed that

Thailand should pursue a growth-led policy, completely rebuild the financial sector from scratch, find new mega-projects. . .to attract massive foreign investment and take the regional crisis global in a foreign policy offensive to save the country from a plunge into chaos (Virametheekul, 1998, no page)

A call for the Thai middle class to work collaboratively with the poor to organize for social transformation and democratic process, especially during the economic turmoil, has been voiced as an alternative to the above prescriptions. Still, it is unclear what role the middle class should play in the economic and political arenas or how and what the middle class can learn from the villagers' way of life as an alternative to Western, capitalist values. However, it seems that those who promote collaboration between the middle class and the rural/urban poor see hopeful possibility in an issue-based movement that may initiate the transformation of Thai society.

The emergence of development NGOs is seen as a response to the need for middle class action in working collaboratively with the poor. Apparently, there are a

number of NGOs that organize alternative learning activities for the middle class to help them bridge the gap in understanding between themselves and the poor. These learning endeavors are undertaken with the hope of creating a productive mode of interaction between these two otherwise disparate groups.

In addition, the most recent NGO work in building alliances and relationships across groups using adult education schemes can be seen in the NGOs' promotion of green consumerism: the promotion of green production and consumption. Thai NGOs working in the area of *alternative agriculture* and *primary healthcare* have been organizing substantive learning activities for the Thai middle class through their green consumerism campaign. The underlying assumptions of green consumerism will be further explored and discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter 5

Green Consumerism

Green Consumerism in Industrialized Countries

What is Green Consumerism?

In 1988, the term green consumerism was coined in the United Kingdom coinciding with the release of the publication *The Green Consumer Guide* book which has since become an international best-seller (Vallely, 1992). Since then, the term green consumerism¹ has been widely and readily adopted by environmentalists, consumer groups, manufacturers, advertisers, marketers and retailers. From the literature review, it was found that there is no consensus on the meaning of green consumerism and no one definition is all inclusive. However, for this research study, the following definition, which seems to be relatively more comprehensive than the others, will be adopted here. For our purposes, then, green consumerism will mean manufacturers and consumers take responsibility for “producing or purchasing goods, and/or participating in services which attempt to replace existing ones with something designed to be environmentally friendlier and less damaging to the ecosystems” (“What Is”, 1996, no page). Some authors (Coleman, 1994; Luke, 1993) include environmentally-friendly behaviours such as participating in a recycling program as part of green consumerism.

¹ The word *green* has been widely used to describe people, products, or activities that are seen to be environmentally responsible (McDougall, 1990, cited in Pettit & Sheppard, 1992, p. 329). On the other hand, the word *consumerism* has at least two meanings. It can mean excessive consumption for the sake of self-indulgence, similar to the commonly-used term *materialism* (Mayer, 1989). In the United States, *consumerism* often refers to a movement of consumers concerned solely with consumer protection through means of monitoring price, the quality of goods, encoding and publicizing consumer rights, and so forth (Mayer, 1989; Nava, 1992).

A fundamental assumption of green consumerism is the notion that since all natural resources are finite, our desire for unlimited consumption, as shown in our endless accumulation and purchases of things, creates environmental problems. Every individual's purchasing decision, no matter how small these decisions are, can significantly effect the overall impact on the environment (Elkington, Hailes, & Makower, 1990; Irvine, 1991; Martell, 1994; Mies, 1986; Seager, 1993). On the other hand, the cumulative weight of small, individual responses to the broader planetary crises can contribute to environmental solutions. Adopting a green lifestyle will then allow us to reduce global environmental issues to a more manageable scale.

Green consumerism is based on the rationale of capitalism which sees consumers as decisions-makers in the allocation of society's resources. It is believed that citizens can exercise *consumer sovereignty*, which is the capacity for individual consumers to modify his/her consumption patterns through free market mechanisms in order to direct the market and to ensure social responsibility in business (Martell, 1994). Therefore, the assumption that consumers behave rationally so as to maximize their utility, one of the principal pillars of free market capitalism, is also prevalent in green consumerism. Since consumers derive some utility out of a healthier environment, it is assumed that they will voluntarily alter their behaviour to help achieve environmental goals in an effort to rationally maximize this utility. As a result, environmentally-concerned consumers will make informed decisions in order to avoid damaging the environment on which they depend (Grunert cited in Pettit & Sheppard, 1992, p. 330). Therefore, the ideal of green consumerism would be equivalent to the self-regulated mechanism within the market economy operating with an environmental context.

Green consumerism, as it has been promoted by producers and the marketing and advertising industries, is primarily concerned with public relations, marketing

opportunities and profit (Smith, 1998). Public relation campaigns are often limited to activities such as sponsoring environmental *good causes* activities. The launching of these public relation campaigns is normally restricted to major polluters, such as oil or mining companies, to help improve their corporate image. In addition, industries often make exaggerated claims that their products are non-toxic, recycleable, and/or have little effect on the environment in their advertisements, label information, packaging and environmental seals of approval. As a result, *Design for the Environment* established itself as a legitimate service to help industries serious about green consumerism to develop new products for the green market by ensuring environmental considerations and primary benefits of performance and price (Ottman, 1996).

From the demand side, green consumerism views consumers as consciously choosing to buy or use environmentally benign products and/or services and giving more thought to excess packaging, disposability, and recycleability when making these choices (Coleman, 1994). It also assumes that consumers can make the choice not to buy or to collectively boycott certain products or services that do not meet green criteria. This criteria has motivated the following questions often referred to as *Cradle-to-Grave* or *Life-Cycle Analysis (LCA)* for evaluating the environmental friendliness of products (Elkington, Hailes, & Makower, 1990; Mies, 1986; Seager, 1993; Wagner, 1997):

- Are the products harmful to the health of people or animals ?
- Are the products produced with unnecessary use of or cruelty to animals ?
- Are the products produced with a disproportionate amount of energy and other resources or pollute the environment during manufacture, packaging, transportation, use, or disposal?

At the start of 1991, ethical consumerism, which has a wider ethical business base than just a concern with a particular product's green credentials, was included in

the green consumerism concept (Vallely, 1992). This means that criteria used by consumers when making purchasing decisions is vastly expanded. Ethical consumerism aims to encourage socially responsible trade within the current economic system. This ethical concern for the environment cannot be totally differentiated from those motivated by political or ideological concerns. Key areas where ethical consumerism is adopted by manufacturers, which includes Britain's first ever ethical supermarket chain (Smount, 1995), are healthy food consumption, human and animal welfare, environmental sustainability, fair trade and local community development. Ethical considerations are also given to companies regarding whether or not they are involved in arms trade investments, are dealing with oppressive regimes, have good union relations, or are exploiting cheap labour in the so-called Third World countries (Seager, 1993; Mies, 1986).

Since more than 80 per cent of household purchasing is undertaken by women, the green consumer movement is typically regarded as home-based and explicitly *women-oriented* (Nava, 1992). Seager (1993) argues that the green consumer movement of the 80s and 90s is a continuation of a long and global tradition of women doing activism for social change while remaining in their domestic sphere. In joining the green consumer movement, women have a chance to protect their own and their families' health as well as contribute to planetary environmental health.

The Origin of Green Consumerism

The origin of green consumerism in the West seems to be ambivalent, depending on how it is being conceptualized and defined. The ambiguity of the origin of green consumerism may be partially owing to the long history of the political use of consumer advocacy. It is difficult to determine when the concerns for the environment

and the practice of green consumption joined that tradition (Smith, 1998). Seager (1993) asserts that green consumerism originated in Europe in the late 1980s and later established itself in North America. However, Valley (1992) claims that the green consumer movement in the United Kingdom can be dated back to the 1970s when the world-wide campaign to stop the fur trade market in the UK was launched. In the early 70s and 80s, the Body Shop enterprise, founded on the principle that no animal testing would be undertaken to determine the safeness of cosmetic products, brought critical public attention to the widespread practice of animal testing. Valley also draws attention to the successful 1987 campaign carried out by Friends of the Earth, UK, who managed to urge companies selling products in aerosol cans containing chloro-fluorocarbons (CFCs) to remove the CFCs from the aerosol format.

In 1989, Time magazine estimated that there were about 18 million green shoppers in Britain (Nava, 1992). Many European countries, particularly Germany, have been offering green products and supporting green consumers far more advanced than in Britain. The German government set up the first eco-labelling scheme in 1979 called the *Blue Angel* program² (Dadd & Carothers, 1991). In Berlin, there are about 50 food co-ops where members can buy organic produce directly from organic farms, and organic food stands are becoming increasingly more common at conventional outdoor markets (Meyer-Renschhausen, 1994).

In the USA, the idea that we are all responsible for the environmental crisis has become increasingly popular with the American public since Earth Day in 1990 (Coleman, 1994; Luke, 1993). This idea of a personal response to the planetary crisis seemed to be more popular with those who became exhausted from the social activism

² There is a discrepancy as to the time the *Blue Angel* program started between that recorded by Dadd & Carothers (1991) and Valley (1992). Dadd & Carothers said it started in 1979 but Valley offers 1978.

of the 1960s and 70s (Seager, 1993). Around and since Earth Day 1990, there have been a number of lifestyle-oriented books published to promote the idea of consumer responsibility toward the environment. These books provided readers with a closer examination of those aspects of their lives where they could take up ecologically responsible alternatives (Coleman, 1994).

In the early 1990s, retailers as well as product manufacturers in the USA quickly embraced the green consumers. In the first half of the 1990s, 308 green packaged products or just over nine per cent of all new packaged goods were introduced into North America. At the same time, more than a dozen U.S. supermarket chains introduced a line of environmentally friendly products distributed by Ashdun Industries ("Going For", 1990). A labelling scheme was also established to monitor the green standard of these new products. In 1990, there were at least two federal labelling initiatives called the *Green Cross* and the *Green Seal* programs.

In Canada, the Canadian Environmental Choice labelling program was formed in 1988 (Gemery, 1990). The big players in the food retail industry, including A & P, Loblaws and the Oshawa Group, began allocating space in their giant markets for organic produce (Graham, 1996). Organic and health food stores are also popular in urban centres. In addition, the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, in which organic farmers and consumers directly link with each other without a middle-person or retailers, proved to be economically and environmentally successful. In CSA, urban consumers order and pay farmers up front for organic produce before the growing season begins. It helps farmers find scarce financial resources as well as guarantees a market for their produce. It also provides urban consumers with an opportunity to take

part in the farming process and to learn more about healthy food, organic farming, the farmers' way of life, and the rural community.

In Japan, the famous Seikatsu Consumers Cooperative (SCC) started much earlier in 1965 as a bulk buying club organized and run by Japanese housewives. Motivated by ecological and social concerns, the cooperative has been flourishing and expanding so that today it accommodates up to 25,000 local groups of some eight households each. They are now able to distribute 400 products, produced to meet rigorous ecological and social criteria, to members of the SCC all over the country (Ekins, 1992).

Green Consumerism and Its Contribution to Environmental Solutions

Positive Aspects

Current debates on green consumerism as an effective and appropriate means to solve environmental problems and to contribute to the sustainability of the earth reveal both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, first and foremost, using environmentally-friendly products and eating a well-balanced, healthy diet are directly beneficial to people's health. Therefore, self-interest in health improvement and family safety are the prime motivations behind people adopting a green lifestyle.

Secondly, according to the current understanding of how the market economy works, consumer demand for green products should be able to direct the production process. Once manufacturers become aware that there is a significant demand for green products, they will make an effort to alter the production process to manufacture green goods for green consumers. The economic incentives manufacturers receive from the green market will encourage them to concentrate on producing environmentally-friendly products (Irvine, 1991). Other companies will then be encouraged to follow in

the same footsteps as these green manufacturers with hopes of repeating their marketing success (Elkington, Hailes, & Makower, 1990). It is important to note that the success of a consumer demand approach to change the production process was normally accomplished by first introducing a strong campaign on certain key ethical issues, such as the elimination of animal cruelty, together with the collective actions of both consumer groups and environmentalists.

Thirdly, green consumerism would empower women, who have almost sole responsibility for home-based domestic work (consuming), as agents of environmental change (Seager, 1993). As mentioned earlier, the green consumer movement is primarily women-oriented and home-based. Women's socialized gender role as principal caretakers of the family and their continuing household responsibility place them in a unique relation with environmental issues, especially those that are health related such as food contamination, household hazards, and pollution. In addition, this gender role has constructed them as a constituency suited to the new consumer activism in an extraordinary way. Nava (1992) sees that there are many examples which confirm women as political subjects in this process, that is, as "active, knowledgeable and progressive" (p.198). Therefore, green consumerism is a venue for women to be active in the public arena while maintaining themselves in domestic affairs.

Through the green consumer movement, women can put one foot into the political arena without leaving the kitchen- an alluring and empowering combination, though not without mixed political implications (Seager, 1993, p.254).

Fourthly, green consumerism can be started immediately by each and everyone on an individual basis (Mies, 1986). It enables individuals to act in their own right to contribute to the reduction of environmental impacts without having to wait for someone else to take action on their behalf. For some, green consumerism is seen as a direct

democratic process that operates at the market level in which consumers, through their purchasing power, can vote for those products that they not only need but that they have determined as being most appropriate (Nava, 1992).

Lastly, for many people, taking responsibility for their personal consumption is a practical and realistic first step to take action on other environmental issues. Furthermore, when people start being more thoughtfully critical by questioning, for example, how the food they eat is produced, they are more likely to begin to examine the reality behind the manufacturing and distribution of other products (Irvine, 1991; Martell, 1994). In this regard, then, it is hoped that green consumerism will help stimulate people to critically examine both their own lifestyles and those social structures that encourage environmentally-destructive patterns of consumption and to have a broader and deeper understanding of environmental issues other than their immediate health benefits and personal safety.

Limitations

Besides the merits of green consumerism mentioned above, there are a number of limitations to green consumerism as a solution to environmental problems. The foremost strength of green consumerism, as a movement, is that it allows individual consumers to immediately act upon the environmental crisis through purchasing activities. However, this is also the movement's principal weakness. This is because the biggest flaw of green consumerism is that environmental problems are reduced to a question of lifestyle. Sandilands (1992) sees that green consumerism privatizes and depoliticizes environmental change while Luke (1993) sees green consumerism as a domestication of ecological radicalism. Those who criticize green consumerism (Coleman, 1994; Dadd & Carothers, 1991; Irvine, 1991; Luke, 1993; Sandilands, 1992;

Seager, 1993) all agree that green consumerism can mislead us into thinking that we personally are the major cause of environmental problems and as a result limit our course of action to the private sphere or to individual responsibility. In this way, green consumerism shifts the burden of responsibility away from states, corporations, and global political and economic arrangements.

Green consumerism is criticized as a thoroughly middle class affair (Irvine, 1991; Seager, 1993). Green products are relatively expensive and the price may be beyond the means of many consumers. The capitalist market system that green consumerism is based upon cannot accommodate individuals who lack purchasing power. If those who have purchasing power are able to remain safe from toxic and hazardous products, the poorer sections of society will continue to consume relatively unsafe and unhealthy products (Martell, 1994; Irvine, 1991). The green consumer movement, as it has been promoted in the United Kingdom and North America, is thus reinforcing the already present division between the rich and the poor, and introduces a new environmental measure of privilege-- the privilege of being safe from household environmental hazards (Seager, 1993).

As mentioned earlier, green consumerism was enthusiastically received by both the manufacture and retail business sectors. As a result, the green consumer movement has become more industry-led partly because green trade is seen by many manufacturers as a profitable market opportunity for new lines of products. As Luke's (1993) analysis shows, green consumerism transformed sections of the ecological movement into a new special subsystem of mass consumption. This is supported by Fink (1990) who points out that in the late twentieth century industry has successfully appropriated even the most radical ideas and artifacts, such as environmentalism, and

neutralized them by modifying them into commodities, thereby eliminating their threatening qualities and making it almost impossible to sustain social change.

Green companies often aim to encourage people to buy *more* not *less* of their goods in order to be successfully green in the market economy (Seager, 1993). Since the natural limits of the Earth's resources demands reducing consumption rather than just encouraging a different form of consumption, as green consumerism seems to advocate, the answer to the environmental problems we face is not only to consume appropriately but also to consume less (Dadd & Carothers, 1991; Irvine, 1991; Martell, 1994). In fact, green consumerism as it has been promoted by the industry does not oppose it against the capitalist principle *more is better* (Irvine, 1991). It also does not question the marketing process that creates demand through manipulation of public taste with aggressive advertising campaigns ("Can Green", no date).

According to Seager (1993), although the message of green consumerism is primarily directed toward women, they are often left out of the decision-making process and the public campaigns focusing on the consumption issues which directly affect them. Women are normally perceived by the industries as an easily manipulated consumer pool with little political power. Too often their attempts at contributing to setting the terms of discussion regarding consumption and production with business are ignored even when products are marketed mostly or exclusively for women. Women are often excluded from the public agenda and discussions held by politicians on consumer issues as well.

In addition, issues on the exploitation of women's labour in the South for the purpose of producing cheap goods to supply the demands of First World women are also mostly excluded from the agenda of green consumerism. This is not unexpected since the issue of labour exploitation is also excluded from many other *non-green*

consumer movements in Europe and North America (Mies, 1986). Further, Seager's analysis (1993) of the sexual politics of products, which uses criteria based on the degree to which products are promoted through the manipulation of sexist images of women has not been addressed by advocates of green consumerism.

Green Consumerism in Thailand

The Business Sector and Green Consumerism

In Thailand, the business sector's interest in green consumerism and other environmental related issues has been growing rapidly since 1990 ("Klern Look", 1993). However, it is only in response to increasing public environmental awareness and the subsequent changes in consumer behaviour in larger urban centres regarding increased demand for green products that business companies started to incorporate a green agenda into their business practices and to market a variety of green products to meet consumers' demand.

Green consumerism as it has been promoted by the business sector in Thailand does not significantly differ from those promoted in Europe and North America in the 80s and 90s. In a survey conducted by Green World Magazine in 1993 ("Klern Look", 1993), it was found that the business sector took advantage of the environmental concerns by initiating environmentally-friendly programs as follow: managing toxic waste; producing green products, green packaging and services; and public relations by means of establishing non-profit foundations or funds to promote environmental *good cause* activities. Major sectors which undertook to promote green consumerism included oil companies, department stores, electrical appliance companies, suppliers of alternative energy, and green hotel business. However, there were deficiencies in such

enterprises as they lack a critical analysis that would link environmental concerns with the problem of wealth distribution and patterns of natural resources use (Rigg, 1996)

Another area of green consumerism experiencing rapid growth is the production and marketing of organic food.³ This growth in the organic food market is reflected in the increasing number of green shops selling organic food and eco-friendly household products, and the number of green shelves in conventional supermarkets. In 1993, there was only one green shop in Bangkok. By the end of the same year, the number of green shops had risen to over thirty in Bangkok and another thirty located upcountry (Rojanaphruk, 1997). In November 1998, *Lemon Farm*, a corporate-owned⁴ supermarket chain selling only green products such as organic rice and vegetables announced its plan to open a total of seven stores in Bangkok (Sukrung, 1998). The company was reported to have helped promote community business by linking directly with farmers groups and ensuring a guaranteed level of income for farmers, as well as buy green products from at least 60 rural communities from around the country (Burakananonda, 1998).

Government Agencies

Thai government agencies, including agricultural universities, have contributed to green consumerism particularly in the area of organic food. For example, in 1992, the Ministry of Agriculture implemented a pilot project with small-scale farmers to produce

³ There are several terms used by Thai NGOs, government agencies and business enterprises to describe food produced by sustainable agricultural practices. *aharn plod-sarn-pid*, meaning toxic-free food, is one of the most popular terms used. Other terms include *aharn plod-sarn-kae-mee* (chemical-free food) and *pak anamai* (hygienic vegetables). Often these terms are used interchangeably as definite meanings of each term has yet to be determined. In this study, I will use the term *organic* food in replacing all the terms mentioned above.

⁴ Lemon Farm is operated by Monkonchai Pattana Co., Ltd., a joint venture between Bangchak Petroleum and the Crown Property Bureau with three million Baht registered capital (Buranakanonda, 1998).

organic fresh fruits and vegetables in response to central government policies to reduce the import of agricultural chemicals, to produce safe food for Thai consumers, and to export organic food to foreign markets as stated in the Seventh National Economic and Social Development plan. Although farmers were allowed to use chemical fertilizers in the pilot project, chemical pesticides and herbicides were totally banned. Alternative pest control management was also introduced to the farmers involved in the project. The Ministry assisted farmers in marketing the organic fruits and vegetables to urban consumers and foreign markets. The ministry also issued standardized labels for these fruit and vegetable products ("Pak Anamai", 1997). As well, the Ministry has been promoting the production of hygienic fruits and vegetables in other target areas. As a result, the government's organic fruits and vegetables have become well known and available in the Thai green market.

Santi-Asoke Buddhist Group and Green Consumerism

Organic food production and consumption has also been promoted by *Santi-Asoke*, fundamentalist Buddhists who advocate simplicity and strict moral discipline to counter the lax and commercialized mainstream clergy. Seven *Asoke Centres* or religious communities were established nation wide as alternative living communities which denounce the excessive materialism and related values and lifestyle espoused by capitalism and consumerism. In these centres, religious devotees live a simple life together as a community and follow strict precepts of Buddhism. *Asoke* members, for example, eat only one or two vegetarian meals a day. The five Buddhist precepts, which prohibit killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, and the consumption of alcohol, are strictly followed. *Asoke* members do a lot of hard physical labour which they do

selflessly to strengthen perseverance and to discourage the development of the ego and its propensity for greed (Teerawichitchainan, 1997).

In the late 1980s, a group of lay Asoke followers in *Srisa Asoke Centre*, initiated organic farming to ensure an adequate food supply for their community. They experimented with mushrooms and later with organic vegetables and rice. The *Srisa Asoke* group was able to produce enough food for themselves as well as surplus for the other Asoke centres. Further, much of this surplus was sold in the stores established by the centres at below market prices. The group also produced other green products, such as herbal shampoos, herbal drinks, and traditional medicines, to sell at local markets. They could sell their green products at a very low price because Asoke members contributed their labour for free. In later years, other Asoke centres established their own organic farms, organic food restaurants, and green stores to sell green products to the public.

NGOs and Green Consumerism

Not only the business sector but also many NGOs working in community development programs participate in green consumerism. NGOs' promotion of green consumerism over the past two decades coincides with the increasing reduction in foreign funding, the major source of funding for many Thai NGOs. Ever since Thailand was designated by the international community as a non-recipient country due to its rapid economic growth, funding has been shifted to assist development work in other Southeast Asian countries. Thai NGOs then had to seek funding locally from the government, the business sector and the general public (Hasarungsee, 1994 cited in Thailand Environmental Institute, 1996, p. 23-24). Marketing green products produced

by farmers in NGO target areas is one such strategy the NGOs use in order to generate funds.

Alternative Marketing

NGOs who actively promote green consumption, as well as produce and distribute green product normally refer to their work not as green consumerism but as *alternative marketing*. The term, initially introduced by Saneh Chamarik, became familiar to the public in 1993 (Oadormpanich & Yaimuang, 1996). Chamarik describes alternative marketing as a market whose primary function is to connect consumers and producers (farmers) who share a common ethical concern for production and consumption. It aims to give fair economic return to producers (farmers) and provide consumers with quality and green products produced by sustainable agricultural practices. As Rapee Sakrik (Oadormvanich & Yaimuang, 1996) adds, alternative marketing is not a market in a conventional economic sense but rather a manner in which consumers and producers relate to each other. This relation between consumers and producers is guided by mutual ethical values. An alternative marketing system does not use misleading advertising to induce consumers to consume more but instead encourages them to consume according to their needs. Finally, alternative marketing regards producers (farmers) as subjects of the production process who are able to determine important production factors such as farm input, technology, and price.

Alternative Agriculture and Primary Healthcare Promotion (PHC)

The NGOs' understanding of green consumerism is closely linked with the promotion of alternative agriculture and PHC for self-reliance. In promoting sustainable agriculture for self-reliance, NGOs encourage farmers to produce healthy food for their

own consumption using sustainable farming practices and to sell their surplus to urban consumers for a fair price. NGOs also help the farmers market their organic produce in the larger urban centres to urban consumers. In addition, NGOs organize educational activities for urban consumers to learn more about organic food as a healthy and nutritious source, sustainable farming practices, the farmers' economic hardships, and the environmental problems faced by local communities. These learning activities brought farmers and urban consumers together to dialogue and form a more meaningful relationship other than one reduced to mere economic transaction.

The promotion of PHC for self-reliance by these NGOs, which is not exclusively separate from the promotion of alternative agriculture, is geared toward encouraging people to become active actors in the decision-making process and in taking control of their healthcare resources. In practice, the PHC movement uses preventative healthcare as their principal strategy together with the promotion of a holistic healthcare model. The movement regards health problems as being interrelated to other issues such as industrialization and pollution, agriculture, and lifestyle. The PHC movement has attempted to revive herbal-based traditional medicines by promoting them as a safe and cheap alternative to Western medicine. They have also campaigned on a number of health-related issues such as anti-smoking and the excessive abuse of imported Western drugs. Recently, the *Co-ordinating Committee for Primary Health Care*, an NGO umbrella organization working to promote PHC, started to focus their work on consumers' rights and protection. The promotion of green consumption among urban consumers, such as organic food and other green products, has also been incorporated into their work (Interview with Saree). The PHC movement, like the alternative agriculture movement, considers the learning process of consumers an essential part of the agenda to promote green consumerism. They also work with other NGOs involved in

the National Network of Alternative Agriculture to link urban consumers with rural farmers through study tours and other learning activities.

First NGO Project Promoting Green Consumerism

From interviews with NGO staff, it was discovered that the *Food for Quality of Life* project initiated by Charnchai Limpiyakorn, an engineering professor at Chulalongkorn University and an NGO consultant, was considered the pioneer project for marketing organic food produced by rural farmers for urban consumers. In 1987, Charnchai contacted a farmer group in Surin province, who were doing integrated farming⁵, to supply him with organic food. The project sold organic rice, vegetables, and fruits at a Friday flea market on the university campus where he taught. The project also helped a farmers' co-op rice mill in Surin province find markets for their rice.

In his interview with *Choomchon Pattana* magazine ("Bon Sentang", 1987), Charnchai said that the idea behind marketing green produce was to respond to the consumers' demand for healthy food and farmers' economic needs which required that they switch to sustainable agricultural practices. During this time, NGOs working on rural development were aware of the negative impacts of market capitalism and agri-business on farmers' lives and rural communities. One strategy the NGOs adopted to contest the growing force of agri-business was to promote low-cost, appropriate technology and integrated farming techniques among farmers. Urban consumers, on the other hand, were becoming aware of environmental problems and their effects on people's health. There was a demand for healthy, organic food as this was perceived as being good for

⁵ In the early 1980s, integrated farming was popularized as a strategy by developmental NGOs in the Northeastern region. It is part of the alternative agriculture movement which promotes a variety of alternative farming techniques and encourages new ways of envisioning the production, consumption and distribution of food. See Appendix C for a description of integrated farming.

urban consumers' health, the farmers' livelihood and the environment. However, at the time there were no organic food outlets anywhere in the city. Charnchai saw this as an opportunity to start a project which would incorporate economic viability for farmers as well as supply urban consumers with wholesome, healthy food. At the same time, the project initially was motivated by the need for NGOs to be financially self-reliant before foreign funding became exhausted. The marketing of organic food to urban consumers was soon established with the intent to serve the following purposes: to promote sustainable farming practices among farmers; to generate fair income for farmers and for NGOs; and to provide urban consumers with healthy, organic food.

Charnchai started the project with those rural farmers groups who were already working closely with other NGOs and with whom they had a good relationship. He saw that a close network relationship and collaboration between farmers and NGO staff would, first, help with product quality and quantity control. Secondly, he recognized that working collaboratively with farmers facilitates the integration of farmers' traditional knowledge with scientific research and technology to further develop appropriate farming techniques. The project had also planned to work with other nearby NGOs to help them market green products and handicrafts made by farmers. There was also an attempt to create a standard labelling system for green product accountability. However, the project had to be terminated after only a year and a half primarily because it was not financially viable.

Green Stores

Green Garden Store

Aside from the NGOs' involvement in the promotion of organic food production, consumption, and marketing, several individuals independently joined this green

crusade. One such individual was Praphot Pethakard, a medical doctor active with the NGO *Rural Doctors Foundation*. His contribution to green consumerism came in 1992 when he founded the *Green Garden* which became the first organic food store in Bangkok. In an interview with Praphot, he said that his motivation for establishing an organic food store arose from his involvement with the Rural Doctors Foundation in its work in and promotion of PHC for self-reliance which included campaigning on public health issues. He noticed that despite the growing concerns of the public over toxic residues in perishable food and the outstanding strides taken by some NGOs promoting alternative agriculture as a means to respond to farmers' health concerns over excessive use of chemical pesticides in modern farming and to establish economic self-reliance among farmers, a viable market integrating these two sides and their concerns, remained weak. In attempting to address this weakness, Praphot took the first tentative steps of personally delivering a manageable quantity of organic vegetables to urban consumers. He brought vegetables from farmers in the neighbouring towns surrounding Bangkok and sold them to his circle of friends and acquaintances. He pursued this as a side interest since he often went upcountry to visit friends and NGO development projects in the rural areas that he was familiar with through his work in the PHC movement. In 1992, after a year of this small scale delivery, he and his friends, who are mostly middle class professionals, decided to open a small green store in Bangkok. They bought shares and officially registered the store as commercial retail.

Two to three people were hired to work as salespersons. The shareholders helped Praphot deliver the goods and with other work that needed to be done. He recalled that when the store first opened, there were less than 30 green products in the market to choose from. At the time of the interview in early 1997, he said there were more than 100 green products to choose from due to the expansion of farmers groups

and NGOs who acted as organic food wholesalers. Praphot also initiated the development of several products. For example, he asked a soy sauce factory owner whom he knows to produce an organic soy sauce to sell at the store and for other stores to order. When asked about the profits that were made, he said income from selling organic food at the store was sufficient to maintain the basic operation of the store and to cover the rent and salaries of the permanent staff. The labour he and his friends put into the store was not calculated as part of the investment. In his own words, "We do not think that we are running a business [in the conventional sense of earning a living from it] because we do not receive any salary" (Interview). The store is still in operation to this day.

Green Net

Green Net was initiated by a group of young professionals who were interested in combining ethical business with organic food. It is led by Vitoon Panyakul who believes that green consumers' purchasing power can influence producers to adopt green criteria in the production process (Interview with Vitoon). Green Net, as an ethical business venture with close connections with NGOs, shares a similar ideology with NGOs in terms of striving to find environmental solutions, developing farmers' economic self-reliance, and establishing fair trade. It acts as a wholesaler and supplier to green stores. It buys products directly from organic farmer groups and NGOs belonging to the National Network of Alternative Agriculture. Green Net also owns a retail store which sells grain and cereal, herbal drinks, preserved seafood, herbal products (e.g. toothpaste, shampoo), fresh organic fruits and vegetables (Green Net, no date). Green Net organizes study tours for urban consumers to visit organic farms and farmers in NGO project areas. The group also plans to work with and organize groups of green urban consumers in the near future (Interview with Triyada).

Thammada Store

Another well known green store is *Thammada (Simple)* in Chiangmai city. The store was established in 1992 by *Friends of Chiangmai*, a community-based group of academics and professionals. Sirichai Nalermitralekakar, a *Friends of Chiangmai* representative, noted that the store was set up as an example or model for people who had environmental concerns and wished to start a small green business. The store sold green products, organic food, meals for lunch, and books on health, meditation, and alternative healthcare. Once in a while, special events, such as small group discussions on local environmental issues, were organized for store members and the general public. The store became a gathering place for those who had an abiding interest in environmental and quality of life issues. The store business went well for a while until they had to move on two different occasions to new locations. At the new locations, it did not attract as many customers and eventually the store, facing bankruptcy, closed down in 1995 (Interview with Sirichai).

Anan Manmontree's Restaurant

Another notable individual worth mentioning because of his contribution to green consumerism is Anan Manmontree, a native businessman of Chiangmai province who is well known for his initiative in a local project and litter collecting campaign called *Walk for Life*. In 1995, Anan whose family business includes a restaurant and hotel, used his 1.5 acres of land outside Chiangmai city to produce organic vegetables. He hired a farm manager with a university degree in agriculture and sent him to Australia to join a permaculture workshop. In the first year, chemical fertilizers were still being used at his farm although he had stopped using chemical pesticides. In an interview, he spoke about how he thought that health concerns and business could go well together. He noticed that at his restaurant, many foreign customers, who tend to be the restaurant's

major clients, were health conscious and wanted to eat a healthy diet. Producing organic vegetables fit well with the customers' perceived need to have healthy food. The restaurant serves both vegetarian and macrobiotic foods in the menu. A food stall was also set up in front of his bakery and restaurant to sell organic vegetables. At the time of the interview, Anan said sales from organic vegetables had not yet reached profit margins. However, he persists in continuing. "I do not think of profits first. I think it is a good thing to do and I should do it" (Interview), said Anan.

Conclusion

Green consumerism, its possibilities and limitations in contributing to environmental solutions, was explored in the first part of this chapter. The major criticism directed toward green consumerism was how it used market values and self-interested individualism to reconstruct the popular understanding of the ecological crisis (Luke, 1993). A review of the literature revealed that there was strong and widespread skepticism regarding green consumerism, in particular, its promotion of individual consumption of green products as the sole response to environmental problems which prevented people from going beyond the narrow self-interests of consumers and his/her perception of the need for clean, healthy, chemically unpolluted and unadulterated products (Mies, 1986).

Another substantive criticism directed toward green consumerism is regarding how the business sector has appropriated environmentalism into their marketing strategy and were able to profit handsomely from it. Nonetheless, these criticisms do not lessen the potential of green consumerism as a *first step* for many people to take action in their everyday life. As Smith (1998, p.7-8) argues, "[The] focus on the home [by green consumerism] has the political potential of mobilizing a significant number of

people using the ordinary as conduit". Some green activists, according to Smith, believe that green consumerism provides "a political opportunity to educate, motivate, and galvanize individuals into a mass ecological movement" (p. 97). It is green consumerism as a site of political struggle and education which is the focus of this research.

Those who can see the potential of green consumerism regard it as a viable and practical solution to environmental problems at *one level* only. However, such measures as buying green products or refusing to buy products that are harmful to the environment have drawbacks and limitations in coping with the ecological problems we are at present encountering. According to Coleman (1994), a proper solution to the environmental crisis would require the need to

directly address production as well as consumption in a broad systemic context that acknowledges and confronts questions of power. Such action will depend on an understanding of the social relations that are embodied in our economic and political systems and in which the roots of the environmental crisis are finally found (p. 44).

Understanding the root cause of the environmental crisis as deeply embedded in the Western cultural, economic and political systems, and subsequently imposed on Thailand through modern development, requires a new kind of learning. Environmental adult education for consumers will play an important role in encouraging green consumers to take action as active citizens rather than as passive consumers. The focus should be on what they can do collectively by organizing and working together to change the institutional and regulatory framework of society rather than by the more limited actions of separate individuals (Coleman, 1994).

In this regard, John Button seems to give the most suitable definition of green consumerism (1989 cited in Smith, 1998).

Green consumerism means much more than just changing products. It means questioning both the nature and volume of consumption. It means

reassessing our role as individuals in reinforcing or transforming the fundamental inequalities in today's world economy. And it means challenging politicians to create a policy framework that will encourage more people to adopt a greener lifestyle (p.93).

Although a green consumerism that has carved a space for itself from within the existing market economy, one of the root causes of the environmental crisis, may seem paradoxical, it is nevertheless regarded by its adherents as contributing to complex environmental solutions. The dilemma of finding an alternative vision while having to continue living within the existing economic system is something faced by all of us. Many people, especially those who live in large urban centres, are inextricably caught up in the existing consumer-oriented lifestyle. It is difficult for us to fully break away from the market economy and the values it imposes on us. What may be of most importance is whether it would be possible to go further than just adopting a green lifestyle and thereby contribute to a profound and lasting social transformation. To what extent it would be possible to be less dependent and influenced by market-driven economic values while attempting to create an alternative social and economic vision that can be put into practice still remains to be seen.

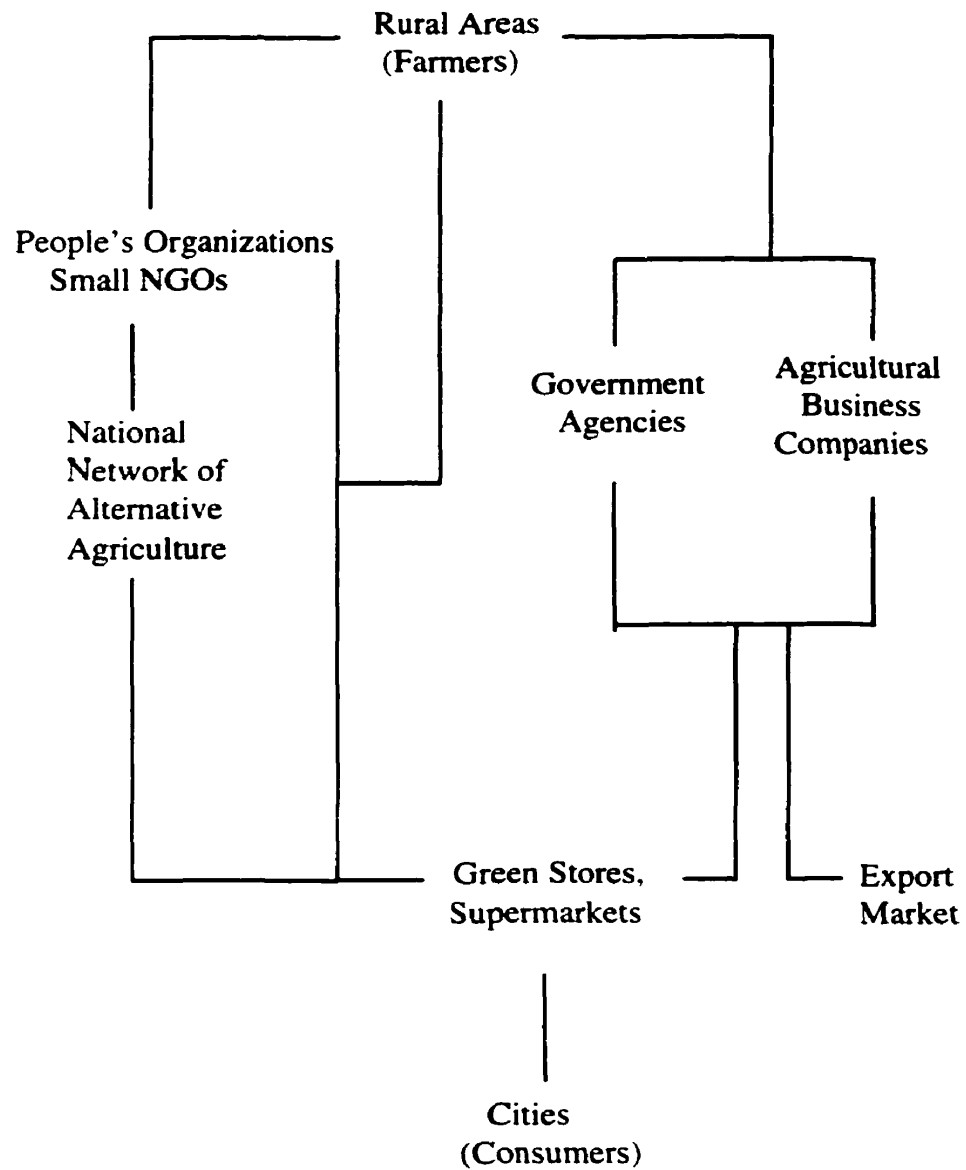
The active role women play in green consumerism, is a unique feature of the movement. For instance, Nava (1992) in her article *Consumerism Revisited* is quite positive about green consumerism as it has enfranchised the less organized sectors of the population in new ways, making possible newer and different forms of economic, political, personal and creative participation in society. However, Seager (1993) cautions that the politics of environmental consumption is far more complicated than had been currently understood. She reminds us that it is imperative for women to control or shape the agenda of any social movement that is being made in their name or else they will end up with the burden of the blame for any failures or remain unnoticed for any

successes they may be responsible for. Therefore, it is crucial that women's agenda and their participation are acknowledged in the strides made by the green consumer movement.

In Thailand, the business sector, government agencies, individuals, religious groups, and NGOs have, in general, voiced their support for green consumerism especially in the area of organic food (See Figure 2). It is worth mentioning that these actors have altogether contributed to the development of green consumerist discourse in Thailand and sometimes they are not totally exclusive from one another. However, it can be generalized that business enterprises successfully promoting green consumerism, as Smith's commentary (1998) points out, strongly suggests that they are more interested in appropriating environmental concerns to further their own self-interest rather than change to accommodate environmental concerns. Others, such as individuals and religious groups, also contributed to advancing green consumerism especially where it related to concerns over health, excessive use of chemicals in agriculture, and the perceived need for organic food.

Thai NGOs have incorporated additional ethical dimensions to green consumerism other than simply the primary concerns for profits and public relations. Thai NGOs' promotion of green consumerism, the focus of this study, is part of a broader promotion of alternative agriculture and PHC for self-reliance and self-determination. It involves the marketing of organic farm products produced by alternative agricultural methods and consumers' environmental awareness especially in the areas of food, agriculture, and healthcare. Finally, NGOs actively encourage the formation of alliances between people from different socio-economic backgrounds and strengthen these grass-roots, people's organizations as part of a broader process of social transformation.

Figure 2. Organic Food System in Thailand



Note. Adapted from Kasaetrakarm Thangluenk Thai [Thai alternative agriculture] (p. 81)

by A. Pongsamlee, 1995. Bangkok: Amarin.

Chapter 6

Case Study I:

Project for Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers-Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand (PRO-CON Network)

ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE

How often in contemporary times total uprooting of nature, technology, communities and entire civilisation is justified on the grounds that 'there is no alternative'. Alternatives exist, but are excluded (Shiva, 1993, p.5).

Having realized the grievous losses resulting from their full participation in agribusiness and its intensive production of modern cash crops, some individual farmers in Thailand have recently found alternative solutions to the problems they and many other small scale farmers encountered. Individual farmers like Vibul Khemchalem, Poryai Pai Soysaklang and Porjan Thongdee Nantha altered their modern farming practices in an effort to liberate themselves from their spiraling debt burdens, the increasing incidences of health-related illnesses due to the intensive use of pesticides, and unsustainable agricultural practices (Wetchapitak, 1993). They have successfully produced alternative farming systems from traditional knowledge and wisdom accumulated over many generations that put into practice a harmonious relationship between farming and ecology (Panyakul, 1992). The stories of accomplishment of these forerunners of alternative agriculture have been repeatedly disseminated throughout the farmers' network by NGOs working in the area of rural development as examples of what can be achieved. Over the period of 1989-1990, the *National Network of Alternative Agriculture* was established as the result of on-going dialogue among the NGOs promoting rural

development, individual farmers, farmers groups, consumers groups, government organizations, and international NGOs (Senakham, 1992).

Alternative agriculture promotes a better quality of life for farmers and consumers, and fosters the development of local institutions for the benefit and the survival of local communities and all humanity (Levin & Panyakul, 1995; Prasertcharoensuk & Phromsao, 1992). Thai alternative agriculture is thus more than simply a farming technique since it works to harmonize inner spirituality, community and nature into a farming system. In other words, it is

a farming system as well as a way of life which supports and maintains ecological balance and gives fair economic return to farmers. World views, lifestyle, economy, spirituality, society, politics, culture and environment are all integrated in alternative agriculture (Wasi, 1992, p.5).

The ultimate goal of Thai alternative agriculture is to aid farmers to be self-reliant. Self-reliance is defined as farmers' self-confidence and their ability to take control of their own lives and communities as well as the important factors which affect their sustenance, e.g. food, clothing, shelter, medicine. It also means that farmers are able to achieve a certain degree of economic security and in full control over their land and labour, which are the two fundamental forces of production (Puntasen, 1992; Hewison, 1993). In alternative agriculture farmers normally produce food mainly for their own consumption and only the farm surplus will be sold for profit. This will guarantee a source of food for farmers' households, thereby reducing dependence on external markets. Alternative agriculture is also seen as an expression of farmers' self-determination. The revitalization of farming practices based on traditional knowledge and values as an alternative to modern agricultural practices helps farmers rediscover the nearly forgotten knowledge of their own traditions. At the same time their

accomplishments in alternative agriculture empower them to take control of the development of their own communities.

In addition, alternative agriculture, as influenced by Buddhist philosophy, calls for farmers to be free from the values of the capitalist market economy which is driven by competition and the maximization of profit. Ideally, farmers should refrain from indulging in conspicuous consumption and instead learn to be satisfied with basic needs, seeking spiritual development more than the accumulation of wealth and material possessions (Puntasen, 1992).

Several Thai NGOs involved in rural development have adopted alternative agriculture as one set of strategies among others to cope with the related problems of ecological degradation and rural economic deprivation. In practice, a variety of sustainable farming techniques which do not rely on industrial-agricultural inputs (e.g. hybrid seeds, heavy machinery, heavy inputs of herbicides, pesticides, and large-scale irrigation system), such as integrated farming, organic farming, and natural farming, have been used, depending on the geographical and bio-regional conditions of each farm area. Some of the techniques are based on traditional knowledge and others are influenced by appropriate farming practices used in other countries or a mix of both.

In addition, NGOs also incorporate alternative marketing, or green consumerism, in their promotion of alternative agriculture. This is partly in response to consumer demand for green produce which is seen as an essential component in helping generate income for farmers and ensuring farmers' success in alternative agriculture. Most farmers who switched to alternative agriculture, though ultimately aiming towards being less dependent on the market economy, still need to be assured of income security to pay off debts and to sustain their families, especially during the transition to alternative methods of agriculture (Levin & Panyakul, 1995).

Moreover, the National Network of Alternative Agriculture values the rural farmers-urban consumers relationship as more than solely an economic transaction. This partnership is based on the fact that urban consumers, who have no access to land, have to depend on farmers to produce nutritious food for them. Their health and well-being rely solely on farmers as food producers. Saneh Jamarik (cited in Panyakul & Siriphat, 1993, p. 441), an NGO leader, asserts that, "Alternative agriculture is not important only for the survival of small-scale poor farmers, but also for urban people's health and quality of life, including the overall sustainability of natural resources and the environment".

The promotion of green products is also a means to raise the awareness of consumers regarding food, health, agriculture and other environmental issues. It encourages them to change their patterns of consumption and lifestyle to value healthy food and sustainable agriculture for a healthy planet. The long-term expectation is that urban consumers will make efforts to support and advocate policies supporting alternative agriculture in addition to taking political action on other environmental issues.

PROJECT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE AGRICULTURE
PRODUCERS-CONSUMERS NETWORK
IN UPPER NORTHERN THAILAND (PRO-CON Network)¹

Project Description

In early 1991, five NGOs in Chiangmai and Maehongsorn provinces got together to discuss the possibility of working collaboratively on organic food production and marketing. The group agreed to set up a small-scale community development project called the

¹ In this chapter, I use the term *project* to refer to the PRO-CON Network project and to use (C) to refer to urban consumers, (F) for farmers, and (N) for NGO workers.

Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers-Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand (PRO-CON Network). It is headed by Northnet Foundation, a local NGO in Northern Thailand.

The PRO-CON Network project is a Thai initiative aimed at regenerating local communities, economies, and ecosystems. The project's ultimate goal is to restore people's relationship to the land and food supply with the twin goals of promoting farmers' self-sufficiency and raising the awareness of urban consumers about food and other environmental issues. The project works in collaboration with various food and agricultural organizations. These organizations are:

- *NGO networks:* National and Northern Networks of Alternative Agriculture, Natural Resources Management Network, Northern NGOs Coordinating Committee.
- *National and local government bodies:* National Economic and Social Development Board, Provincial Agriculture and Cooperative Office, Provincial Public Health Office.
- *Business sector:* Bangchak Petroleum Chemical Company, Lemon Green supermarket chain, local supermarkets and green retail stores in Chiangmai city (PRO-CON Network, 1996).

The project strategy is to strengthen the network of farmer and urban consumer grass-roots organizations and to promote alternative marketing for green products. The final goal is to strengthen farmer and consumer organizations for active participation in the democratic process. The preparatory stage of the project was from 1991 until the end of 1992. The project's first activity was a survey study to explore organic food marketing trends and consumer demand for organic produce. The survey study showed that urban consumers are aware of the problems related to toxic residues in farm produce and are

willing to pay up to 20 per cent more for organic produce (PRO-CON Network, 1996). In early 1992, farmers in the Northern region who had previously participated in the NGOs' community development projects were approached by the project staff. These farmers and the five NGOs participated in a collective study to learn more about alternative farming techniques used in the area and to find the most suitable alternative farming system for themselves. After several farm visits and discussions, the farmers decided to adopt an *organic farming system*² since the farming techniques had the advantage of using organic, local farm inputs, and improving soil conditions. Another advantage was that the techniques did not require large capital investments. During this time, training activities for some organic farming techniques were organized for farmers wishing to participate in the project.

In 1993, the project started its full operations. The project target area covered eight provinces in upper Northern Thailand but the major project activities were clustered around Chiangmai province (See Figure 3). The project's goals were to:

- 1) campaign and advocate for alternative agriculture, alternative marketing and consumer rights.
- 2) develop and strengthen producer [farmer] and consumer organizations.
- 3) strengthen the network of organic producers and consumers in upper Northern Thailand.
- 4) develop alternative marketing (PRO-CON Network, 1996).

The project sought funding from both local and overseas funding agencies. At the time of my first field research in 1995, the project was receiving major funds from NOVIB, an NGO from the Netherlands, which was enough to employ two community workers and three support staff. In 1996, the project expanded its work and NOVIB funding

² See Appendix C for details about organic farming.

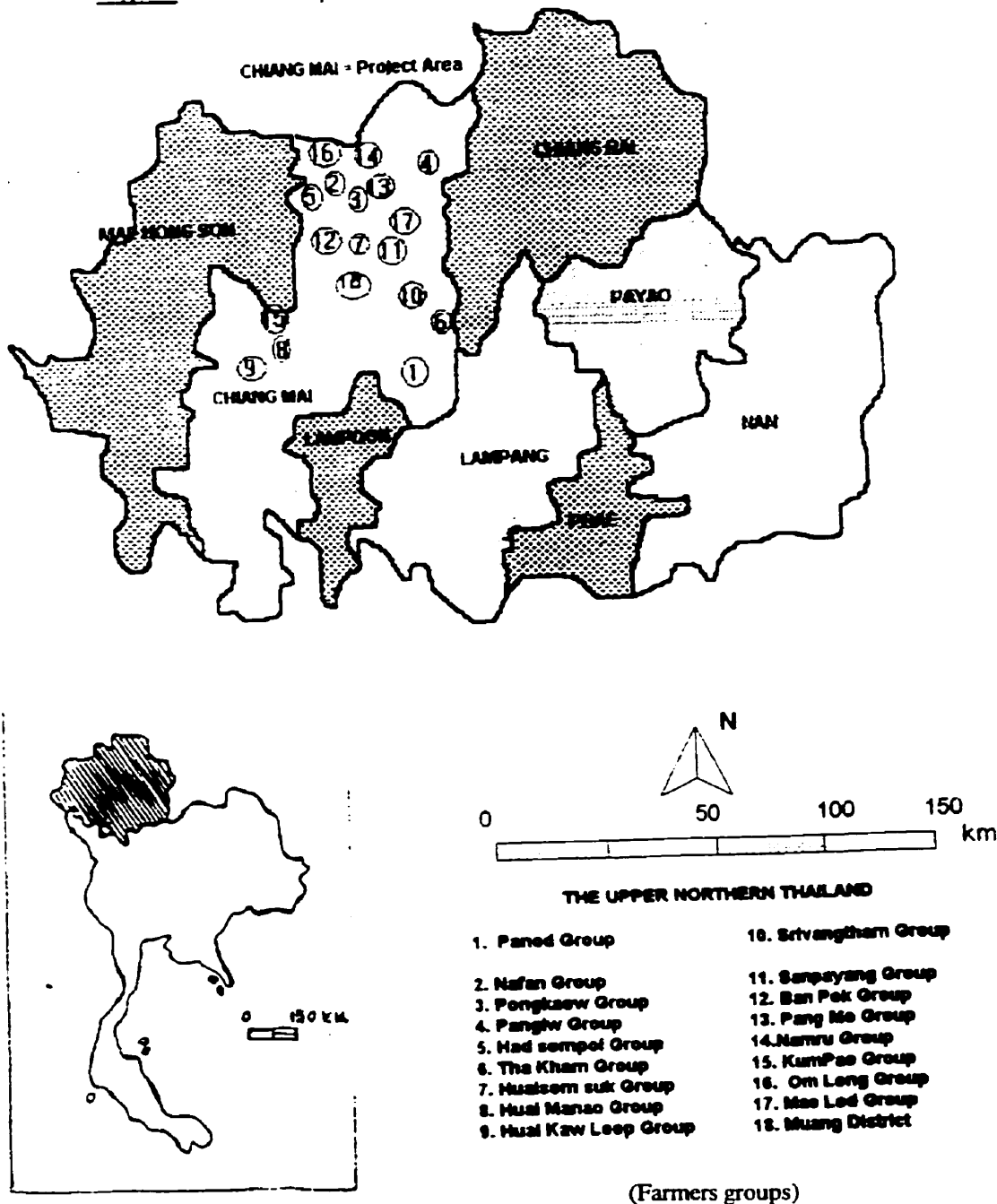
increased. As a result, the number of project staff had increased to 10 full-time staff and one part-time volunteer.

Working with Farmers

From the beginning, the project organized activities that would allow the opportunity for farmers to develop organic farming skills aimed at increasing production. Project activities included a series of training sessions, workshops, and study tours. At first, farmers were encouraged to grow vegetables, which require a short growing season, for their own personal consumption; later they were encouraged to sell the surplus produce to other villagers and people in nearby urban areas. The long term expectation at the farm level is that farmers will produce an ever larger diversity of food crops within the farm ecosystem that will increasingly adapt to the needs of the local population.

Farmers from each village who were interested in alternative farming formed small groups consisting of 5 to 15 family households, which then formed into the larger and semi-formal *Organic Food Producers for Health and Environment Club of Chiangmai*, headed by an elected committee to administer the club's work. In 1995, the farmers club consisted of 59 farm households from nine villages. By October, 1996, the number of farm households involved in the project had increased to 92 families from a total of 19 villages (See Table 4). Out of these 92 farm households that practiced alternative agriculture, 10 households had farms that were highly diversified up to 30 to 50 varieties of crops on each farm.

Figure. 3 Map of PRO-CON Network Project area



Note. From Project Evaluation Report (1994-1996) (p.11) by PRO-CON Network Project, 1996. Chiangmai: Author.

Table 4

Number of Farmers Groups and Households Participating in the PRO-CON Network Project

Group status	Number of farmers groups	Number of farmer households			
		1993	1994	1995	1996
• Well-established group	1	13	14	10	11
• Groups being consolidated and strengthened	6		17	30	28
• Groups needing to be revived	5	7	24	12	0
• Newly organized groups in new areas	7	0	0	0	53
Total	19	20	57	55	92

Note. Adapted from Project Evaluation Report (1994-1996) (p.15) by PRO-CON Network Project, 1996. Chiangmai: PRO-CON Network Project.

Working with Urban Consumers

The project organizes activities for urban consumers that primarily provide information on healthy eating, toxic residues in food, consumer rights, and alternative agriculture. These activities include seminars, workshops, study tours and training. In addition, the project disseminates information to the general public through the media in the form of article writings, books, pamphlets and posters (See Appendix E).

In December, 1993, the urban consumers, with support from the project, organized the *Chiangmai's Consumer and Environmental Protection Club* headed by an elected committee. At the start of the club, there were 30 members and increased to 200 members in later years. The objectives of the club are to:

1. support to have safe products for consumers and the environment
2. disseminate information which is useful to producers [farmers] and consumers
3. create linkages and collaboration between producers and consumers
4. encourage government agencies to take part in alternative agriculture movement

Prior to 1996, although there were 200 club members, most of them only received newsletters and did not participate in other club activities. In August 1996, the key members of the club decided not only to change its name to *Organic Food Consumers Club* but required that membership be restricted to only those who would be interested in participating in club activities (Pro-Con Network, 1996). With this change, the number of club members decreased to 30 (See Table 5).

Table 5

Number of Consumer Club Members

	Number of members			
	1993	1994	1995	1996
• Chiangmai's Consumer and Environmental Conservation Club	30	100	200	
• Organic Food Consumers Club				30

Note. Adapted from 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 Progress Reports. Chiangmai: PRO-CON Network Project.

Establishing Organic Food Outlets

In addition to the work involving the farmers and consumers clubs described above, the project also helped to market organic products for farmers. In April 1993, the project worked with the farmers and consumers clubs to establish a green cooperative store in the city of Chiangmai called the *Imboon Cooperative Centre for Health and the Environment*. The store serves as a green retailer and wholesaler in the Northern region. It delivers organic vegetables and other green products to retail stores in Chiangmai city and other cities throughout Thailand. The store also launched an *Imboon* seal for organic products produced by members of the farmers club. Unlike conventional wholesalers, the centre made an agreement that allows farmers to determine the price of the green produce they deliver to Imboon.

In November 1994, a weekend organic farmers market was set up for farmers to bring their produce to sell directly to consumers in the city of Chiangmai. Afterwards, an allied NGO in the area set up an organic farmers market outside the city of Chiangmai on every Wednesday. Some farmers groups sell organic produce in local markets in their villages, sub-districts or districts. In 1996, the Imboon Cooperative Store sought other market outlets in Chiangmai city to sell produce directly to consumers certain public institutions such as schools or hospitals. In a related effort, two consumer club members helped sell organic produce to colleagues at their workplace but they had to stop after only a few months.

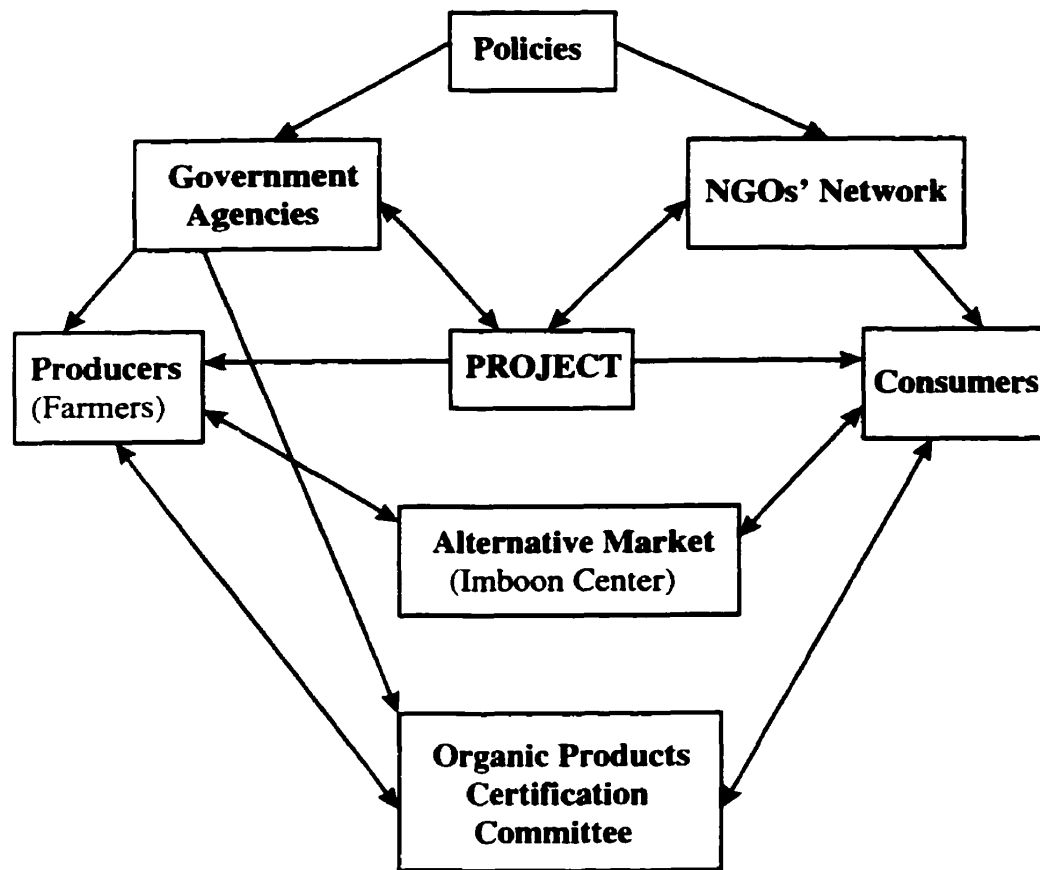
Other Related Work

In 1995, the project worked with the cooperation of the farmers club, consumers club, and relevant NGOs and government agencies in the Northern region to form the *Committee for Standard Certification of Organic Products*. The committee worked to formulate guidelines for organic food standards, a certification process, an inspection committee, and a product labelling scheme. The drafted guidelines followed the organic standards of the *International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)*.

In addition, the project actively advocated for a progressive agricultural policy that would address and be responsive to the need to shift away from modern farming practices to alternative agriculture for both farmers' economic and environmental benefits. Project members, as representatives of the Northern Network of Alternative Agriculture, have successfully lobbied the government to incorporate alternative agriculture and marketing policies into the *Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan for 1997-2001*.

The overall project implementation strategy is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure. 4 PRO-CON Network Project strategy (1994-1996)



Note. From Project Evaluation Report (1994-1996) (p.9) by PRO-CON Network Project, 1996, Chiangmai: PRO-CON Network Project.

RESEACH FINDINGS

Green Consumerism

As described in Chapter Five, the NGOs' discourse on green consumerism incorporates various dimensions other than marketing opportunities and public relations. In the early 1990s, the idea of green consumerism, as the promotion of organic food consumption, began to emerge and be put into practice in Northern Thailand. NGOs assumed that consumer demand and fair economic return from selling organic food could motivate farmers to participate in alternative farming practices. The nature of green consumerism as implemented by the project can be summarized as follows:

1. The marketing of organic food is essential to the promotion of alternative agriculture. In other words, the promotion of alternative agriculture requires an adequate level of green consumer demand to guarantee its success.
2. Direct consumer-producer (farmer) links are used as an alternative trading scheme to start off the marketing of organic produce as well as to raise consumers' awareness regarding issues concerning health, agriculture, and the environment.
3. The project strives to promote feelings of moral obligation between consumers and farmers. The goal is to create a relationship other than those dictated by market-driven economic transactions which takes self-interest and profit-making as the only priorities.
4. The promotion of organic food consumption is only a means, not an end in itself. It draws consumers and farmers together to work cooperatively and collectively. It raises consumers' awareness regarding those health and environmentally related issues resulting from unsustainable agricultural methods. It is hoped that in the future support from urban middle class groups will somehow strengthen and enhance farmers networks in their economic and political struggles.

5. Product certification is also part of green consumerism. In this regard, the project helped organize a committee to promote and implement product certification in Northern Thailand.

How Direct Farmers-Consumers Links Help to Promote Moral Obligation

In a modern market system, buyers and sellers do not directly interact in the market place since arrangements for product exchange are undertaken by intermediaries or traders (Grabowski, 1997). Bookchin (1987) sees that the impersonality of the modern market system deprives farmers and consumers from having a mutual relationship. He sees that a direct relationship between the two groups will encourage the revival of moral obligation and thereby contribute to a well balanced market exchange relationship. In similar fashion, the project emphasized the importance of creating a direct relationship between farmers and consumers. As Dilok (N) observes,

people in the city were influenced by merchants and business. I see that the merchant [trader] system makes consumers and farmers feel distant from each other. We try to cut down the intermediaries to make buyers and sellers visible. . . . We try to make them get closer to each other like it was before. We have field trips, and a cooperative store to make them feel familiar and close to each other.

Grabowski (1997) explains how a close relationship between the two groups would enable a sense of moral obligation. In what he calls a traditional market, the dense network of social relationships which bind people together within a village or a small region help generate information for a merchant, trader, buyer or seller who is part of such a community to determine the reliability of potential buyers and sellers. In an area where social networks are strong and pervasive, mechanisms to produce cheap information about buyers and sellers are likely to function well. Granovetter (1985 cited in Grabowski, 1997, p. 52) made a similar remark suggesting that trust (honesty) can be

created through interactions between individuals in structures or networks of relationships which discourage non-cooperative (dishonest) behaviour. The repeated interactions of individuals in situations in which reputations are generated can act as a mechanism to produce trust.

In the case of the PRO-CON Network Project, the above assumption seemed to ring true. In their close relationship with farmers, consumer club members contributed in discouraging farmer inclined to dishonest behaviour through the selling of unacceptable produce. Farmers then had to weigh the benefits of short-run gains of non-cooperation against the long-term gains of being designated as trustworthy. Aree (C) told me what happened at the first organic farmers market day.

On the first organic farmers market day, a female farmer from Samueng district [in Chiangmai province] sold non-organic vegetables She is not a member of the farmer club either. Decha (C) and I reprimanded her and gave her a warning not to do it again. . . .Later, Decha (C) talked very seriously to the farmers group. . . . We said do not let this thing happen again. We told the woman who was not a member of the organic farmers club not to come back to the organic farmers market again. We said if she wanted to come to the market, she will have to start growing organic vegetables. Members of the farmers club looked at each other. I think they understood the warning that we were serious about this. . . . For farmers who use this opportunity to make money without following the rules of the group, we will have to continuously keep an eye on them. We will have to refine, warn, dialogue, train and screen them.

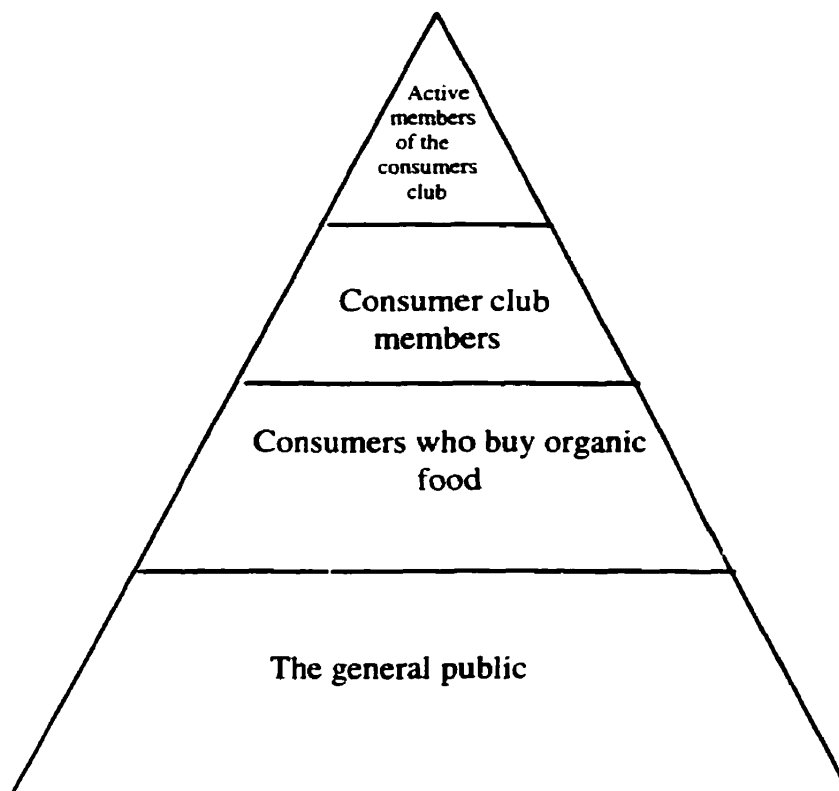
Who are the Consumers?

According to Dilok (N), urban consumers can be roughly divided into four groups to form a pyramid-like model (See Figure 5). At the top of the pyramid, there are those who are actively involved with the project. This group of consumers are either consumer club members or members of the club committee. The top of pyramid implies that only a small number of consumers fully and actively participate in project activities. The project staff

normally works closely with this group of consumers. It is this group of urban consumers that this research study mostly refers to.

The second layer from the top include members of the consumer club who participate in project activities only occasionally. Most of them, however, receive information via newsletters. The third layer include all those who buy organic food from the organic farmers market, the Imboon Cooperative Store, or at other organic market outlets. This means that the consumer club members (layer two) and those who regularly buy organic food from the project's market outlets (layer three) may not necessarily be the same group of people. Although there is no available data related to this group of consumers, Ratre (N) and Chuchai (N) have observed that those who buy organic produce are mostly women. At the bottom of the pyramid are consumers and the public in general who receive information on alternative agriculture and healthy food from the project through the media.

Figure 5. Consumer Pyramid



From the survey conducted by the researcher, it was found that of the 110 consumer club members who returned the survey questionnaire, 31 per cent of them were 31-40 years of age. The number of female and male respondents were almost equal (49 per cent and 51 per cent respectively). Most of them (62 per cent) were married. Almost two fifth (39 per cent) have university diplomas. Less than half of the club members (43 per cent) worked as government officials. About one third (30 per cent) earned between 10,001-20,000 Baht per month. The majority of the consumer club members can be

roughly classified as urban middle class considering their income and job categorization.

See Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6

Characteristics of Consumer Club Members

Characteristics of Consumers	N = 110	%
Sex		
Male	56	50.9
Female	54	49.1
Age (years)		
20 or younger	3	2.8
21-30	14	12.8
31-40	34	30.9
41-50	26	23.9
51-60	20	18.3
Over 60	13	11.9
Marital status		
Single	31	28.2
Married	69	62.7
Divorced/separated	6	5.5
Widowed	4	3.6

Table 7

Education, Profession and Income of Consumer Club Members

Education, Profession and Income of Consumers	N = 110	%
<i>Educational level</i>		
Lower than elementary education	2	1.8
Elementary education	7	6.4
High school	15	13.6
Certificate/ college diploma	9	8.2
Bachelor's degree	43	39.1
Higher than Bachelor's degree	34	30.9
<i>Profession</i>		
Students	5	4.5
Employees of companies	3	2.7
Farmers	8	7.3
NGO workers	13	11.8
Government officers	48	43.6
Retired	10	9.1
Others	23	20.9
<i>Income per month</i>		
No income of his/her own	4	3.7
Lower than 5,000 Baht	15	13.8
5,001-10,000 Baht	28	25.7
10,001-20,000 Baht	33	30.3
20,001-30,000 Baht	17	15.6
30,001-50,000 Baht	8	7.3
More than 50,000 Baht	4	3.7
Did not answer	1	0.9

Environmental Adult Education

The Production and Transfer of Knowledge

Who Produces Knowledge ?

In a situation where people have become active, self-conscious of their own knowledge and aware of the limitations of the experts' knowledge (that is, when they have thrown off knowledge-based domination by the experts), then they can also participate fully in decisions about the production of new knowledge, for themselves and for society (Gaventa, 1991, p. 130).

The Shift in the Production of Knowledge.

In modern agriculture, it is the scientists, agricultural technicians, government agricultural extension workers, and the multinational, agri-business companies who play the major roles in the creation of agricultural knowledge. In promoting alternative farming production and consumption, the project brought forward a shift in the production of knowledge from the so-called experts to the farmers. This shift in the production of knowledge was confirmed by consumers as well as farmers. Consumers gave credibility to farmers as hands-on agricultural experts of alternative agricultural practices. Farmers are seen as "more reliable than [so-called] experts because farmers talk from their direct experience in farming", as pointed out by Wilai (C). Farmers who participated in the project also became increasingly aware that so-called experts and other professionals from the city, to whom many farmers normally look up to, do not know about the farmers' own living situation and the real benefits of alternative agricultural practices (Boonrahong, 1995). Some farmers whom I informally talked with told me they were surprised to learn that urban, professional people who visited their farms seemed to know little about organic farming and often asked them many questions.

Saliva Agriculturist.

Some NGO staff, though trained in agricultural colleges or universities, know less than farmers about alternative agriculture because the subject is not taught in conventional educational institutes. A few times, in meetings or seminars, I noticed that the NGO staff were teased by farmers who often referred to them as *saliva agriculturists*, meaning that they only know alternative farming techniques in theory (talking), not in practice. Not all the time, then, do farmers rely on NGO staff for their expertise in alternative agriculture. For example, when Boonmee (F), first switched to alternative farming a few years ago, he had a problem with low yields. He said he did not get an adequate answer to his problem from the NGO staff who, inappropriately, responded by telling him that he could grow any crops he wanted at any time of the year. I asked Boonmee why NGO staff told him this and his answer was because NGO staff were trained in modern agriculture which presumes that is possible to grow anything at any time of the year.

Public Presentation.

Many of the project activities allowed farmers to publicly and directly talk to urban consumers about the experience of switching to alternative farming. In one seminar I attended in 1995, female as well as male farmers stood alongside the agricultural experts to give a talk on alternative farming. Farmers gained the confidence and endorsement of forum participants when they were asked to share their knowledge and experiences with an audience other than farmer groups. In addition, in my opinion, the shift in the production of knowledge was to some extent aided by democratic processes integral to the project itself. Dilok (N) told me that the organization is still small and colleagues readily provide of evaluations of each other's performance. Farmers also evaluate NGO

workers and their work. Dilok said, "If nobody complains about our work or blames us, that means things are all right" (Interview).

What Counts as Knowledge ?

In general, the knowledge base in alternative agriculture largely relies on "the philosophy and experiences of traditional/indigenous knowledge systems as well as appropriate contemporary farming technologies" (Philippine Development Assistance Program [PDAP], 1995, p. 6). This understanding applies to the project as well. Agricultural information and technology provided to farmers through technical assistance, training and training materials are mostly in regards to appropriate contemporary farming techniques. Traditional/indigenous knowledge systems were also incorporated into the knowledge base provided by NGOs.

In addition to the information and technology transferred to farmers from NGOs, farmers learn traditional farming techniques from their parents. Knowledge on growing vegetables is traditionally women's knowledge. Sukjai (F) told me she learned how to grow vegetables from her parents by helping them with farm chores such as plowing, planting, and harvesting when she was young. However, she told me the farming techniques she learned from her parents differed from those promoted by the project. She gave an example of the differences by referring to one particular technique.

When my parents and I raised plots to grow vegetables, it was not wide or high up from the ground. The agriculture way [the techniques NGO promoted] raises plot higher up and the produce is good. Raising the plot higher from the ground also helps preventing any damages from the rain to vegetable leaves (Interview with Sukjai (F)).

Alternative agriculture created learning opportunities for farmers at the farm level. Farmers would start to accumulate knowledge on farming by trying out the various

farming techniques learned from NGO educational activities, other farmers in the horizontal network, and through a problem solving process. For farmers, what is legitimated as knowledge seems to be judged by its practicality. The focus of farmers' acquired knowledge was on practical knowledge *or what works* and *what does not*. It is to develop skills which are linked to immediate needs arising from their work in farming, selling vegetables etc. In addition, alternative farming knowledge also stimulated change in the farmer's basic belief about modern agriculture which heavily relies on inputs such as chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

Researcher: When you first visited Mae Ta village³ to see organic farms, how did you feel?

Rawee (F) : At first, I did not believe it would work. It was unbelievable because I never grew anything without using chemical fertilizers or pesticides. I joined field trips and training a few times but I still did not believe it was possible to do organic farming. I went to see organic farms but I still did not believe it.

I thought it was impossible. I watched a video tape of Uncle Nab's farm⁴ at Darapirom Forest temple [training site]. I stopped using chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides and used organic farming techniques to see whether these techniques would work. I told myself if it did not work, I would give up. It worked eventually. Vegetables turned out well. I learned that, first, we have to prepare the soil. When the soil is good, things will turn out well. If we have bad soil, it will not work.

³ This farm visit was part of the study tour that farmers participated in.

⁴ Uncle Nab or Samai Thongthammarat is a successful organic farmer who lives in Chaiyapoom province. He is a member of the organic farmers group who receive technical and marketing support from the Japanese Volunteer Centre (JVC), an NGO working in Chaiyapoom province.

How Knowledge is Exchanged and Disseminated

Various Learning Channels.

In the project, knowledge and information exchange occurred through communication channels such as face-to-face buying and selling activities, study tours, training, conferences, and seminars. Information disseminated through the media (e.g. a short documentary that was to be shown on television; printed materials in the forms of books, magazines, news release, and pamphlets; and radio programs) has been mostly carried out with the support of the National and Northern Networks of Alternative Agriculture Network. The most used and effective medium which the project and the Northern Network of Alternative Agriculture emphasized was the radio programs because the radio is a popular medium and can reach a wide audience.

Informal Learning Channel.

Some activities in the project encouraged an informal channel of knowledge exchange among consumers. Jantra (C), who helped the farmers group sell vegetables at her workplace, reported that, "Selling vegetables at my department gave me a chance to associate with other people. We exchanged recipes and shared with each other the use of each kind of vegetable for cooking". Consumers also informally learned about alternative farming techniques when they went to buy vegetables. Chuchai (N), an NGO support staff, told me that consumers often asked him questions about organic farming methods when he delivered organic vegetables to the green stores in Chiangmai or sold them at the markets. He often would oblige them and explain the methods farmers use to grow organic vegetables.

Horizontal Learning Network.

For farmers, the exchange of knowledge/information in the project was not a top-down, transfer of technology from scientists to farmers through agricultural extension. Rather, it was a *horizontal learning network* in which farmers exchanges knowledge with each other in addition to what they had learned from the experts. They often exchanged knowledge through farm visitations, farmer club meetings, and seminars. Dilok (N) offered a simple explanation regarding the advantages of a horizontal learning network: "Small groups in a horizontal network will create learning" (Interview). Instead of using the *transfer of technology* model which is meant to deliver a set of scientifically proven agricultural knowledge/techniques developed by scientists in agricultural research stations (Chambers, 1993), the project attempts to create farmer-to-farmer exchange programs to serve as learning experiences from the application in the field of alternative agricultural systems. It was apparent that the exchange of knowledge occurred when farmers met other farmers from other communities either in study tours or in training. Chanpen (F), a female farmer who for the first time participated in the training, told me that she learned a lot from it.

Before this, I did not know much [about organic farming]. I had a chance to join training and to meet other farmers groups. They gave me some ideas about organic farming techniques. Now I know about organic farming methods better than before.

Urban consumers were included in this horizontal learning network as well. They learned from farmers when visiting their farms and sometimes offered their own advice. Vena (F) told me that the consumers group suggested to her that she should grow organic vegetables at least 10 metres far from the plots which use chemical herbicides and pesticides. They also told her that organic vegetable plots should be located upwind so that the wind will not carry the chemical pesticides used in nearby farms to her farm.

Vertical Network.

In addition to working with groups in a horizontal network, the project also works to disseminate knowledge/information in a vertical network. Those considered to be part of a vertical network are people who act as formal *change agents* in the development process. Government officers are classified as one such group in this vertical network. In this regard, the project would exchange information related to alternative agriculture with relevant government agencies. Government officers were also invited to participate in seminars and study tours organized by the project (Interview with Dilok (N)).

Farmers Becoming Trainers.

In the project, farmers were encouraged to take charge of the process of the dissemination of agricultural knowledge. In early 1995, the project, working with other NGO members of the National Network of Alternative Agriculture, started a *Training of Organic Farmer Trainers* (TOFT) program. TOFT works in two ways. First, it creates a pool of local resource persons to carry on the task of expanding and disseminating alternative agricultural knowledge. In the long run, it will guarantee the continuation of the promotion of alternative agriculture even when the NGO terminates its operation. Secondly, farmers who were invited to be trainers were encouraged to use their farmland as a *demonstration farm*. A demonstration farm is an exemplary farm that other farmers can learn from.

Educational Practices

The overall promotion of organic food consumption and production employed by the project was a means to raise environmental awareness among urban people and rural

farmers. It was also intended to bring together farmers and urban consumers to meet and dialogue on an equal basis and eventually to create cooperation among these two groups. Many of the project activities functioned to help open up two-way communication among the urban consumers and rural farmers. These activities provided them with the opportunity to meet, learn, exchange ideas and take actions. It should be noted that many practices undertaken in the project were not intentionally designed to be educational, but in fact turned out to be learning moments for those who participated in the project activities.

Activities Which Created Learning Moments for Urban Consumers and Farmers.

Two specific objectives of the project in working with urban consumers were, first, to help urban consumers solve the problem of unhealthy, contaminated food caused by the excessive use of chemicals in modern agriculture. The second objective was to link consumers with farmers groups. The project attempted to reach these two objectives by encouraging urban consumers to alter their unhealthy eating patterns, and creating a network and encouraging cooperation between consumers and farmers. The long term goal of the project was to create a consumer base which would purchase alternative agriculture products and advocate for policies which promote alternative agriculture.

As mentioned earlier, many project activities were not intentionally designed as educational activities but became powerful moments of learning for those involved. Most activities were open for both urban consumers and farmers to join. Some of these activities were as follows:

1) *Seminars*

Since the eating patterns of Thai urban people have changed drastically as a result of accelerated pace of modern lifestyle, the commercialization of processed food, and the excessive use of chemical pesticides/herbicides in agriculture, the project attempts to provide information to consumers on healthy eating and a balanced diet. One or two days seminars were conducted from time to time on different topics with regard to food for health and environmental sustainability.

At least once every year, for example, the project and NGOs in the Northern Network of Alternative Agriculture organize a *Producers Meet Consumers Day* event. The main purpose of the event was to provide a venue for these two groups to meet and exchange ideas with each other. Consumer club members, government officers, farmers from different provinces in the Northern region who belong to the alternative farming network, and the public in general join these seminars. The format of the seminar normally consists of a farmers' forum to discuss their deteriorating living conditions resulting from modern agriculture and the problems they encountered in the process of switching over to organic farming methods. This is followed by a panel discussion on health and food issues and other broader issues such as agro-industry, the bio-diversity treaty, intellectual property rights, agricultural policy, and other topics. Small group discussions on these topics were also encouraged and recommendations formulated for concerned organizations to follow. Farmers also brought their organic produce to sell in the organic food bazaar at these seminars (See Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9).

2) *Study tours*

Study tour activities are set up for both urban consumers and farmers. Study tours to nearby organic farms were arranged for urban consumers so that they could observe

Figure. 6 Reading materials for seminar participants, *Producers Meet Consumers Day Seminar*, Chiangmai, 1995



Figure. 7 Poster exhibition on vegetarian diet, *Producers Meet Consumers Day Seminar*, Chiangmai, 1995



Figure. 8 Organic farmers selling their products, *Producers Meet Consumers Day Seminar, Chiangmai, 1995*



Figure. 9 Government agency's Thai traditional medicine display, *Producers Meet Consumers Day Seminar, Chiangmai, 1995*



first hand the results of various organic farming methods (See Figures 10 and 11). In addition, they got to know farmers and how they live. They exchanged ideas about alternative farming techniques and other issues such as marketing, pricing and distribution. Dilok (N) told me that. “ The purpose of the study tours, which includes both tour of the village and organic farms, is to give urban consumers an opportunity to learn how the problems in a village level are effected by government policies” (Interview). For example, when the urban dwellers visited the farmers group working on community forest issues, they learned first hand about the problems of deforestation and how the local communities were able to preserve their forests.

3) Training

When the consumers club was first established, the project made an attempt to organize small workshops especially designed for urban consumers on various topics such as how to make herbal cough syrup (Interview with Preecha (N)). However, the activities were discontinued because it turned out that very few consumers joined these activities, and it was too costly to organize this kind of activity because of the high guest speaker fee. Training for farmers is more practical and focuses on skill training in alternative agriculture techniques. Small workshops have been organized on specific issues such as how to use certain herbs as herbicides and pesticides, soil improvement, and marketing strategy.

Training for farmers in alternative agriculture techniques normally includes farm visitations. Successful organic farms are used as model farms, and each year many farmers as well as urban consumers visit them. Farm visits to other provinces in Thailand were also organized for farmers and urban consumers but not as often as study tours in the Chiangmai province.

Figure. 10 Urban consumers' study tour to Mae Ta village, Chiangmai, 1997



Figure. 11 Having lunch together: Urban consumer study tour to Mae Ta village, Chiangmai, 1997



Another Type of study tour that was occasionally organized and offered to small groups of urban people from Chiangmai or Bangkok provinces was the village forest walking tour which allowed participants to learn about medicinal plants in the forests. Farmers, as experts on the medicinal plants, acted as guides and teachers.

When the project organized training on organic farming techniques for rural farmers, they often invited the consumer club members to attend. Although the training sessions can accommodate very few people, the sessions helped the urban consumers to understand the production process as well as the rationale behind alternative agriculture. As mentioned earlier, in 1995, farmers who were trained to be trainers started to give training on alternative agricultural techniques to other farmers thereby replacing NGO workers and experts from outside the community (See Figures 12 and 13).

4) Consumers and farmers clubs

The semi-formal organization of the consumers and farmers clubs provide a systematic way for members to plan and work together on a regular basis to achieve the clubs' goals. The farmers club is a forum for knowledge exchange on organic food production, processing, marketing, and policy. The club members learn from each other by participating in discussion and reflection on activities they did and planning actions they wish to take together. The consumers club has also applied the action-reflection process in the club meetings.

These club meetings are not exclusive only to club members. When there are club meetings, the consumers club normally invites representatives from the farmers club to attend meetings. In turn, when the farmers club organizes a meeting, they invite committee members of the consumers club to join. However, the number of farmers attending the consumer club meetings decreased due to the time constraints of farmers

Figure. 12 Farmer trainers' demonstrating how to prepare an organic vegetable plot at the organic farmers training session, Pong Kow village, Chiangmai, 1995



Figure. 13 Farmers preparing herbal pesticides at the organic farmers training session, Pong Kow village, Chiangmai, 1995



5) *Imboon Cooperative Store and weekend organic farmers market as sites of learning* The Imboon Cooperative Store acts as a wholesaler and a retailer for the farmers club (See Figures 14 and 15). The store also serves as a place that can provide knowledge on organic food. As Rujipas (C), the new chairperson of the Organic Food Consumers Club points out, "It should be a store which can both sell products and provide knowledge to people. Product knowledge is important for organic food promotion" (Interview). NGO staff who look after the store are able to give information to customers on the quality of products, how to use these products, and where the products came from. In addition, in working collectively to pack and transport organic produce to the cooperative store, farmers in each village have a chance to learn from each other about production, distribution, and marketing. In this way, the creation of the cooperative store as one activity of the project, is regarded as an educational as well as an economic structure (Coordinating Team, 1994).

In November 1994, the farmers and consumers clubs attempted to find other ways to sell organic produce. A weekend organic farmers market was then organized every Saturday. At the cooperative store and weekend organic farmers market, informal links between urban people and farmers were established through buying and selling activities. Consumers often talk informally about organic produce with farmers. For example, as mentioned above, if there are new kinds of vegetables that consumers are not familiar with, they will ask farmers their advice on how to cook these vegetables (See Figures 16 and 17).

Figure. 14 Store front of the *Imboon Cooperative Store*, Chiangmai



Figure. 15 Green products on the shelves of the *Imboon Cooperative Store*, Chiangmai



Figure. 16 Organic vegetable outlet in front of the *Imboon Cooperative Store*, Chiangmai



Figure. 17 Weekend organic farmers market, Chiangmai



What Did Consumers Learn?

When asked what the consumers learned in joining the project, those whom I interviewed reported that, first and foremost, they learned more about the farmers' lives. They learned to value the farmers for the role they play in providing healthy, nutritious food to them, and they learned about the importance of alternative farming practices for maintaining the land and the farmers' economic self-reliance. Kampol (C), for example, observed that "I learned about the farmers' lives and their ideal. We consumers owe much to them. They do us a favour by producing good food for us" (Interview). Urban people also learned to overcome the social biases that sees the agrarian sector as backward and maldeveloped and sees farmers as uneducated. To this, Kampol added that, "Though farmers have not gone through much formal education, they are knowledgeable because they learn from nature" (Interview).

What seems to be in common among consumers I interviewed was that they learned about the problems farmers face and how hard working they were. Decha (C) felt that consumers owe a lot to farmers and they should support farmers as much as they can.

Consumer club members should understand that we should support farmers fully and enormously. This is because farmers have a weaker economic status than us. There is no need for them to be farmers because they can find other work. They are still farmers though they can go to big cities to work in factories. I am especially talking about women. They are small and they still carry hoes and spades in the sun to produce food for us. Therefore we should give them moral support. I think this is the most important thing we should do. . . . I heard that in other countries consumers value farmers and tried to assist them as much as possible. In Bangkok, there is a Japanese group that helps farmers by buying organic vegetables directly from them and donating some money to the farmers group for investment in their farms. I therefore wish to see how we can encourage consumers to sympathize and understand farmers; to see farmers' important role in the food production process and to give them moral support; to show them that being a farmer is still a viable profession. It is a better job than being a factory worker in a big city (Interview).

Some consumers who joined the project started to see the connection between their self-interest in healthy food, the farmers' well-being, and a healthy environment. As Kampol (C) observed, "I learned that lives have to depend on each other. When we do anything, we should think of nature. If we are too selfish, we will get a bad return" (Interview). Ubol (C) eloquently expresses the interconnection between people's consumption patterns and the well-being of farmers.

When we consume, we not only eat for health reasons, but also for life. Life means the lives of all of us in the future. I mean, if farmers who make up 60 per cent of the Thai population cannot survive, nobody will survive. . . .If the rural communities collapse, so will everything (Interview).

Some were able to recognize the structural problems of modern agriculture. Aree (C) said he learned from reading books and attending NGO seminars how vain the government is. He also saw the problem of how multi-national corporations influenced agriculture through the additive use of imported chemical pesticides. He saw that the lower class people are being taken advantage of and this needs to be changed.

It should be noted that consumers are interested in gaining particular information because of their professional or personal interests. Kampol (C), a senior citizen who owns an organic farm located in the suburb of Chiangmai, is interested in acquiring new skills in alternative agriculture. He learned how to reduce manure use which gradually changing to compost, how to use leguminous plants as soil cover, and how to use grass and leaves for compost. Two agricultural extension workers who joined the consumers club paid a lot of attention to alternative farming techniques. Jantra (C), a university professor, is interested in organic food because she teaches nutrition. Sodsai (C) joined the consumers club because of her health problems. She is a cancer survivor who would like to keep herself healthy and free from chemical residues in her food.

Some find that joining the project activities gave them an opportunity to socialize with other people.

I learn about a wider world other than the one I know at university. I live in the world of the university which tends to be narrow. In joining the consumers club I now know other groups of people, i.e. food producers [farmers]. I also know where to buy organic food after joining the project (Interview with Sodsai (C)).

What Worked Best for Consumers' Learning?

When asked what kind of learning materials helped them learn best, consumers whom I interviewed mentioned reading materials that provided useful information.

Sodsai (C) said that she gained new information from the handouts given to her in the seminars organized by the project. She also gained knowledge from reading books. She said these written materials helped her a lot in learning about food, pesticide residues on local food crops, how to clean vegetables to reduce chemical residues, etc. Decha (C) also reported that he learned from both the consumers club newsletters and books the NGOs published about eating a healthy and balanced diet.

Written materials either in the form of newsletters or handouts are useful because they can reach a wider consumer audience than seminars, workshops, or study tours which can accommodate only a small number of people each time. The disadvantage of using written materials and other forms of media, according to Rujipas (C) (Interview), is that it is difficult to evaluate the results of consumers' learning. Information may be thinly disseminated and no feedback is received. In other words, it is one-way communication.

In my opinion, study tours are the most effective educational tool for urban consumers. In study tours, they learn first hand about organic farming techniques. Urban consumers also have an opportunity to visit farmers' villages and to learn how

they live. Since each study tour could accommodate only a small group no more than 30 people, urban consumers and farmers could converse more easily with each other face-to-face in the farmers' own familiar surroundings rather than in intimidating or alienating meeting rooms, or offices in the city. The disadvantage is that the cost of organizing study tours is higher than the cost of organizing other kinds of activities.

From the point of view of Dilok (N), farmers are the best learning instrument to raise awareness of both consumers in general and government officials responsible for the implementation of agricultural policies. Farmers' testimony about their lives operates to contextualize the problem of agriculture in real-life situations. Underlying this powerful learning experience for consumers is face-to-face communication. Wilai (C) (Interview) thought it was essential to have activities which encouraged consumers and farmers to directly meet each other. In her opinion, meeting each other face-to-face enables urban consumers to learn how farmers grow organic vegetables with no need to go through a secondary source. Consumers, according to Wilai, learn from farmers how difficult it is to produce vegetables. It is hoped that consumers' understanding of the farmers' living conditions and their empathy towards farmers will encourage them to patronize organic produce and to find long term solutions to help improve farmers' living conditions.

Farmers' Learning Process

The project places much efforts to strengthen both the competency of farmers practicing alternative agriculture and the growth of farmer organizations. Educational programs organized for farmers were then linked to developing skills in farming, food processing, selling and marketing. It emphasized the formation of farmers groups and how working together as a group is more effective than working individually. A pool of

resource persons in alternative agriculture in the Northern region was also created through the TOFT program.

In the project, farmers learned to change their agricultural practices from modern agriculture practices which heavily rely on petroleum-based farming inputs such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides to alternative agriculture practices which rely on organic inputs. They participated in training and joined study tours organized by NGOs to learn new skills about organic farming practices. There were also opportunities for self-learning through experimental learning in farms. They also learned from one another about alternative farming techniques and worked as a collective group to produce, pack, deliver, and sell organic farm produce to urban consumers at the organic farmers market and food outlets in the city. In sum, farmers relearned the new, in fact old, meaning and value of agriculture as a way of life and to take control of the food production and distribution processes.

Farmers' learning happened in structured educational programs organized by NGOs as well as in farmlots, when selling organic vegetables at the organic farmers market, or when working as a group and in group meetings. Organic farming also provided many learning opportunities for individual farmers. This is partly because alternative agriculture technologies are location-specific so that each farmer must *customize* her farming techniques through direct and practical experience. In the project, the farmers' learning processes were usually entwined with action. In support of this, dilok (N) observes, "Working is learning. If we don't work, we don't learn anything. Learning can happen at any level - at the farm level, when selling vegetables, or at the global level "(Interview). This kind of learning is informal but effective because it is grounded in action relevant to their everyday life.

Sukjai (F), for example, demonstrated informal learning with a pest control device. She invented a scarecrow from chicken feathers (See Figure 18) to chase away birds that has been eating her garden vegetables. However, the homemade scarecrow was ineffective in scaring the birds away. One day, she saw a scarecrow made from a disposable plastic container at a farm in a nearby village. When she returned home, she made one herself (See Figure 19) and used it in her garden. She told me that it worked well this time. On another occasion, an organic strawberry farmer had developed a new farming technique for raising strawberries and vegetables together without sacrificing the potential yield (PRO-CON Network, 1996).

Some female farmers also had an opportunity for the first time to learn about and develop selling skills.

- Yupha (F): I have just started going two or three times to the organic farmers market to sell vegetables.
- Researcher: Why didn't you go to the organic farmers' market earlier?
- Yupha (F): I did not dare to. I have never been a merchant before. I do not know how to talk with customers. I only packed organic vegetables in bags with the farmers group in our village.
- Researcher: How did you feel after your first few visits to sell vegetables at the organic farmers market?
- Yupha (F): I didn't know how to talk with customers. Those who know how to talk with customers sell their produce well.
- Researcher: How would you improve your selling skill?
- Yupha (F): I think I will try to go every Saturday. I will go to the organic farmers market at Darapirom forest temple too (Interview).

It should be noted that some farmers started alternative agriculture before they had participated in any training sessions on organic farming practices. They observed what other farmers did and started doing it themselves. Sukjai (F), who had made the

Figure. 18 **Homemade scarecrow**



Figure.19 **New and improved scarecrow**



scarecrow, learned alternative farming techniques by observing her brother⁵ in his backyard garden.

Researcher: How did you learn about organic farming?

Sukjai (F): I saw my brother do it and I just copied it.

Researcher: Did he give you any advice?

Sukjai (F): Not much. I know how to do it because I have seen it. I can do it when I see how people do it (Interview).

Boonmee (F) had similar experiences as Sukjai (F). He started experimenting with organic farming techniques before he joined any formal training sessions organized by the project. However, he expressed that learning by himself without any formal training or guidance was an agonizing experience. It was a trial and error learning process with a price to pay.

Researcher: How did you find learning by yourself?

Boonmee (F): I found that it was difficult. I wasted a lot of time, money, and labour because I did it by trial and error. I have never grown any vegetables before. It was like starting from scratch. At the beginning, I could grow some vegetables, i.e. white greens. When I started growing other vegetables I never grew before, I faced problems (Interview).

What Worked Best for Farmers' Learning?

As mentioned earlier, it appeared that study tours as learning activities worked well for urban consumers. It also worked with farmers. For farmers, farm visits as part of the study tours were worthwhile since they said they learned best from seeing the actual farming practices and being able to talk to and ask questions of farmers who were successful in organic farming. They felt that this encouraged them to try these farming techniques when they returned home. Chatchai (F) told me how he learned and how a study tour to a successful farm assisted him with the learning process.

⁵ Chatchai (F), her brother, participated in a few organic farming training sessions organized by PRO-CON Network Project.

I start by watching a video [about organic farming shown in the training]. Then I went to a real farm to talk with a farm owner whether it is possible to do alternative farming. If I had questions, I had a chance to ask him and to find out whether he was telling the truth. Though I might have been suspicious about what he said, I tried the farming techniques just the same. I watched videos and tried what I learned from the videos in my own garden, and later discovered that those farming techniques worked well.

In study tours, farmers had an opportunity to see organic farms and converse with successful farmers (See Figure 20). In one of the study tours I joined, I found that though farmers did not ask as many questions as urban consumers who joined the tours, they would often dig or step on the soil at the farms they visited to see what it was like. They would ask for seeds from farmers whom they visited (See Figure 21). They often observed and tried out new farming techniques they had learned on the study tours.

Sukjai (F), after joining a study tour for the first time in 1995, said that

I am glad to have a chance to learn new things. I wish I could do like what farmers do in Chaiyapoom province [where we toured the farms]. For example, I saw them grow Chinese broccoli by raising the plot above ground level. I tried to do what they did and it worked well (Interview).

Not everything they learned from training or study tours was applied. Farmers only applied techniques, and methods which were suitable to the physical conditions of their own farms.

I went to Sima Asoke and Chaiyapoom province.⁶ I saw that their vegetables were very big. They used chicken manure and ashes from rice husks to improve the soil. I have lots of rice husks at home and I want to use them too (Interview with Vena (F)).

⁶ In that study tour, the group visited a farm belonging to the Buddhist Asoke groups in Nakorn Ratchasima and Nakornprathom provinces, organic farms in Chaiyapoom province of the Northeast, Vibool Kemchalem's farm in Chacherngsao, and the TMSR Project in Bangkok.

Figure. 20 Farm visit and an informal talk with *Samai Thongthamarat*, a successful organic farmer, farmers' study tour to Chaiyapoom, 1995



Figure. 21 Farm women collecting seeds, farmers' study tour to Chaiyapoom, 1995



And,

After coming back from Mae Ta village [to see organic farms], I did not start growing organic vegetables right away. Unlike my farm, the farms I visited were close to water resources (Interview with Yupha (F)).

Impacts

Direct Impacts

Urban Consumers

Programs for consumers can be characterized as a process of broadening consumers' self-interest to include farmers' interest and the environment. The process starts from

- gaining understanding of farmers' hardships
- promoting a change in the behaviour and attitude of consumers
 - a consumers club was established with the explicit objective to support farmers
 - consumers gave credibility to farmers for their knowledge in organic farming
 - consumers did not complain about the higher price and imperfect appearance of organic vegetables
 - consumers helped farmers sell organic vegetables at their workplace
 - consumers allowed farmers to sell vegetables at government offices
 - consumers gave grants to the farmers group

As mentioned earlier, the project opened up opportunities for consumers to learn about farmers' lives and alternative farming practices through study tours, farmer's

public presentations, and informal talks with farmers when they bought vegetables. Wilai

(C) explained how she understood the farmers' situation as related to organic farming.

I feel sympathy for the farmers. They face problems with marketing because they can only produce a small amount of vegetables. The farms are located far from the city and when they deliver vegetables to the city, many of the vegetables are damaged. As well, transportation costs are high. As a result, farmers have to increase their prices.

The most concrete action carried out by consumers which could be said to be due to the increasing awareness of the farmers' arduous living conditions and their difficulty in switching to alternative farming practices was the establishment of Chiangmai's Consumer and Environmental Protection Club. In November 1993, the club was established to support both urban consumers as well as farmers. The club in fact was conceivable only because of urban consumers' growing empathy for the hardship of farmers' lives. This was validated by the many people I had talked to. Kampol (C), one of the key members of the consumers club, said, "The long-term goal of the consumers club is to support farmers as they themselves make sacrifices [to produce safe, nutritious food] for us. . . .Farmers are the givers and consumers owe them".

People who had an opportunity to have direct contact with farmers and learn about how they live and work tend to have a positive attitude towards them. For example, Wandee (N) offers that "I respect farmers for their patience and effective group organizing. They work cooperatively as a group". Sodsai (C) gave an account his feelings regarding the honesty of those farmers involved in organic farming.

Some people ask how I can be so sure that what farmers said [that they use organic farming methods to grow vegetables] was true. I think it depends on the individual's conviction. I had a chance to join the seminars and happened to know some farmers who produce organic vegetables. I believe they are honest and qualified farmers.

Another attitude change created by project activities was the acceptance of organic vegetables that were both blemished in appearance and higher in price compared to vegetables produced with modern agriculture methods. Pongsak (C) compared the attitudes of those who participated in the project activities and those who never joined any activities.

For consumers who had opportunities to learn about the difficulties farmers faced when growing organic vegetables, they did not complain about the price or imperfect appearance of the vegetables they bought. For those consumers who did not have this opportunity to learn, they expressed concerns about price and the quality of the vegetables primarily because they did not understand why the price of organic vegetables was high and why the vegetables' appearance was imperfect compared to those grown with chemicals (Interview).⁷

Farmers themselves saw the difference between those who joined activities such as study tours and those who did not. As Phantip (F) observed,

Some consumers understand us. They said they do not need vegetables that look good. They only want to make sure vegetables are organic. . . . For those who visited our farms, they do not talk about cheap or expensive vegetables [price] anymore. They said it was good to have organic vegetables for consumption. They told me when they bought what was [claimed to be] organic vegetables at other places, i.e. Chiangmai's night bazaar, they were not sure whether those vegetables were organic.

Some consumers helped to advertise organic vegetables by word of mouth or by recommending that people buy vegetables from the Imboon Cooperative Store or the weekend organic farmers market. When the consumers club was first established, two female members of the consumers club sold organic vegetables at their work place two to three times a week. Unfortunately, this last only for a few months due to the intractable problems associated with supply and retail.

⁷ As mentioned earlier, when farmers switched from modern agriculture to alternative farming methods, they often faced low yields and increased pest problems due to the infertile soil. Many consumers complained about the poor quality of vegetables they bought. They expected a nice appearance and a high quality right from the beginning.

Besides selling vegetables at their workplace, members of the consumers club have also shown their support for farmers by seeking new markets for selling organic produce. They helped negotiate with government authorities to allow farmers and the Imboon Cooperative Store to sell organic produce on government property. The support given to farmers is in part because urban consumers had an opportunity to learn about farmers living conditions in the seminars they joined.

Researcher: Do you think consumers have empathy towards farmers?

Boonmee (F): I think so. There were positive responses [from consumers]

when I joined the seminars. For example, government officers who joined the seminars and listened to our speech let us sell organic vegetables at their workplace. They allowed us to sell our vegetables during office hours for 5-10 minutes. If we just showed up at any government office, we would not be allowed to sell vegetables.⁸

In addition to in kind support consumers provided to farmers, some consumers gave financial assistance to them. For example, after one farm tour in 1993, Decha (C), a senior member of the consumers club donated a small tractor and rice mill to one group of farmers. He also contacted an agriculture supply store in Chiangmai and arranged to have a 30 per cent discount to organic farmers when they purchased any farming equipment. Also, a small grant was given to farmers for their community forest activities. The project, therefore, allowed for the urban consumers to experience somewhat the hardship of many farmers, which in turn acted to encourage the former to participate directly in bringing about positive changes.

⁸ Soliciting activities are prohibited at any government office.

Farmers

Three Stages in Farmers' Adoption of Alternative Farming Practices.

In this section, I am looking at the direct impact of the project which somehow contributed to changes in the farmers' lives and their farming practices. Experiences from many countries have shown that when farmers change from modern to alternative farming practices, there are three transitional phases which farmers normally go through (PRO-CON Network, 1996). The first phase is called the *discouraging* phase. This is the period when farmers start to apply alternative farming techniques to rehabilitate the farm ecosystem which was damaged by modern agriculture practices. They normally struggle and realize how difficult it is to revitalize the devastated farm ecosystem. Many farmers feel discouraged at this stage. They may give up and go back to modern farming practices or continue working on solutions to the farming problems they encounter.

The second phase is called the *encouraging* phase. Once the farmers pass the first phase of discouragement, they enter the encouraging phase. This is the time when farmers realize the positive effects of a rehabilitated soil and farm environment. They will experience a better quality and yield of crops, better physical health, and to some extent, better income than when they first started doing alternative farming. At this stage farmers usually become innovative and experimental with new farming techniques that they hope will improve farm productivity and increase the sustainability of the land base. Once the farmers pass the second stage, they enter the *gratuity* phase when they harvest the benefits of a sustained, highly productive farm. When entering this stage, farmers gain a steady and higher income than before. Their overall quality of life improves. It is seldom that those who reach this stage go back to modern farming.

From the 1996 project evaluation report (PRO-CON Network, 1996), it was found that most farmers who joined the project were in the discouraging phase with a few exceptions who were in the encouraging phase. Rawee (F), who was in transition from the discouraging to encouraging phase shared his experiences of the discouraging phase with me.

Researcher: Were you hesitant to try organic farming?

Rawee (F): Not at all. I tried it out right away. However, at first it was not successful. It was because I did not know how to prepare the plot. Or sometimes I put too little manure into the soil. I felt discouraged at that time. . . .When I saw organic farms, I thought it would be easy to do so by putting manure in the garden. In fact, it was not that simple. There are more details in what you have to do. For example, pest control. At first I did not practice all the pest control and other techniques of organic farming (Interview).

It should also be noted that most farmers do not switch all of their land to organic farming. Some farmers own two small separate pieces of land far from each other. They may decide to continue growing cash crops with the use of chemicals in one plot of land and grow organic vegetables using alternative farming practices in the other plot. Or they may grow both alternative and chemical crops in neighbouring plots on the same farm, or use the backyard garden as their organic farming plot. The combination of chemical and non-chemical farming is done to insure cash income for family needs, especially for the children's education and to pay debts as well as to reduce the risks of switching to organic farming without any other source of income. Since markets for organic vegetables is still uncertain, it means that income from selling organic vegetables is also uncertain. The parallel farming systems is, therefore, a practical and appropriate solution to the farmers' situation.

Although there were only a handful of farmers who have fully converted their

farms to become organic and therefore made it their sole source of income, they are often looked up to. This can be considered as having a *demonstration effect* on others. Sukjai (F) told me how one successful farmer's stories inspired her to continue doing organic farming.

I met Praphat and asked him how he started doing organic farming. I told him I am interested because I want to be rich⁹ like him. Praphat is doing well right now. He told me it took him some time to be at this point. So I will do it slowly and little by little. . . . When he attended the meeting in the village, many people talked to him. He said he did not have much money. When he practiced organic farming, he had enough money and could pay all his debts. I wish I could do things like he did. . . . I am interested in doing what he has accomplished and when he was here at the training, I would discuss this with him. . . . When I listened to Praphat's words, I remembered them and thought about what he had said. I want to be like him because he is rich now. His farm looks big and there are lots of trees and vegetables. I watched it from the video. I am jealous of him. How can he be so good at this organic farming (Interview)?

Changing Farming Techniques.

As mentioned earlier, the project placed considerable emphasis on the development of the farmers' capabilities in organic farming methods. The project activities thus focused on training farmers in the various techniques of organic farming. The project also encouraged farmer-to-farmer exchange programs by means of study tours or seminars. The project expected that farmers would, after joining the training and study tours, apply organic farming techniques on their farms. Vena (F) told me how she applied specific farming techniques on her farm that she had learned from the training in her farm.

Researcher: What did they teach you in the training ?

Vena: They taught me about soil preparation and organic fertilizers. We then practiced those techniques in the training. When we practice these techniques on our farm, I

⁹ The word *rich* in this statement is a relative term. It is normally used to praise someone who has an above average income compared to other farmers. Praphat Apaimool, the farmer whom Sukjai (F) mentioned in her statement, is free of debts, owns a fair sized farm and earns some cash from selling organic produce all year round. He and his wife are healthy.

know there is a standard procedure to follow. . . . In the training, they told us not to throw grass clippings away but to put them back into the land. Before joining the training, I burned the grass or weeded and threw them away. I now put grass clippings back into the soil (Interview).

Changes in farming techniques can possibly lead to changes in the way farmers relate to their physical environment. Rawee (F) told me that his work pattern has changed since he adopted organic farming. Doing organic farming requires more time than doing modern farming.

To take care of an organic farm requires much more time than growing non-organic vegetables. Before this, when there were insects, I sprinkled them with chemical pesticides and they would all die. When I grow organic vegetables, I have to find ways to control insects all the time. If I did not goon my farm for a few days, the bugs would eat all of my vegetables. To control insects I had to visit my organic farm regularly and water my vegetables with manure tea. Then there were no bugs at all.

Changes in the Farm Ecosystem.

From the 1996 project evaluation report (PRO-CON Network, 1996), the evaluation team found that it is difficult to systematically monitor changes in the farm ecosystem because the baseline data before the farms were switched to organic produce was not available. However, there were some physical changes which can be observed. Three indicators are: an increase in a variety of crops grown on a farm, changes in the soil conditions, and the changes in the farm inputs and outputs. Chuchai (N) noticed that the soil of the two farms, considered to be farms in the encouraging stage, he had visited had improved. He also noticed that the quality of the vegetables were better than those produced at the beginning of the project. One farmer reported changes in the soil conditions and an increase in crop yield on her farm. The project evaluation team visited a number of organic farms in 1996 and saw most farms they visited used compost and mulching techniques. The team also observed a variety of

crops, fish and ducks combined into one farming system on each of two farms they visited in one village. On one farm there were more than 50 species of plants and trees (PRO-CON Network, 1996).

Withdrawal From Drugs¹⁰ Metaphor

The intensive use of chemicals in modern farming practices has been compared to addiction to drugs. Farmers practicing modern farming methods are often used to the fast-acting chemical fertilizers and herbicides/pesticides as solutions to farm problems. It is not easy for farmers to change their attitude regarding chemicals and the quick results that they get from using them on the farm and to recognize the long-term negative impacts of these chemicals on the farm ecosystem, their health, and the environment. When compared to modern farming, some farmers felt that organic farming practices brought about positive results very slowly and required intensive labour. Withdrawing from modern farming practices, which rely heavily on chemicals to produce fast results, would be like withdrawing from drug use. Farmers need to have the right understanding in order to be able to withdraw from *drugs* and break that habit of mind which looks for quick and easy solutions to farm problems. They have to believe they can do without drugs or chemicals before they are able to stay away from them. Soil and the farm ecosystem also need a certain amount of time for proper rehabilitation from the many years of intensive chemical use.

Since chemicals have been promoted and applied on the farms for more than three decades, many farmers found it hard to believe that farms can produce reasonable yield without chemicals. Before, Yupha (F) tried her hand at organic farming

¹⁰ Coincidentally, *ya*, the first word in the term for drugs in Thai (*ya-sep-tid*) is also the first word in the term for chemical insecticides (*ya-ka-ma-laeng*). As part of the habit, farmers now often use the word *ya* to refer to both chemical herbicides and pesticides used in modern agriculture.

she told me that she did not believe it was possible to grow anything without chemicals. Later, she thought that she would try organic farming techniques anyway after realizing that her total income from cash crop production was insufficient for her family. She thought that organic farming could possibly provide her with supplementary income, but once she started practicing alternative farming methods, she realized that it was feasible to do farming without using any chemicals. Later on, though, she faced a problem when attempting to convince others to accept alternative farming.

Researcher: Do you think it would be possible for all villagers to grow organic vegetables?

Yupha (F): I guess it is impossible because when people saw our organic farm, they said that we would get nothing to eat from the farm. They think that organic farming is an impossible thing to do. The thing is that although they still use chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides on their farm, they still have not been able to get a good yield even after many years. I tried to explain organic farming to them. Some understood but some didn't. Some paid attention, but some did not. They just changed the subject (Interview).

Changing One's World View

Changing the farm system and agricultural techniques also means changing one's world view about farming. It requires a conviction that using chemicals is not necessary. In addition, one needs to be earnest and patient. Rawee (F) explained the importance of conviction in organic farming to me when he answered my question about whether doing organic farming is a difficult task.

I think if we pay attention and are serious about it, we can do it. We will have to tell ourselves that we are serious about it. Or else we will not succeed in alternative farming. . . . If we are serious about it, I don't think it's too difficult. It seems difficult, but somehow easy. It seems easy, but somehow difficult. We only have to improve our farming techniques. We have to be serious and dedicate ourselves to alternative farming. We have to take care of the farm regularly (Interview).

What struck me most was a statement made by Chatchai (F) who described how his attitude and relations to small animals have changed since practicing organic farming.

Before starting an organic vegetable garden, I often killed lizards and birds just for fun. I did not know the value of them. I don't kill them anymore because I know they help eat insects which are harmful to my plants. Before this, I caught frogs and small green frogs. I later learned that they eat worms that are plant predators. I also hunted small birds but now I don't do it anymore. Since I started using organic farming methods, there have been more birds and small animals in my vegetable garden than before. They will come to my garden because there is plenty of food [insects, worms] for them. They can live together harmoniously. I do not have to spray chemical pesticides. There are predators and prey, and they balance each other (Interview).

Changing Eating Patterns.

Another effect the project had on the farmers is that they embraced organic food consumption and set an example for others. It would not be convincing if farmers who grew organic vegetables did not eat organic produce themselves. I noticed that some farmers do not eat non-organic vegetables at all, even when they eat out. Although most vegetables cooked and sold as ready made food in local markets were non-organic, one farmer told me he avoided eating them by eating local vegetables which are grown wild and do not require chemical pesticides or fertilizers. As Rawee (F) noted, "Since I started organic farming, I no longer eat non-organic vegetables. I mostly eat local, native vegetables - those that are eaten with *larb*".¹¹

¹¹ Larb is a local dish made from cooked ground meat and herbs. The dish has fresh vegetables as a side dish.

Benefits.

Health improvements

When asked what kind of changes organic farming brought to their lives, all the farmers whom I interviewed mentioned the improvement of their state of health. In fact, some farmers were motivated to switch to organic farming primarily because of health reasons. Chanpen (F) told me about the health hazards she and her husband encountered when using agricultural chemicals.

My husband cannot sprinkle any chemical herbicides/pesticides on our farm anymore. He is allergic to chemicals. When we used chemical herbicides/pesticides, we had to spray five times a month. . . . I had to be the one who sprinkled pesticides because my husband cannot do it. I stopped using chemicals on my farm at the end of 1994 (Interview).

Yupha (F) had similar experiences as Chanpen (F). She told me her health had improved since she stopped using chemical herbicides/pesticides.

There have been some changes in my health condition. Since I started growing organic vegetables, I have never gone to the doctor. Before this, I had headaches or nausea from applying chemical pesticides on my farm. My husband had the same problem too. Every time he used chemical pesticides on our farm, he felt sick. He complained about head and body aches. Now he does not complain about those symptoms anymore (Interview).

One of the benefits farmers gained from growing organic vegetables was to have safe food to eat at home. It was also convenient.

Researcher: Have there been any changes in your life since you switch to organic farming ?

Vena (F): Yes, I receive income monthly and weekly from the organic farmers market. Another thing is, we have organic vegetables to eat every day (Interview).

Chatchai (F) told me how convenient it was for him to use organic vegetables for cooking and to feed the ducks.

When I want to eat vegetables, I only need to pick them and do not have to worry about chemical residues. When I still used chemical herbicides and pesticides, I sometimes forgot how long ago I had sprayed those

chemicals on my vegetables. It was unsafe because sometimes I realized I only sprayed chemicals two days ago. . . . When I used vegetables to feed the ducks, I had to figure out when I last used the chemicals on my farm. If I harvested the vegetables too early, the ducks would eat the vegetables and die. It happened once to me that the ducks died. Right now, I can harvest vegetables at any time and feed them directly to the ducks.

Researcher: When you were using chemicals, didn't you have any sign to tell?

Chatchai (F): No. Let's say I have five vegetable plots. I sprayed two or three plots and I had to go to the city to do some errands. I forgot which plots and how many days ago I sprayed them (Interview).

Increase in income

Farmers have many venues to earn income from organic vegetables and other green products such as wild honey, herbal medicine, and preserved fruits. They can do wholesale and sell their products to the Imboon Cooperative Store or Green Net in Bangkok; sell organic vegetables directly at the organic farmers market in the city of Chiangmai on weekends; sell them at special fairs such as the Producers Meet Consumers Day Seminars; sell to consumers when they visit farms; find local markets in their village or sub-districts and districts; or sell them directly to consumers at government offices. Being able to produce organic vegetables for their family consumption can be considered as income generation since it helps reduce the family's food expenses. The low cost of organic farm inputs, when compared to modern farm inputs, helps farmers reduce the amount of money needed to invest in their farms. Since data on farmers' income before and after adopting an organic farming approach was not systematically recorded, it is difficult to determine the changes in the level of income that farmers experienced as a result of the project.

From the 1996 project evaluation report (PRO-CON Network, 1996), farmers who were in the encouraging stage reported that their net income was higher than when they sold non-organic produce. Boonmee (F), one of the most successful organic farmers in the farmers club, said his net earnings were about 75,000 Baht per year. He invested 85,000 Baht in farm inputs and earned a total income of 160,000 Baht. When he used modern farming techniques, which depend on chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, he earned only 105,000 Baht per year and the investment cost for chemical farm inputs was higher than the cost he paid on organic farm.

In general, it can be concluded that, for farmers who are in the encouraging stage, income from selling organic vegetables surpasses income they gained from modern chemical farms. For those who are in the discouraging stage or for those who did not switch their whole farm to grow organic produce, income from organic farms is considered to be supplementary income. Sukjai (F) who grew organic vegetables in her backyard garden told me that one of the changes in her life was an improvement in income flexibility:

Researcher: Have there been any changes in your life since you started organic farming ?

Sukjai (F): Quite a few changes. My financial flow is a little more flexible I earn more money [from the organic farmers market in the city of Chiangmai] than when I only sell vegetables in my village. When I sell vegetables at home, I sell them cheaply (Interview).

Rawee (F) mentioned that income from selling organic vegetables was relatively small and unstable during the discouraging stage and it was insufficient to be the farmers major source of income. He disagreed with what an NGO staff member said about income from organic vegetables eventually replacing income from cash crops. At least it did not apply in his case.

I don't think income from organic vegetable production can be my major source of income. I earn only 200-300 Baht a week from selling organic vegetables. It still cannot be the major source of income for my family. However, I see that I do this for my family to have good food to eat every meal (Interview).

Moral support and trust

The face-to-face communication and the support of urban consumers, either in the form of words of encouragement, or the physical presence of consumers when they visited farms and listened to the farmers' stories, or helped find markets for farmers, in some ways affected how farmers view themselves and their world view about agriculture. By having a direct relationship with those who eat the food they produce, farmers are able to see more clearly the significance of their role as food providers for urban households and gain confidence and feel pride in their role. It helps farmers overcome their common tendency to down play the importance of their occupation.

I am delighted that urban consumers are interested in organic farming. They visited me at my farm to see how I grow vegetables. I sell organic produce and they buy our produce. I feel proud (Interview with Yupha (F)).

Meeting each other regularly at the weekend organic farmers market also takes away the invisibility between farmers and consumers. At one level, it creates trust.

Researcher: What do you think of consumers in the city?

Sukjai (F): They are regular customers. I meet some of them regularly. I normally do not talk to them much. But I tell them that our vegetables are chemical-free. I don't tell them a lie or cheat them. Those who buy from us regularly trust us. Many of them buy from us every Saturday [at the organic farmers market]. They will ask if the vegetables are chemical-free; I will tell them yes. There are still worms with our white greens (Interview).

However, not all farmers feel that consumers are reliable and supportive of them, especially when buying organic vegetables. Rawee (F) urged consumers not only to pay lip service to assisting farmers and contributing to environmental protection.

Like what they say on the TV commercial [to promote environmental awareness], if you wish to help decrease pollution in the environment, don't do it by lip service. If you would like to encourage producers [farmers] to take care of the environment, like what they said in the training I joined, we cannot do it alone. It depends on the consumers to help us by eating organic produce (Interview).

Having new friends across socio-economic classes

Another thing that happened is that farmers developed new friendships with urban people. Having new friends or connections in the city did not happen on a superficial level since the relationships they have could extend itself to actions of support from consumers. As mentioned earlier, some government officers who happened to know farmers from the seminars organized by the project helped one farmers group to sell their vegetable products at government offices. Boonmee (F), who was a guest speaker of a few seminars and meetings, shared with me that the project brought new friends in his life. He also gained some personal favours such as bypassing the long queue at the public hospital because of the intervention of one doctor whom he met at a seminar. This kind of favouritism¹² enabled him to gain better services from state hospitals which would never have happened to a farmer like him had he not known any doctors from the seminar. He said,

I know more people in the city than before. I got a chance to meet people whom I had never met before. Before this, when I came into the city, I knew nobody. Sometimes when I came to a hospital, I had to stay overnight [in the lobby of the hospital] for seven nights. It was difficult for me because there was no mattress and there were lots of mosquitoes. Now I can sleep anywhere [any house] because I know many people [in the city of Chiangmai]. I have more friends than before. Before that, I had once taken my friend to Suan Dok hospital. I had to leave home at five in the morning and wait in queue with him till 3 p.m. before he got to see the doctor. Another day, I took my brother-in-law to the hospital. We saw my doctor friend we got a chance to have a check-up right away (Interview).

¹² It is still common in Thailand for many in the middle class to have better access and faster services because of their relations with government officers who are friends and acquaintances. As a result of lack of class opportunity, most farmers do not normally have these privileges.

Women

Women Consumers.

The lifestyle of both urban women and men, with time pressures due to office work and traffic seems to prohibit urban consumers from playing an active role in the project. In Thailand, many urban middle class women work both outside and inside the home. Nevertheless, in my observation, some female committee members of the consumers club are very active and enthusiastic participants of club activities. Both consumers, for example, who sold organic vegetables at their offices were women.

As mentioned earlier, Ratre (N) noticed that most customers at the Imboon Cooperative Store and at the organic farmers market are women. Preecha (N) agreed with Ratre (N) that

there are more female than male members in the consumers club. Most customers who buy organic vegetables are women and committee members are mostly women. This suggests to me that importance and potential of women (Interview).

In spite of the fact that the majority of consumer club members are women, in terms of formal leadership in the consumers club, I observed that both chairpersons of the old and new consumers clubs are men. However, Rujipas (C), chairperson of the new Organic Food Consumers Club, commented positively about urban and rural women's participation in food production and preservation. In general, he sees that women are responsible for their families' well-being.

Women have a role in food preparation and processing. Women have less tendency to behave badly because they live permanently with families and are concerned with their family's well-being. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to misbehave (Interview).

Women's responsibility in the family's welfare and their reliability have been recognized by consumer club members, farmers, and NGO workers. Nevertheless,

Dilok (N) admitted that the gender issue in the consumers group has not been emphasized yet. He agreed that the project may have to work more on this issue in the near future.

The relationships and networks between women farmers and urban women consumers who are members of the consumers club are still not fully developed. Women farmers may converse with urban women when selling vegetables at the weekend market or in meetings on a personal basis but no more than that. However, in the future, further substantial linkages between these two women's groups to address specific women's issues in alternative agriculture and consumption could possibly be encouraged and established in later stages.

Farm Women.

At the beginning of the project's implementation, the women's farmers groups in target areas were approached first (Pro-Con Network, 1993). More than seventy per cent of the project participants are women, and in almost every organic farmers group, women are the key actors (Pro-Con Network, 1994). Women play an active role in the production, packaging, and selling of organic produce at the organic farmers market. Traditionally, women act as the financial/organizational managers of the family and have been able to apply this knowledge to organic food production and marketing. In the Ban Pa Nod organic farmers group, for instance, women were responsible for farm product inventory and accounting as they had previous experience with their own group's savings operation.

In Northern Thailand, where the project is located, growing vegetables for family consumption is traditionally women's work. Once they joined the project, the men started to work with women in the organic vegetable gardens in what was once the women's domain. Organic vegetable production is thus seen as an example of a community

development activity in which women and men participate together in the same process, unlike other activities which typically segregate women and men. Panyakul and Trimanka (1996) pointed out that with the same goal in organic vegetable production, the female and male partners in each family work effectively and mutually to develop the family's production process.

It should be noted that consent from the women to switch to organic farming is very crucial. Prawit (F) assured me of this fact.

Researcher: Why are there only five families doing organic farming in this village?

Prawit (F): It was because their wives disagreed with the idea of switching to organic farming. The wives said they could not even make ends meet when they used chemical fertilizers, pesticides. How will it work without using them (Interview)?

From the interview with Sangwan Maneewan, one of the key NGO staff of the Northern Network of Alternative Agriculture, it was found that although the women's farmers groups were approached first, only men were invited at the beginning to participate in organic farming training. In fact, the NGOs had a plan to train both women and men but did not at first emphasize the gender quota in training. Later on, the male farmers expressed their concerns that it was about time their wives received some training. This was because the male farmers had conflicts with their spouses who did not receive sufficient information to understand the principles of organic farming and would not support them. Recently, the project has made a clear policy of having both genders included in the training. Dilok (N) concludes that, "The heart of switching from monoculture to alternative farming is to have men and women equally receive information about alternative farming. They should participate in alternative training together".

Having women join the training or study tours in some ways turned out to be helpful to male farmers in their own training in organic farming. When asked what he thought about his wife who for the first time joined the study tour to Chaiyapoom province, Rawee (F) said

The trip benefited me because I do not need to tell her what to do step by step about organic farming like I did before. She has seen the real thing [an organic farm] herself. She saw the same thing; knows the same thing as me. This helps us understand each other better. . . .Before this, I had to explain to her or tell her what to do all the time. It was difficult for me to try to explain everything about organic farming to her. Now that she has seen organic farms and learned the techniques herself, it is easy to do it together (Interview).

Sangwan also noticed that when women learned something new, they were more inclined than the men to apply their newly acquired knowledge. Sangwan said, "When ten women joined study tours, at least four or five of them would attempt to adopt the new organic farming techniques they learned from the tour on their farms. If ten men joined study tours, only two out of ten tried what they learned from the tours on their farms " (Interview).

The project also enabled women to expand their active participation from groups in the village to the broader community and then regional and national network levels (Panyakul & Trimanka, 1996). As mentioned earlier, some women, like Yupha (F), had an opportunity for the first time to learn about selling skills at an organic farmers market outside her village. Other women were selected to head organic farmers groups at the village level. Some were invited as guest speakers on organic farming to regional and national conferences and seminars. Some were trained as trainers for the Northern Network of Alternative Agriculture. However, Dilok (N) commented that at the community level, women are still given less of a role to play than men, especially in the public sphere such as being active members of the village or sub-district committee. He

stresses the importance of finding ways to increase women's roles at the community level.

It can be said that most NGO workers are aware of gender issues. Farm women are seen as the key to successful organic farming and everyone agreed that they played an important role in farming. "A good farm relies on women's work" (Interview with Dilok (N)). A decision to change from modern to organic farming has to be from both female and male partners. Nevertheless, Dilok is skeptical as to whether the project has merely created more workload for women than before. There may not be a clear answer to his concerns. However, Sangwan told me that there are signs of change regarding the division of labour between the genders. For example, some men are willing to take over housework and childcare so that women can have an opportunity to take part in study tours or training in the city.

From informal discussions with some female and male farmers, adopting organic farming practices has brought some changes into their lives. Those whose farms are in the encouraging stage talked about improved family integration as one of the benefits organic farming practices brought. They felt that doing organic farming gave them an opportunity to be together as a family: that their husbands or wives did not have to leave home for so long to look for work in cities for extra income, and that their health improved because of good food and using non-chemical farming methods.

Wider Impacts

Government Policies

Realizing the substantial role of the government in the development process, the project works collaboratively with local and central levels of government. The purpose is to share expertise, resources and to learn from each other. "If the government adopts a

good approach and methods, even if they are diluted and performance is spotty, the total wider impact can still be enormous. . . ” (Chambers, 1993). Local government officials are often invited to participate in and/or attend seminars, training sessions and study tours organized by the project.¹³

The project is also geared towards creating a wider impact by means of policy advocacy. Policy areas which the project and other related NGOs campaign on include alternative agriculture, community rights for the management of natural resources, farmers' organization rights, consumers' protection rights, and the protection of local bio-resources (PRO-CON Network, 1997). As mentioned earlier, in 1995, NGO workers and farmers groups, representing the Northern Network of Alternative Agriculture, participated in a Northern regional forum organized by the government to review the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan. They successfully lobbied the government to include alternative agriculture and alternative marketing policies in the Eighth National Plan.

It is notable here that NGOs' collaboration with government agencies at the local level does not hinder them from taking other kinds of confrontational political action aimed at initiating policy changes. This was most evident when project staff members, NGOs workers in the National Network of Alternative Agriculture, and farmers groups

¹³ For example, in 1995 when the Minister of Agriculture was invited to give an opening remark on the first day of the Producers Meet Consumers Day Seminar, and in the following year when other officers from the Ministry were present to test the quantity of toxic residues in vegetables. Also at this seminar in 1996, were health officers from the Ministry of Public Health who were on hand to test for toxic residues in the blood of seminar participants. Other examples include when representatives from government agencies were invited to sit on the Committee for Standard Certification of Organic Products and when a modest fund from the Provincial Public Health Office and Ministry of Agriculture was granted to the project to organize a seminar.

actively participated in the 1997 *Assembly of the Poor*¹⁴ demonstration (See Figures 22 and 23).

Representatives from the alternative agriculture group in the Assembly of the Poor demanded changes in the direction of agricultural policies in the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan. Although the plan stated that the government would ensure that up to 20 per cent of the total farmland would be utilized for alternative agriculture (Panyakul, 1997), it did not formally acknowledge this in the actual action plan. The plan was also criticized for serving the interests of agro-business firms rather than small-scale farmers since it tended to promote big scale organic farming for export. The government approved the recommendations proposed by the Assembly of the Poor and allocated operational funds for the promotion of small-scale organic farming.

The alternative agriculture group of the Assembly of the Poor also opposed the trend toward the bio-engineering of genetic resources to boost yields to serve the global market. They were concerned that farmers would be denied access to local genetic resources and that benefits would mainly go to multi-national companies. An appeal to amend laws related to the protection of local genetic resources submitted by the Assembly of the Poor was also approved on principle by the government.

¹⁴ The Assembly of the Poor, a collective group of farmers and slum dwellers who were affected by government development policies, staged a protest in front of the Government House in Bangkok for a few months in early 1997. They wanted to pressure the government to solve 121 long standing problems such as land compensation for land lost to the construction of a mega-dam project. These people's organizations had on previous occasions attempted to resolve these problems through regular bureaucratic channels but without success.

Figure. 22 Street demonstration, the *Assembly of the Poor*, Bangkok, 1997



Figure. 23 Farmers from the Northern provinces joining the demonstration at the *Assembly of the Poor* in Bangkok, 1997



In April 1998, the project, NGO members of the Northern Network of Alternative Agriculture, and the newly formed *Chiangmai's Consumer Protection Association* joined together to demand that the government increase import levies on chemical pesticides, some of which are banned in many Western countries. In addition, they recommended to the government to cut back on the import of highly toxic chemicals by at least 25 per cent annually. If the campaign is successful, it will indirectly help reinforce farmers to use more environmentally-friendly modes of agriculture. The general public also were urged to participate in the campaign to ban pesticides by sending a series of postcards, each portraying an illustration and brief description of one of several problems farmers experience with chemical pesticides, to the prime minister and agricultural minister ("Tackling Toxins, 1998) (See Figure 24).

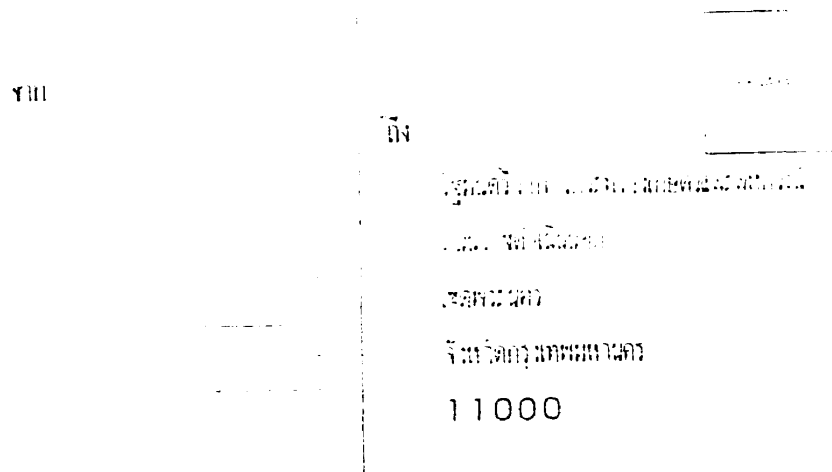
Spread Effects

The spread effects of project activities, according to Chambers (1993), includes sharing approaches and methods for development actions. The major spread effect which the project seemed to accomplish was the sharing of experiences in development approaches and methods especially in the area of alternative marketing with other NGOs and community organizations. Though Dilok (N) saw that the project was far from ideal, many people approached the project to ask for their expertise and advice.

Though target groups have not increased, people from the provinces of Chiangrai, Phayao, and Nan came to take training with us. Organic vegetables is a fever of the North. Many stores are open in Lamphoon, Chiangmai, Phayao, and Nan provinces. Our project has been utilized as a strategy for other NGOs in the Northern region. Our Imboon Cooperative Store is considered a model store. Alternative marketing has turned out to be an NGOs' national strategy (Interview).

Dilok (N) concluded that the project made an effort to catalyze a shift in people's perceptions about agriculture, and class-based and market-based relationships between

Figure. 24 Sample of postcard sent to the Minister of Agriculture



- ชมรมผู้ศึกษาความปลอดภัยสารพิษ
- ชมรมผู้ผลิตพืชผักเพื่อสุขภาพและสิ่งแวดล้อม
- ชมรมคุ้มครองผู้บริโภคจังหวัดเชียงใหม่
- เครือข่ายเกษตรกรรวมทางเลือกภาคเหนือ
- ภาพโดย นายวิมลกร แนนท์

ประเทศไทยมี ๖๖ เจ้าสารเคมีทางการเกษตร โดยปราศจากภาษี ถึงแม้แสดงให้เห็นถึงการอุดหนุน ใน การผลิตสารเคมีทางการเกษตรอย่างชัดเจน.



ข้อเสนอ : ให้มีการเพิ่มภาษีการนำเข้าสารเคมีทางการเกษตรที่มีอันตรายร้ายแรงเป็น 100 %

Note. (Translation of postcard)

(Top of postcard with illustration) Thailand gives all imported agricultural chemicals with a tax exemption. This shows that the government encourages farmers to use agricultural chemicals.

(Farmer says): These are all dangerous chemicals. Aren't you going to collect taxes at all ?

(At the bottom of postcard) We recommend the government to impose 100 per cent tax on imported toxic chemicals.

farmers and consumers. The project has made an attempt to deconstruct modern agricultural practices and to create a green consumer movement which would support farmers and alternative agriculture policy. The new values the project makes efforts to promote can be summed up as follows:

Agriculture

- from depending on resources from outside of the farm, such as chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, to resources which are available on the farm or locally from agro-business which is tied to the global-market economy to the local market economy (revitalize the economy, local community, and ecosystems)
- from cash crop production to food crop production

Green consumerism (alternative marketing)

- the bottom line is not about profit-making but economic viability, good health, and good environment
- the production process needs to be environmentally-friendly
- an emphasis on farmers-consumers relationship (connection)
- importance given to farmers as food producers
- food is considered to be a source of nutrition

Challenges

Like many other change agents attempting to bring forth social change, the project faced problems and obstacles which I would prefer to see as challenges.

Consumers and the Consumers Club

Behavioural Change is Difficult

During the past few decades, the eating pattern of urban Thais has changed drastically due to the fast paced, modern lifestyle and work structure of big cities. The average urban middle class family is a two income family. They work outside the home and do not normally cook every day but rely on ready-made food available in local markets or food vendors. They grocery shop at the most convenient location to save time. The majority of the urban population does not know how to eat or cook local vegetables. Those who cook prefer to purchase out-of-season vegetables with perfect appearance at a cheap price. They eat less than 10 varieties of Chinese or non-native vegetables (Interview with Vitoon (N)).

Sodsai (C), who eats organic food and had become a vegetarian, shared her opinion about how difficult it was to influence consumers' eating and buying behaviours.

It is difficult to change people's eating patterns [behavior]. Many people would say yes, it is a good idea [to eat organic vegetables]. However if they have to drive five kilometers from home to buy organic vegetables or spend their time during weekends to buy and cook food, they will not do it. . . . Many people do not make an effort to buy organic food. They claim they do not have time. I told them I donate my time to choose food to eat because I am sick. I know people say they believe organic food is good for their health. However, they do not care enough to change their eating patterns.

Rawee (F) also reflected on urban lifestyles and expressed his concern about urban people and their support through purchasing organic food.

I wish I could produce organic food for everyone to eat. But I don't have much hope in city people. They do not have time to cook for themselves. Only some of them cook [and therefore buy our organic produce]. I am afraid it may be difficult to expand the group of consumers (Interview).

Even Wandee (N), an NGO support staff herself, found that it was difficult to change her eating and buying patterns. Although she learned a lot about toxic residues

in non-organic vegetables, her time limitations for cooking stopped her from cooking and eating organic food regularly.

I still eat non-organic vegetables but less and less. I normally buy vegetables from our organic farmers market or from the Imboon Cooperative Store. . . .I think people are aware of toxic residues in vegetables but they do not change their behaviours. I think they are like me. I know, but I don't change my behaviour. Sometimes when I go to the market, I see some food I like. I buy it although I know there are chemical residues in it. I think it is because we do not see the effects of chemical toxin to our bodies right away. We just spoil our mouth first.

Information Given is Insufficient

As mentioned above, the goal to have people consume organic food and to eventually purchase organic vegetables so that farmers would gain stable and sufficient income seems to be a difficult task. Preecha (N), who is responsible for the project's consumer activities, pointed out that activities organized for consumers were mainly based on the assumption that providing information about chemical hazards in food created by modern farming methods and the policies which helped to promote modern farming methods would somehow influence and change consumers' behaviour. He emphasized that we should start from our personal experiences and explore our consumption and purchasing behaviours in a critical way.

In seminars or meetings or when we exchange ideas, we sometimes forgot to discuss our everyday life behaviours; what we do or how we behave or what others do. We normally talk about policies and broad, general ideas. I think we missed the point because we did not start from who we are, what we have. We forgot to talk about what is close to us (Interview).

Preecha (N) suggested that there should be an activity to help urban consumers to critically explore and to reflect on their personal, everyday life consumption and buying

behaviours. Critically discussing one's behaviour in public may be interpreted as blaming someone or making someone lose face in public. Preecha (N) replied that

I do not think that will be a problem because we are talking in the context of finding solutions to the problem of [unhealthy, unsustainable eating, buying patterns]. I think it is a good thing to talk about our lives deeply. It is like showing that we care for and pay attention to each other. When we care for each other, we cannot care for something too light [abstract]. We should pay attention to our behaviour and that of others. If each of us accepts that we have to help each other to make our behaviours better, or we have someone to help guide us, I think this is happiness (Interview).

It is a challenge for the project and the consumers club to work together to ensure that learning activities provided by the project would include a critical reflection of a person's own consumption and shopping patterns. Educational activities for urban consumers should be geared towards behavioural as well as attitude and value changes.

Price is a Problem

As mentioned earlier, when farmers switched to organic farming, they faced many problems such as low yield, small produce and an unattractive appearance of vegetables. Some consumers who eat organic food regularly and buy organic vegetables from farmers still complain about the quality and relatively high price of organic vegetables. This problem can be seen from at least two perspectives. The first perspective is consumers do not realize the value of organic vegetables and how difficult it is to produce organic vegetables during the discouraging stage. If we assume that all middle class consumers can afford to buy organic vegetables, consumers should rationally weigh the benefits they will gain from eating safe food with the higher price they have to pay. They will supposedly make a rational choice to allocate their

resources (income) to acquire safe food for their own health benefits. However, consumers did not seem to rationally make decisions based on health benefits they would gain from organic food. They are still concerned about price, quality and appearance of the vegetables, and convenient buying location. Dilok (N) commented that,

some consumers who are concerned about health problems still want to eat cheap food. Though they know it is not safe to eat non-organic vegetables, they do not want to buy our organic vegetables because of the price.

The second perspective is that the price of organic vegetables is beyond the means of most consumers. Similar to the problem of green consumerism in North America and Europe, organic food is class-biased and only a certain group of people with a certain income range are able to afford it. Altering urban people's consumption habits and making organic food accessible for all people will probably be the next task the consumers club and the project need to concern themselves with. Both urban and rural women, who play a major role in the family's health and well-being, have an opportunity to link and work together in this common concern. New initiatives such as reviving traditional backyard vegetable and herb gardens for families in the city should be explored and tried out. It is also a challenge for the project to provide support to help farmers to go through the discouraging stage and to produce a better quality of organic food for consumers as soon as possible.

More Work Needs to be Done

Though it seems that there have been a number of activities organized for urban consumers, NGO staff admitted that consumer work still needs to be strengthened and worked on. Some activities were just ideas that were not put into practice for whatever

reason. The less emphasis on consumer work can be explained in a number of ways. Saree Oungsomwang, an NGO worker who did an overall project evaluation in 1996 with other members of the project evaluation team, thought that the project had too many objectives to accomplish and that resources and staff were unevenly allocated to project activities. Consumer work received less attention and resources. In addition, in my opinion, consumer work is a relatively new area of concern for developmental NGOs. Developmental NGOs in general are rural-based and mostly concentrate on working with rural farmers or the urban poor. They may not be keen on organizing activities for and with urban consumers or strengthening consumer organizations. The project staff noted that some staff do not see clearly in what direction consumer work should take. In addition, while activities to build farmers' technical capacity in alternative farming and strengthen farmers' organizations are strongly supported by the National Network of Alternative Agriculture, project activities for consumers are still limited to back up resource and expertise. It is a challenge for NGOs and the consumers club to identify possible local and national resources for consumer work and to network with those who directly work on consumer issues for technical support and an exchange of ideas.¹⁵

Direction of the Consumers Club

Considering the range and breadth of the four objectives of the consumers club, that is, to ensure consumers have access to safe products; to disseminate useful information to urban consumers and farmers; to strengthen collaboration between farmers and consumers; and to stimulate government agencies to participate in the alternative agriculture movement, one needs to acknowledge how ambitious their goals are and how

¹⁵ Since 1997, the project has paid more attention to the consumer aspect of their work by organizing more activities for the urban consumers than before.

difficult they are to achieve. Due to its largely voluntary nature, the club has limitations in regards to financial and human resources. At the time of the research study in 1995, the club activities were financially supported by the project and most routine work, such as issuing the club's newsletter, was done by the project staff and a governmental extension worker volunteering her time to help with the club's work. It is a challenge for the club to find ways to work effectively under the structure of a volunteer-based organization with limited resources. The project staff and the consumer club members may need to work together to refine their operational goals or to set their priorities. For instance, whether they would like to work on promoting organic food consumption by simultaneously campaigning on organic food and benefits to consumers' and farmers' health and to the environment or they want to focus their work on policy advocacy with local, central government and policy makers.

As mentioned earlier, in 1996, there was a significant change in the direction of the club's policy. The consumers club also decided to change its name from *Chiangmai's Consumer and Environmental Protection Club* to *Organic Food Consumers Club*. The club's policies were revised to focus mainly on organic food consumption promotion. In 1997, the project, together with the Chiangmai Provincial Public Health Office, assisted other consumers in Chiangmai to organize themselves to form the *Chiangmai's Consumer Protection Association*. However, the association works on the broader issues of consumers protection rather than solely on food for health and the promotion of organic farming.

Organizing Consumers in Groups

The challenge of organizing urban consumers as a group was addressed by Ubol (C). She thought that organizing urban consumers and working with them as a group was more difficult than organizing farmers groups. This is because urban consumers do not have certain characteristics such as kinship bonds common among farmers. Ubol (C) suggested that it would be more realistic to work with consumers on an individual basis than on a group basis, otherwise NGO staff will have to identify what constitutes a group in an urban setting. In fact, there are many possibilities to work with consumers as groups. Preecha (N) suggested that groups of urban consumers could be identified as those who have common interests or share certain identities.

I think a group needs to have some kind of common interests; for example, the interests common to senior citizens group, such as sharing the common problem of being neglected by their families or lack of warmth and care from their relatives, which could form them into a group (Interview).

Preecha (N) added that once consumers' common interests are identified, the opportunity is there to focus on responding to their needs or problems. The challenge in working with urban consumers as a group is then to identify potential or existing consumers groups and to respond to their needs appropriately.

Exercising Collective Power

Another challenge is to improve consumer's collective power through product boycotts and address the real effects of over-production and over-consumption brought about by a consumer culture. As Mies (1986) points out, boycotts can be used as a learning tool to raise awareness among consumers of the destructive impact of certain products on the environment and people. By working with other consumers groups in Chiangmai and Northern region, members of the consumers club can campaign on

products or services which directly affect their welfare and begin a boycott of those products or services. The campaign on the ban of imported agricultural chemicals organized by Chiangmai's Consumer Protection Association is one good example of how consumers can exercise their collective power to create changes.

Support at the Group Level

Consumers supported farmers, i.e. giving donations or marketing assistance, on an individual basis rather than as a group. This kind of support is rather limited to help solve farmer and agricultural problems in the long run. Solidarity between consumers and farmers groups have not been well-established especially in the sensitive area of farmer's political struggles. For instance, in 1995, there was a large farmers demonstration in Chiangmai province to protest the government's forestry policy.¹⁶ The majority of organic farmer club members actively participated in the demonstration. The key members of the consumers club knew about the demonstration and it became a topic of discussion at the annual meeting of the farmers-consumers network. They, however, did not take any collective action, i.e. writing a protest letter to the government or showing support for the farmers' demonstration. Again, at the 1997 demonstration of the Assembly of the Poor in Bangkok in which the project staff and farmers groups fully participated no direct support was received from the consumers club.

What seems to be lacking among the consumer club members is just this political perspective and agenda which would encourage them to participate more critically and to give more support toward the farmers' political struggles for self-reliance. This apolitical

¹⁶ Many farmers in the project area were affected by the new National Forestry Bill which failed to recognize the presence of 11 million people living in national forest reserves (Thai Development Support Committee, 1995). They would lose their traditional land ownership and be evicted from their homeland as a result of this forestry policy.

outlook may be due to the lack of a political tradition at the local level that would have otherwise fostered or supported wider popular struggles or political movements (Riddle and Robinson cited in Mita, 1997, p. 38-9). From the perspective of the farmers, the question seems to be that since many issues concerning their well-being have forced them into the realm of political action, how they will solicit and demand political solidarity and support from the consumer club members who may or may not be aware of having any direct interest in the farmers' political issues is a challenge for the future. It is also a great challenge for adult educators and NGOs to foster learning opportunities in which these two groups can identify the link between environmental and health problems they each encounter and eventually to form a broad-based environmental coalition to take action for change in one way or another.

Farmers

Self-Interest and the Dishonesty of Some Farmers

It cannot be denied that most farmers and urban people were primarily motivated to participate in the project according to an ethic of self-interest. An increasing number of urban consumers were first motivated to look for alternative food sources as a result of the growing fear of diet-related disease rather than broad social or ecological concerns. Only later did they learn about the farmers' hardships with agri-business and their difficulty in switching to organic farming.

Similarly, farmers whose economy and health had deteriorated after having become involved in cash-crop production wanted to find a more sustainable way to earn income. When farmers began to experiment with alternative agriculture, their primary concern was with productivity and income. Some farmers were motivated by personal

health concerns since many had been made ill from pesticide use. Only later did they become aware of the social and environmental implications of alternative agriculture. This is comprehensible since the Thai farmers' tradition of simple living, self-reliance and mutual self-help is full of flaws and imperfections, especially in the present context whereby the market economic values influence their everyday lives.

At the time of my 1995 field research in Chiangmai province, two members of the organic farmers club had been expelled because they had violated the rules set by the farmers club. One of the ex-members had sold non-organic produce at the weekend organic farmers market and the other did not stop using chemical fertilizers on his farmland (PRO-CON Network, 1995b). This problem has plagued the club from the start. As mentioned earlier, on the first day the organic farmers market opened, a female farmer was caught selling non-organic produce at the market. By 1995, eight farmers were altogether expelled from the organic farmers club for similar violations.

Rujipas (C) observed that the high price of organic produce, when compared to non-organic, may have motivated farmers to be dishonest (Interview). Since standardized quality and the process of certification of organic produce was not yet fully developed in Thailand at the time of my first field study in 1995, accountability of organic produce could be ensured only through a direct relationship between farmers and urban consumers and the internal monitoring of each farmers group. In fact, the two farmers who were expelled were members of the same farmers group from the same village. I observed signs of internal conflict and problems in the group during my field research.¹⁷ Therefore it is likely that the internal monitoring of vegetable production would only work in groups which have good leadership and management.

¹⁷ In 1996, most members of this farmers group were no longer involved in organic farming practices and the group was classified by the project staff as a group which needs to be revived (PRO-CON Network, 1996).

Decha (C) thought that it was essential to work on quality control and make the distinction between those who are qualified and those who are not. Those who are credible and qualified will be supported by the consumers club. It is hoped that the rewards for honesty would motivate other farmers to follow. Decha (C) suggested that, besides establishing tight quality control in a group and certification of products, farmers' responsibilities towards consumers could be promoted by using the Buddhist basic precept as a guideline.

Another way to do it is to encourage moral behaviour by telling them that it is against the Buddhist precept to tell people a lie. What would happen if consumers who eat their produce die because of pesticides? I talked to many [Buddhist] monks and they said killing is a sin. Not to kill is a merit. Growing organic vegetables is like helping people not to be killed. It is like making merit. This way of interpreting Buddhist teachings has never been taught by Buddhist monks (Interview).

Organic Food Production Standard Is Too High

It appears that there has been a lot of expectations placed on farmers to be responsible and honest to urban consumers. However, Rujipas (C) questioned whether the standards of organic production that NGOs and farmers had set were practical or too high for farmers to comply with. While there are other models of sustainable farming practices promoted by the Thai government or business sector allowing for minimal use of chemical fertilizers and rigid control of herbicide/pesticide use during production, the organic farming methods NGOs and the farmers club adopted do not allow for the use of chemical fertilizers, nor herbicides/pesticides. There is no easy answer to the question raised by Rujipas since it is evident that some farmers groups with good leadership and management were able to successfully meet organic production standards. In fact, there are many other factors that need to be considered in the organic production process and these factors may or may not be favourable for organic

food production, for example, farm location and the availability of water, soil conditions, size of farm, ownership of the land, appropriate technical consultation given to farmers from NGO staff or experts, and finally, like Rawee (F) noted, farmers' commitment to organic farming principles. Therefore, it is a challenge for NGOs and all stakeholders to find ways to guarantee that all farmers follow the production standard as well as allow room for adjustment and modification when necessary.

NGOs

Women

As mentioned above, the majority of consumers who participated in the project, either as members of the consumers club or as customers who buy organic produce from the project's organic food outlets, are women. Farm women are also recognized as key to the success of organic farms. However, during my field research in 1995, women's and gender issues regards to both consumer and farmer work were not sufficiently highlighted. NGO staff members were aware of this issue, and in later years have made efforts to work on it. For instance, in 1997, the project organized workshops, training, and conferences on the topic of *Gender and Alternative Agriculture* to increase gender awareness among farmers and NGO staff. In addition, the project clearly stated that they would provide an opportunity for women to express their knowledge, needs and concerns and encourage them to take a leadership role at the group and community levels (PRO-CON Network, 1998). However, gender and women's issues were not emphasized in the consumers group, as it has been in the farmers and NGO groups. Suggestions for NGOs to work on women's and gender issues will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

Confusion With the Terms Used

The promotion of organic food production initiated by NGOs has been gladly received by the business sector. This would supposedly be a good news for urban consumers since they would have more organic food outlets and supply available in the market. However, the major problem is that once the business becomes involved, they will try to corner a significant share of the green market. While there is no central or government organization which can monitor organic food, consumers are confused with the various organic food labels now found in the market. Some people contacted the consumers club for label clarification. Rujipas (C) expressed his concern about this confusion.

People phoned us to find out what these food labels meant: non-toxic, toxic-free, or safe from toxins. They want to know whether these vegetables are toxic-free. I think these vegetables differ from each other because of the different methods they use in the production process. Some are organic and use only integrated farming methods without the use of chemicals. Some use chemicals, i.e. while seedling. Some consumers groups want the government to get involved with the certification or labelling process. People are tired of this ambiguous information (Interview).

The challenge of NGOs and the consumers club regarding green consumerism is to work collaboratively with government agencies to find ways to guarantee the quality of organic food and to help the public differentiate between the different kinds of labelling or product standards available in the market. The committee for standards in organic produce is a good example of strides made in this direction.

Making Profits vs Advocating for Social Justice

Since the NGOs' promotion of alternative agriculture is tied closely to green consumerism, which continues to operate as another aspect of the market economy, it is sometimes difficult for NGOs to find a balance between being *business like* and

advocating for social justice. With their good intentions and commitment to help farmers, NGOs seem to focus more on the benefits to farmers than on other aspects of business management. For instance, when the Imboon Cooperative Store buy organic produce from farmers, they buy produce at a guaranteed price that is determined by farmers as well as absorb most losses incurred as a result of short shelf life of vegetables and fruits. The result is that the store still cannot sustain itself independently as a business enterprise. Rujipas (C) who owns a direct-sales business of natural food and herbal products, commented that NGOs sometimes were too modest in doing business. He gave examples of the way NGOs decorated their green stores is too simple and not so attractive to customers. This is not to mention the NGOs' lack of business experience or training. The challenge is for NGOs to function as an ethical business agency while holding on to values to those values aimed at changing the existing economic and social systems. Working from within the system to create transformation is not an easy task to perform.

Educational Challenge

A challenge for NGOs and adult educators involved in promoting alternative agriculture is to organize environmental adult education for urban people in a way which goes beyond the mere promotion of consumer self-interest, that is, concerned merely with acquiring healthy, organic products. Learning opportunities should be provided for urban people in an effort to develop a transforming awareness of the various exploitative relations which materialize around and are sustained by the production of the commodities they buy and consume (Mies, 1991). As pointed out by Dilok (N), organic vegetables are only a means, not an end in themselves. The important task of education is to encourage urban people who participate in alternative agriculture projects to critically examine both

their own lifestyles and the broader social structures which encourage environmentally-destructive patterns of consumption and production. Environmental adult education should also encourage people to see the association between environmental and health problems because, as Shiva (1994, p.3) says, "there is a continuity between the earth body and the human body through the processes that maintain life". Otherwise, the promotion of organic food consumption among urban people will only reinforce a new environmental measure of privilege which continues to intensify the risk of those who are not likewise privileged: that is, the privilege of having uncontaminated, wholesome organic food.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that in the PRO-CON Network project, there has been a shift in the production of knowledge. Farmers are recognized as both knowers of organic farming and consumers. Learning occurred in the project both in formal groups as well as informal settings.

Urban consumers who participated in the project relearned the importance of food as a source of nutrition, the value of farmers in providing healthy, nutritious food, and the vital importance of alternative farming practices for the environment. They learned to overcome the social biases held against farmers who are seen as backward and uneducated. Farmers and urban consumers learned to care for each others' well-being, to feel responsible and obliged to each other in their mutual welfare (Bookchin, 1987). Both farmers and consumers, in fact, learned to develop new values and attitudes in consumption, production and lifestyle and take constructive actions in their everyday lives individually and collectively.

Farmers learned to change their agricultural practices and the values modern farming practices and the market economy had been imposed on them. They relearned the new, in fact old, meaning and values of agriculture as a way of life. They organized themselves as a group, and participated in training and study tours organized by NGOs to learn new skills about organic farming practices. They also taught themselves new skills through a process of experimental learning. They also learned from one another through farmer-to-farmer exchange programs and worked collectively in groups to produce and distribute organic farm produce to urban consumers. In all, alternative agriculture brought changes not only to the farm ecosystem but to their world view as well.

Chapter 7

Case Study II

Traditional Medicine for Self-Reliance (TMSR) Project

THE PRIMARY HEALTHCARE POLICY AND THE REVIVAL OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

In the late 1970s, the Thai government committed itself to primary healthcare (PHC), a policy which was popularized by the World Health Organization (WHO). With PHC an attempt was made to make healthcare accessible, acceptable and affordable. To achieve success, active participation by the community and the implementation of health education would be of primary importance. PHC is originally a reorientation of the healthcare system. It is a revolutionary shift from a clinical to a community approach, or even a political approach (Wolffers, 1990). The community members make a decision on their health needs, what kind of health services will adequately respond to their needs and the cost of these services. However, WHO, which is criticized as an instrument of market-oriented Western countries, instead, depoliticized the concept of popular participation, emphasizing technological interventions, increasing the number of modern health facilities in rural areas and ignoring health as a profoundly political issue (Cohen, 1989).

The Thai government implemented PHC in line with an interpretation of community participation, the core of PHC, whereby are to villagers cooperate with the government to implement health projects the government defines from above. Thai official discourse views community participation as community passivity; that is, the government would still have a significant role as benevolent paternalist. In this regards,

those aspects of community participation which would have control over the social, political, economic and environmental factors determining health were overlooked.

By the end of the 1970s, WHO had developed policies which aimed to promote and integrate traditional medicine into PHC. The policies suggested that traditional healers and medicine are local resources which could possibly be utilized and integrated into the PHC system. However, the policies were in conflict with the overall direction of the WHO which was grounded in a bias that assumed the superiority of Western, scientific medicine. The integration of traditional medicine into PHC, like the PHC program itself, varies from country to country. The Thai government, with its main concern over the growing dependence of the Thai population on imported drugs, hoped that the production of herbal drugs would reduce the import of modern drugs and thereby increase the country's self-reliance in drug provision. The government approach, thus, is producer-oriented in nature, and aimed at improving the availability and distribution of traditional drugs (Logrand, Streefland, & Sri-ngernyuang, 1990).

In the past few years, traditional medicine and its role in national healthcare provision has been restored after decades of being semi-repressed. The government now is extensively promoting the use of traditional medicine in rural community hospitals. Funds are allocated to rural hospitals to produce traditional medicine for hospital use. The Rural Health Division, which supervises all community hospitals, and the Office of Primary Healthcare are two major agencies in the Ministry of Public Health responsible for the promotion of traditional medicine. In 1993, another agency, the National Institute of Thai Traditional Medicine, was established in the Ministry of Public Health. The Medical Plant Information Centre at Mahidol University also plays an active role in traditional medicine knowledge collection and promotion (Verapong Kriengsinyos, personal communication, 19 May 1999).

THE NGOs' REVIVAL OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Besides the government's endeavors, the Thai NGOs also played a significant role in establishing PHC. The *Coordinating Committee for Primary Healthcare for Thai NGOs*, an umbrella organization of NGOs working on PHC, was set up in 1983. In 1984, there were 17 NGOs involved in PHC. The NGOs' understanding of PHC differs from the government's in many respects, especially in community participation. NGOs regarded people as active actors in the decision making process and in taking control of their health and other resources. They regarded PHC as a "structural democratic process that will enable people to liberate themselves from tightly oppressive social structures" (Cohen, 1990, p. 168).

The NGOs' PHC movement became active in the promotion of traditional medicine in 1983 with concerns over the declining practice and status of traditional medicine. The movement's major goal was to restore people's confidence and pride in local wisdom by reviving knowledge about traditional medicine and healing system (Tantipidok, 1990). Their projects also often originated from the recognition of the need for safer, cheaper alternative healthcare services, based on self-reliance and indigenous culture.¹ Villagers were made aware of possible adverse effects caused by the use of potentially harmful modern drugs or misuse of drugs through local publications and training. Herbal drugs were also promoted by the NGOs as a cheaper and safer alternative.

¹ The NGOs' revival of traditional knowledge or Local Wisdom was influenced by the *Communal Cultural Discourse* developed from NGOs' field experiences and dialogues with intellectuals. The Communal Cultural Discourse aims to bring back to the communities the inner core of Thai beliefs and to organize villagers and communities to resist the state's power and to establish bargaining power within the market economy. The Communal Cultural Discourse suggests at least two levels of development: the level of political and economic development for self-reliance and genuine progress in achieving equality and democracy; the level of social and cultural discourse that emphasizes spiritual values and people's feelings. See Nartsupha (1991) for further details.

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE FOR SELF-RELIANCE (TMSR) PROJECT

Project Description

The Traditional Medicine for Self-Reliance (TMSR) Project was established in 1980 by a group of ex-student activists and volunteers who believed that herbal medicine could be used as an alternative to modern medicine in Thailand's existing healthcare system. TMSR plays a significant role in promoting PHC by emphasizing people's direct participation and self-reliance regarding their own health. At the beginning, the project operated under the Komol Keemthong Foundation in Bangkok. In 1996, with the expansion of its mandate, TMSR registered as an independent organization called the *Thai Holistic Health Foundation* which operated separately from the Komol Keemthong Foundation. The organization's general mandate can be summarized as follows:

1. to develop knowledge, services, and education on holistic healthcare
2. to support research on herbs for general healthcare and the prevention of AIDS²
3. to promote the herbal medicine industry and the production of organic food (Korkeatkachorn & Kiatiprajak, 1997, p.101).

TMSR promotes the use of herbal medicine and other traditional self-care practices as economically viable and safer alternatives to modern drugs, thereby minimizing dependency on the existing modern healthcare system. In the very first years of TMSR's operations, it collected information on herbal medicine from traditional healers and Thai traditional medicine texts. It helped to promote the

² Research on traditional medicine and AIDS is a response to the AIDS epidemic in Thailand in the late 80s and early 90s.

knowledge and the use of these herb-based traditional medicines to the public and to medical personnel in particular. The five practical criteria used to select herbal medicine for promotion are as follows:

1. It is a medicine that can relieve common illnesses found in many people.
2. It is toxic-free and can be used as a herb or food.
3. It can be used as a single medicine without combining it with other ingredients.
4. Its supply is abundant and available.
5. It has been scientifically studied in a laboratory and clinically proven to be effective in curing the illness in at least five persons (Chutima, 1995, p.8).

TMSR disseminated information on, and thereby popularized, traditional medicine through various media formats such as the publishing of traditional medicine magazines, books, newspaper articles, and the production of radio and television programmes on herbal medicine for self-care. TMSR also arranged seminars so that traditional medicine practitioners could come together and exchange their knowledge and to create or extend networks of local specialists in traditional medicine (Cohen & Purcal, 1989). Workshops, training, and seminars were organized for the general public and government healthcare staff to learn more about herbal medicine and its use.

In 1984, TMSR worked closely with an active, grass-roots group called the *Folk and Herbal Medicine Club of Kudchum* in Yasotorn province of the Northeastern region. The club was organized by villagers, Buddhist monks, teachers and healthcare professionals from Kudchum hospital with the strong leadership of the Buddhist abbot. The community, which remains close-knit, still uses herbal medicine extensively. The club and TMSR organized meetings for members for the purpose of providing an opportunity to exchange knowledge on traditional medicine. Three or four times a year

they would distribute pamphlets with information on folk and herbal medicine. A *Folk Treatment Centre*, with herbal sauna and traditional Thai massage services, was established at the village temple (See Figure 25). Intensive introductory training on traditional medicine was organized for both elementary school students³ and Buddhist monks. TMSR also established herbal gardens and production units for developing herbal medicine preparations initially for use in Kudchum hospital and households (See Figure 26).

From Traditional Medicine to Alternative Farming Promotion

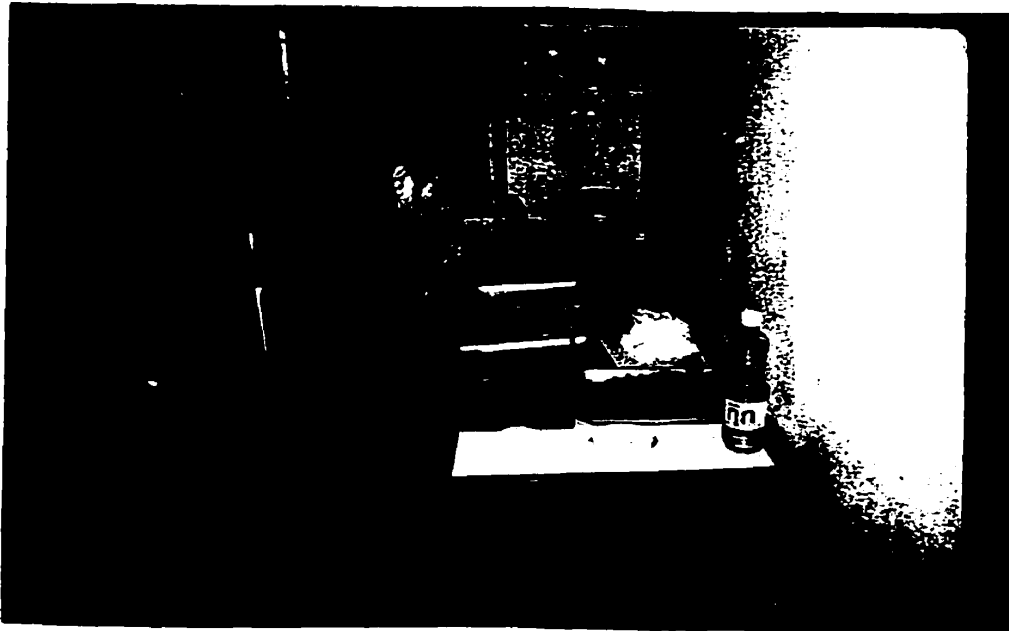
During the past few years, TMSR's active promotion of traditional medicine in healthcare, the latter being closely related to other life-enhancing activities, opened opportunities to develop a wider range of projects. For instance, there was a growing interest in self-reliance from a wider perspective other than exclusively from a healthcare approach among the villagers in the Kudchum area. This is because, after a few years experience, the members of both Folk and Herbal Medicine Club and TMSR realized that although they could solve the problem of the high cost of medical care and the wide-spread abuse of modern pharmaceuticals, they still faced many compelling economic problems. In this regard, they hoped to find ways to combat the deteriorating living conditions and increasing debts of a growing number of farmers.

³ Elementary schools are the most common state-run educational institution in the rural areas. Since compulsory education in Thailand is grade 6, and in some areas to grade 9, most children from farming communities will only have the opportunity to finish an elementary education.

Figure. 25 Thai traditional massage clinic, Kudchum, Yasotorn



Figure. 26 The production of Thai traditional medicine in the Kudchum area



In 1984, integrated farming, a mixed farming approach grounded in the development of symbiotic relations between crops and animals, was promoted among the Kudchum group by TMSR. Integrated farming was seen as a sustainable farming method which could provide sufficient income, healthy living conditions for farmers and a more balanced relation with the natural environment. Thus, TMSR and the Folk and Herbal Medicine Club activities have increasingly incorporating appropriate farming methods, which struck at the very basis of village life. The promotion of integrated farming was not well received by villagers in the Kudchum area who traditionally grow rice as their major crop. Although there were a number of farmers who agreed to experiment with integrated farming techniques on their farms, they have yet to be fully adopted by Kudchum farmers. TMSR also attempted to promote *natural farming*⁴ among farmers in Kudchum. The idea of natural farming originated with Masanobu Fukuoka (1978), a well-renowned Japanese scientist and farmer in his book *One Straw Revolution*. The book was translated into Thai by Rosana Tositrakul, TMSR senior staff, and was well received by the public. Since 1991, following a visit by Fukuoka to Thailand which inspired nation-wide interest in natural farming, natural farming techniques have been extensively promoted in the Kudchum area. At the beginning, natural farming in its pure form was tried by 52 farmers in 12 villages in the Kudchum area. The number of farmers involved in natural farming decreased to five families in the following year partially because it was difficult to strictly follow the rules of natural farming (TMSR, 1992). The initiation, however, was not in vain because farmers started experimenting with other related farming techniques such as organic farming. They also altered some natural farming techniques originating in Japan, which are in some ways unsuitable for farms in tropical climates like Thailand, to suit local conditions. As a result,

⁴ See Appendix C for a definition of natural farming and Fukuoka's book *One Straw Revolution* (1978).

farmers created their own technological innovations. The development and promotion of natural farming still continues in the Kudchum area. The number of farmer households participating in natural farming increased from six in 1992 to 302 in 1993, and 731 in 1994 (Chutima, 1995).

Organic Rice Production

Though the promotion of natural farming, like the promotion of integrated farming, has never been fully adopted, the consequence was that it opened up learning opportunities for farmers to experiment with other alternative farming techniques and methods and allowed them to discover those variations more suitable to their particular situation. The project activities therefore unfolded through a learning process and dialogue among and between farmers and TMSR staff. The project soon turned toward a new direction to include toxic-free rice production and consumption. The idea of organic rice production was well received because it was more in tune with the traditional farmers' way of life in the Kudchum area, who are primarily rice farmers, and did not require a drastic change in their pattern of land use (See Figure 27).

Later, members of both TMSR and the Folk and Herbal Medicine Club set up a rice mill cooperative in Kudchum called the *Natural Fields Company* to produce organic rice free of chemical pesticides for sale to a larger market in the urban areas. TMSR's connection with the co-operative includes a 20 per cent share in the co-operative and an ex-senior staff of TMSR as head of the co-operative's management. TMSR helps the co-operative promote and market their organic rice in urban Bangkok. The underlying assumption of TMSR is the belief that demand from informed urban consumers will ensure that the food production process and the market become environmentally and socially friendly.

Figure. 27 An organic farmer in Kudchum applying chicken manure to his rice field



In addition, farmers will gain fair economic return and consumers will have a supply of safe and healthy food (TMSR, 1992). TMSR's efforts were well received which encouraged many other farmers to join the organic rice production program. The total yield of organic rice from the Kudchum area for the year 1994-1995 was 600 tons (TMSR, 1994)

Expanding Work and Developing New Directions

Throughout this time, TMSR continued to promote herbal medicine and natural food through a variety of medium, emphasizing social and environmental perspectives and viewing food industrialization as the root of many health problems. Training activities for farmers, government healthcare staff, and the public on herbal medicine and holistic healthcare also continued (See Figure 28 and 29). In 1991, TMSR stopped printing its well-known traditional medicine magazine which was TMSR's principal medium for disseminating and exchanging information on traditional medicine to the public. The major internal factor for cancelling the magazine was that TMSR staff felt that they had collected a sufficient database and they were ready to develop their work further. As a result, TMSR extended their work from herb-based remedies to include a broader holistic healthcare approach which incorporated the physical, mental, social and environmental dimensions (TMSR, 1992). The emergence of holistic healthcare in TMSR's work was partly from their awareness of the limitations of the Western medical model which "became more and more entrenched into drug-oriented and invasive treatments, supported by research but with little attention paid to the long-term side effects" (Burton Goldberg Group, 1999). In holistic healthcare, health is approached

Figure. 28 Thai traditional medicine training for farmers in Kudchum



Figure. 29 Practicing making Thai traditional medicine, Thai traditional medicine training for farmers in Kudchum



Note. From TMSR's picture archive

from a comprehensive perspective, focusing on the patient as a whole and on preventing disease and restoring health. Holistic healthcare uses many of alternative medicine's approaches and complementary therapies which combine body and mind, science and experience, and traditional and cross-cultural avenues of diagnosis and treatment.

The information collected by TMSR was then extended to more diversified areas to include environmental impacts to human health, and later alternative medicines and remedies currently used by many Thais such as traditional Chinese medicine and macrobiotics. Seminars and academic discussion groups on holistic healthcare were organized as part of information collection and promotion.

Throughout this same period, the project mission slowly shifted from knowledge production & dissemination and rural development work to the production of medicine aimed at improving the availability and distribution of certain kinds of traditional medicines. In this regard, TMSR established a small factory in Chacherngsao province to produce herbal medicine for a wider market. In addition, through NGO networks, TMSR encouraged farmers in some provinces to grow herbal medicine plants and to act as a supplier for the traditional medicines TMSR produced.

TMSR is considered to be one of the first NGOs to take concrete action in promoting alternative marketing or green consumerism to sell herbal medicines, organic rice and health foods. The idea behind alternative marketing was in part to help farmers market their produce, such as organic foods and herbal medicines, and to give a fair economic return to farmers. It is hoped that this financial benefit will indirectly result in motivating farmers to switch to sustainable farming practices. Alternative marketing functions as a quality control mechanism to ensure that the quality of

alternative health products are up to the standards promoted by TMSR which in the long run will create credibility and accountability among conscientious consumers.⁵

Working with Urban Consumers

Presently, TMSR's project mission includes acting as a mediator between urban consumers and farmers as a means to promote a holistic healthcare system. In December 1991, TMSR began work to promote its activities among urbanities by setting up the *Friends of Nature Club* which became a gathering place for health-conscious urban consumers in Bangkok (Chutima, 1995). TMSR promoted holistic healthcare by emphasizing the connections between food, health and environment. Natural and healthy diets, and the use of herbs and other alternative remedies are the basis of preventative holistic healthcare. Educating consumers and farmers on holistic healthcare and environmental issues is considered essential in helping TMSR reach its goal. Friends of Nature Club plays a crucial role in the education process since it establishes a learning network between consumers and farmers with the hope that the network will collectively encourage consumption and production patterns which are safe and healthy for farmers, consumers, and the environment (Interview with Rosana (N)).

In practice, the activities of the Friends of Nature Club include the production of a quarterly newsletter aimed at linking and bringing together health-conscious consumers. In 1992, the club organized two study tours involving 112 urban consumers to observe a number of demonstration farms in Supanburi province.⁶ The primary

⁵ Like many NGOs, the major factor which drove TMSR into these new directions was the recent decline in foreign funding which TMSR had been extensively dependent upon. Other factors are TMSR's realization of farmers' economic needs and the favourable social conditions for promoting health and environmental awareness among urban consumers.

⁶ These study tours were organized together with the *Technology for Rural and Ecological Enrichment Foundation*, an NGO promoting alternative farming methods to small-scale farmers in Supanburi province of central Thailand.

purpose of the study tour was to give urban consumers and farmers an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas regarding sustainable farming practices and food production and to create a network of mutual support between these two groups. Another tour was organized involving 42 urban consumers to visit a farm belonging to Vibul Kemchalerm, the village headman of Huai Hin in Chacherngsao province. He is well-known nationally for *agro-forestry*,⁷ sustainable farming practices based on the principle of coexistence between humans and the ecosystem (TMSR, 1992). A year later, TMSR organized another study tour for urban consumers to visit farmers in the Kudchum area. However, the study tour activities were discontinued in later years due to the high cost of organizing study tours and the increasing availability of study tours provided by other NGOs.

In 1994, the club started a green store called the *Friends of Nature*, located in TMSR's main office in Bangkok, to sell green products such as organic rice, herbal medicines and drinks, natural foods, handicrafts made by rural villagers, and publications on health and the environment (See Figures 30 and 31). In April of the same year, the club launched a *holistic health clinic* to service people seeking alternative health advice. Six volunteers consisting of pharmacists and food scientists took turns consulting clients at the clinic every Saturday and by phone or by mail on other days.

⁷ See Appendix C for details of agro-forestry.

Figure. 30 Store front of the *Friends of Nature Store*, Bangkok



Figure. 31 Urban consumers buying green products at the *Friends of Nature Store*, Bangkok



Note. From TMSR's picture archive

Research Findings

Green Consumerism

According to Rosana Tositrakul, one of TMSR's founders and current secretary general of the Thai Holistic Health Foundation, green consumerism became of interest to TMSR more than a decade ago. The idea was derived from NGO seminars and her overseas trips. As Rosana points out, "At the beginning, nobody was interested in green business. Later on NGOs started to think of new innovations and activities, develop new products, and act as suppliers" (Interview).

Influenced by the holistic approach in healthcare, TMSR sees that the issue of health cannot be divorced from environmental, community, and economic issues. Traditional medicine, as mentioned earlier, can be linked to food, agriculture, forest, and farmers' well-being. Promoting green consumption in fact accommodates and enhances TMSR's work in holistic healthcare promotion.

As mentioned earlier, the need to assist farmers to gain more control over their economic situation and TMSR to find new funding sources to sustain their work converged with green consumerism. Since farmers in the area where TMSR operates grow rice, the project worked with farmers groups to produce organic rice for the urban market. Other future plans include opening a traditional massage parlour, a health centre, and a health food restaurant specializing in foods appropriate for those who suffer from diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure (Interview with Opas (N)).

The supply side of green consumerism from farmers seemed to fit well with the demand side from consumers. Sunee (N) said, "It seems to me that the general public accepts green consumerism more than before. Consumers in general are concerned about their health. There are more people interested in green products" (Interview).

Verapong (N) confirmed this observation with a similar remark: “There are a small group of people who are waiting for this kind of thing [green products]. They are concerned about their health and care for the environment” (Interview).

TMSR’s green consumerism, however, is not to exclusively respond to consumer demand. Rosana (N) sees that NGOs can also help stimulate consumers to care for the environment and the people behind the food production process. As she says, “I believe that consumption patterns can be altered by creating new attitudes and values to care for people and the environment”. In addition, Rosana thinks that green consumerism can help create a sense of community and mutual assistance between groups from different sectors of society.

When asked about what TMSR staff wish to see in their future work promoting green consumerism, Verapong (N) responded that he wished to see a greater range of green products available for consumers. This view was also supported by Opas (N) who felt that having more green products in the market will benefit consumers as they will have more options even if products which claimed to be green in the present market are rarely purely green. Verapong adds that he wished to see a formation of groups which regularly patronize green products. Finally, he hopes that urban consumers will not only change their product choices but also consume less or as necessary.

In general, the green consumerism promoted by TMSR, which is similar to that of the PRO-CON Network project, can be summarized as follows:

1. There is the assumption that consumer demand can change the production process because producers, in responding to consumers’ demand, produce what will sell well.

2. The marketing of traditional medicine and organic produce is for the benefit and improvement of consumers' and farmers' health. It is also to generate income for farmers and TMSR.

3. Direct farmers-consumers links are used as an alternative trading scheme to start off the marketing of organic produce as well as to raise consumers' awareness on health, agriculture, and environmental issues.

4. Farmers' well-being has been added as another dimension of consumption. Consumers have responsibilities to help farmers and the environment by encouraging sustainable farming practices via their purchasing power.

5. TMSR works to promote an alternative kind of production, that is, a small-scale business unlike the mass productions characteristic of plantations. It also works to promote fair trade.

6. The promotion of organic food consumption and the use of traditional medicine is only a means, not an end in itself. Products TMSR produces and markets are used to connect with consumers and to raise their awareness on health and environmentally-related issues resulting from the dominance of Western science and modern development.

7. Product certification is also part of green consumerism. TMSR launched its own labels and product standards. The project believes there can be more than one product standard in the market but consumers should be made aware of these other standards. In addition, TMSR has been working cooperatively with the National Network of Alternative Agriculture to set up a national standard for organic food production and to establish an independent monitoring organization to issue certificates to organic farmers who meet the requirements set by the national standard (Verapong Kriengsinyos, personal communication, 19 May 1999).

Who are the Consumers?

Prior to 1992, TMSR's contact with urban consumers was primarily through the dissemination of traditional medicine and alternative healthcare information provided in different media forms such as magazines, books, pamphlets, and television and radio programmes. Training and workshops were also organized for urban consumers from time to time. In 1992, TMSR started working intensively with urban consumers through their connection with the Friends of Nature Club. Many subscribers of the TMSR traditional medicine magazine continued their relationship with TMSR by joining the Friends of Nature Club.

It should be noted that Friends of Nature Club is a loosely organized learning network of like-minded consumers interested in alternative healthcare. The club did not operate in the manner of the PRO-CON Network's consumers club whose club committee is composed of volunteers. Most routine work carried out by the Friends of Nature Club, for example, the production and distribution of the club's newsletter, is performed by salaried TMSR staff. However, some club members do volunteer their time and expertise to the weekend alternative healthcare clinic.

In 1994, there were 900 Friends of Nature newsletter subscribers. In 1995 and 1996, there were 650 and 770 subscribers, respectively. The number of urban consumers who the TMSR project services include those who bought green products and/or seek health advice at the Friends of Nature Store and Clinic. The store and the clinic are also open to the general public. Table 8 shows the number of clients who receive health consultation from the Friends of Nature Clinic each year. These clients are mostly women.

Table 8

Number of Urban Consumers Who Used Services at the Friends of Nature Clinic

Year	1994	1995	1996
Female	74	92	N/A
Male	46	48	N/A
Total	120	140	160

From: TMSR Annual Progress Reports (1994, 1995, 1996), by TMSR, Bangkok: Author.

Hanwonpibul and Nimitdee (1996), student pharmacists from Mahidol University in Bangkok, highlighted some of the general characteristics of urban consumers, who bought green products from the Friends of Nature Store, from data in a survey research study they did of 100 consumers (See Table 9). Of these, there were 50 men and 50 women. The majority of the consumers group (39 people) were between 36 and 45 years of age. Fifty four of them had a bachelor's degree. Twenty six earned an income lower than Baht 10,000 and nineteen of them earned more than Baht 40,000.⁸ From my observations, the demographics of TMSR's consumers group appeared to be similar to those of the PRO-CON Network project (See Tables 6 and 7). The majority of consumers can be roughly classified as middle class according to their education and profession.

⁸ In 1996, the exchange rate was approximately Cdn. \$1 = Baht 18.5.

Table 9

General Information About Consumers Who Bought Products at the Friends of Nature Store

Characteristics of consumers	N
<i>Sex</i>	
Male	50
Female	50
<i>Age(years)</i>	
Younger than 25	10
26-35	29
36-45	39
46-55	10
Over 55	12
<i>Education</i>	
Junior high school or lower	5
Senior high school or equivalent	15
Certificate/ diploma or equivalent	12
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	54
Higher than Bachelor's degree	14
<i>Income per month</i>	
Lower than 10,000 Baht	26
10,000 - 20,000 Baht	25
20,001 - 30,000 Baht	19
30,001 - 40,000 Baht	11
More than 40,000 Baht	19

Note. From Factors Related to the Consumption of Thai Herbal or Health Food Products, a Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Bachelor's Degree of Science, Faculty of Pharmacy by W. Hanwonpibul and S. Nimitdee (1996), Bangkok: Mahidol University.

Environmental Adult Education

The Production and Transmission of Knowledge

Who Produces Knowledge and How ?

The knowledge of folk medicine, peasant technology or means of survival are all examples of useful knowledge, the validity of which has been suppressed by Western science and Western technology (Gaventa, 1991, p. 127).

Traditional medicine as a knowledge system has consistently been devalued and suppressed by the dominance of Western science. TMSR's efforts include reversing this trend by valuing traditional knowledge as legitimate knowledge. Although Western medicine has its strength in the management of medical emergencies, complex surgical techniques, trauma care and certain bacterial infections, it has failed in the areas of disease prevention and the management of the many new and chronic illnesses. Its roots are embedded in the germ theory of disease which supersedes the individual's role in her own health. In its attempt to treat the body according to its separate parts, it has lost sight of the whole person (Burton Goldberg Group, 1999). Western science is therefore regarded as only one type of knowledge among other systems of knowledge and is not inherently superior to others (Gaventa, 1991).

As an alternative to Western medicine, Thai traditional medicine understands health from a holistic and comprehensive perspective. Like many other alternative medicines, its efforts are aimed at repairing the imbalances which allow the illnesses to occur in the first place.

The underlying concepts of alternative medicine are not new. They represent a return to the principles that have been part of human understanding of health and disease for thousands of years. Over the centuries, medical wisdom evolved within a framework which linked health to a state of harmony or balance, and disease to a state of disharmony or imbalance, and took into account the factors that contributed to both (Burton Goldberg Group, 1999, no page).

According to Rosana (N) (cited in Supanich, 1997), the knowledge base of Thai traditional medicine is located in people's everyday life experiences, for example, herbs and medicinal plants have been used for centuries as ingredients and spices in Thai cooking. It emphasizes preventative and curative functions of healthcare. As Rosana points out, "Our forefathers had modern ideas about preventive and curative medicine. That is why we have so many herbs and spices with medicinal values used in everyday Thai food" (no page). In acknowledging the preventative and curative elements of Thai traditional medicine and other alternative healthcare approaches which have both preventative and curative elements, TMSR understands the importance of building people's knowledge base on self-care and food as part of maintaining good health.

In regards to the TMSR project, knowledge on traditional medicine has been primarily produced and/or provided by traditional healers and farmers. TMSR plays a significant role in recovering and conserving this traditional knowledge from different sources and to provide significant knowledge power to resist Western industrialization of food and health. TMSR also effectively disseminates and popularizes knowledge on traditional medicine to the general public by making traditional medicine products readily available and affordable for consumers.

Although the production of scientific knowledge by scientists is considered to be just another system of knowledge production, in practice, TMSR works cooperatively with pharmacists and hospital staff to perform research and clinical tests on herbal medicines that TMSR plans to promote. TMSR utilizes these scientific research reports as a means to legalize and register traditional medicine as intermediate medicines to be approved by the Food And Drug Administration (FDA). In addition, there is a knowledge exchange between TMSR and researchers on medicine and health. TMSR's

publications have often been cited and given credibility by academics and researchers in the health field (Chutima, 1995).

In 1994, TMSR established a *Natural Farming Centre* to collect knowledge on and experiences of natural farming. The centre works closely with farmers and agriculturists doing field experiments to help them develop appropriate natural farming techniques. With the commitment and collaboration of farmers, two farmlots in the Northeast of Thailand, one in rice farming and the other in mixed orchard, were turned into on-site experimental and demonstration farms for other farmers and NGOs to study (Chutima, 1995). The centre is a good example of NGOs' efforts at strengthening linkages and collaboration between farmers and scientists, in defining priorities and technology development, and to integrate traditional farming knowledge with research and technology .

An Organic Intellectual.

When I did my training with TMSR in the summer of 1993, I had an opportunity to meet Mr. Thonglor Kwanthong, a middle-aged farmer in the Kudchum area who continues to work closely with TMSR in experiments with natural farming. This meeting was instrumental in helping me understand more clearly the meaning of Gramsci's term *organic intellectual*: "One whose philosophy emerges from an understanding of the common sense world and the historical and economic forces which have shaped it" (Weiler, 1988, p.15). Thonglor's real-life experiences reflected the current social reality and, through different phases, he developed his own critical analysis and gained insights from his daily-life practices. Thonglor told me that he learned that the more he involved himself in the mono-cash crop production of the market economy, the more he and nature were being exploited. He witnessed soil degradation over the past decades, and

a decrease in food production on his own farm. He also experienced the erosion of his own community when many young people migrated to the urban areas to work in the factories leaving behind mostly old people and children. When integrated, natural and organic farming approaches were introduced to farmers in the Kudchum area, most farmers did not want to change their current farming practices. The main reason was they did not believe that these sustainable farming methods would produce as much in terms of yield as modern farming methods. Those who wished to try new things were often strong-willed and determined in having taken such an economic risk. Thonglor was the very first farmer in the Kudchum's Folk and Herbal Medicine Club to try natural farming techniques aimed at working cooperatively and humbly with nature. He admitted that his first motivation to try natural farming, however, was not out of ecological concern. At first, he thought that natural farming⁹ techniques could replace the current labour intensive, conventional farming techniques he had been using. After practicing natural farming for a while, he realized that natural farming is not about farming per se. Instead it involves a significant degree of the spiritual and the deep insights and appreciation of nature's work. These insights, I believe, were developed from his understanding of both natural farming principles and Buddhist philosophy which see the interconnection of all things in nature. I was impressed with his simplicity, sincerity, openness and ability for self-criticism when he told me about his life. In addition, he acknowledged that his family, his wife and father-in-law, were very supportive of his attempts at natural farming.

⁹ Natural farming is also called *Do-Nothing Farming*, a name which mistakenly assumes that no labour is required. See Fukuoka (1987) for details.

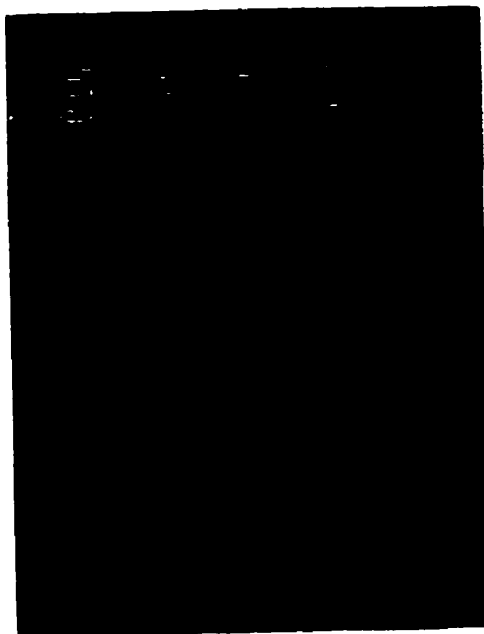
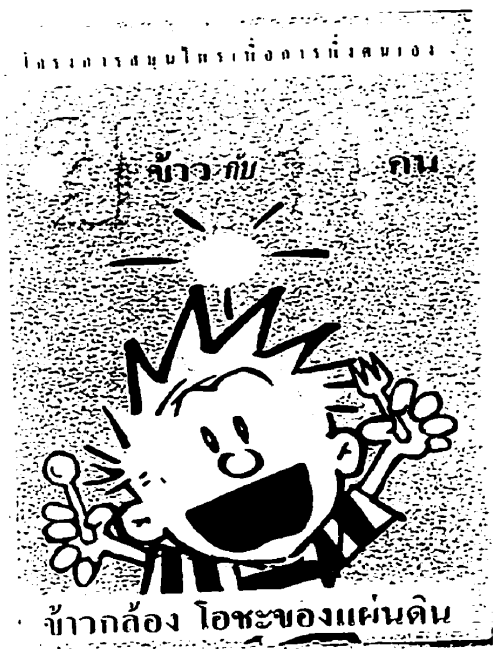
How Knowledge is Exchanged and Disseminated.

At the beginning of the project, TMSR compiled traditional medicine knowledge obtained from both traditional healers in the project target area and old texts on traditional medicine. TMSR disseminated the information they had compiled through different print media such as books, newsletters, and pamphlets (See Figure 32). They also wrote newspaper articles and gave interviews on various television and radio programs. In this regard, TMSR is keen on providing to the public credible information on herbal medicine in plain, easy to understand language with practical examples on how to use it (Chutima, 1995). Because the materials TMSR publishes are comprehensible and not heavily loaded with scientific jargon, they are readily accessible to the general public. In addition, since mid 1996, TMSR has regularly contributed information to the Ministry of Public Health's Website which is a public service that provides on-line health information (TMSR, 1996).

For more than a decade, a traditional medicine magazine has been used by TMSR as the principal medium to disseminate knowledge on traditional medicine to the general public on a regular basis. The magazine also serves to receive information from subscribers. According to Opas (N),

[t]he magazine worked in two ways. It disseminated as well as received information and knowledge from subscribers. There were about 90 people who regularly corresponded with the editorial team and gave us feedback and information [on traditional medicine] even though we never met them face-to-face. The strength of our organization is that knowledge has been accumulated and collected from people's experiences. Nobody has ever done this kind of work before (Interview).

Figure. 32 Samples of TMSR publications



TMSR has also adopted the use of a horizontal network for the purposes of knowledge and information exchange. Seminars, workshops, and training were organized for farmers, school children and teachers, Buddhist monks, traditional healers, healthcare officers, and urban consumers for the purposes of exchanging ideas and information.

It is noteworthy to say that TMSR is very cautious about working with foreign researchers, scientists, or organizations, especially those from industrialized countries (Chutima, 1995). Since power is justified by who has control over the use of knowledge, knowledge exchange needs to be done on an equal basis. There has been an imbalance of power in knowledge exchange between countries in the South with rich biological resources but lacking in advanced technology to develop these resources and those industrialized countries in the North with advanced technology and capital to make use of these resources on an industrial scale but poor in biological resources. Recently, Thailand lost the rights to one local biological resource when a Japanese pharmaceutical company decided to patent *Ploy Noy*, a local plant used for treating ulcers. *Kwaao Khrueta* (*pueraria mirifica*), another Thai herb, is reportedly being eyed by another foreign company which plans to run a permanent plant breeding and manufacturing project in Thailand. It is likely that *Kwaao Khrueta* will be exported as raw material, where its effective ingredients will be extracted and patented by the company, and returned to Thailand to sell at a higher price (Assavanonda, 1998). TMSR has been working at the policy level with other organizations to prevent the growing piracy of local biological resources and traditional knowledge. This will be further discussed in the *Impacts: Policy* section.

Educational Practices

Green Consumerism Campaign.

In 1992, TMSR started a nationwide campaign to promote the consumption of organic food and those traditional medicines which help to detoxify toxic residues in people's bodies. In this regard, TMSR's educational activities have incorporated the promotion of green consumption and production. As mentioned above, the project disseminated information through magazines, newspaper articles, books, interviews with the media and giving talks at public events. The project also provided information to television and radio programs, and newspapers for their own use. Presently, TMSR is working on the following:

- issuing a quarterly Friends of Nature newsletter
- publishing two books a year on holistic healthcare, organic food, and alternative agriculture
- writing articles in national newspapers once a week
- giving interviews to and providing information for magazines, newspapers, and television and radio programs
- being guest speakers at conferences and meetings
- organizing seminars, workshops, conferences and training for different target groups on specific topics (See Appendix F) (See Figure 33 and 34).

According to Rosana (N), the green consumer campaign is not an advertising campaign. As she points out, "When we work with consumers, we campaign on specific issues. It is not solely about advertisements or product promotion" (Interview). The green consumerism campaign is geared towards promoting a particular attitude or behavior. It also works to assist in screening those consumers interested in working with TMSR.

Figure. 33 Panel discussion on herbal medicine and natural food organized for urban consumers, Bangkok, 1993



Figure. 34 Herbal shampoo making demonstration for urban consumers, Bangkok



Note. From TMSR's picture archive

Campaigning on a wider scale helps to draw people's attention towards a particular issue. Then we work further in depth with those who are seriously interested in what we campaign. It is like a screening process. We are thinking of organizing them into groups of about 10 people according to their interests or problems, i.e. those with diabetes or who are overweight. They will have a chance to exchange ideas and knowledge with each other and to help stimulate new behaviours (Interview with Rosana (N)).

From the perspective of the NGO staff, the general public has little or no access to information on agricultural chemical residues and their effects on the environment. As Amporn (N) notes, "Consumers lack information on toxic-free food and health. To give information to them will help them realize [the problems] and change their attitude". The staff see TMSR's role as providing alternative knowledge to consumers and the general public. Information on alternative knowledge includes toxic residues in food and related dangers, such as how toxic-free food is produced and who produces this food. Since the consumer movement in Thailand is still fairly new and the gap between law enforcement and consumers' rights, such as the right to have accurate information, is wide, providing alternative knowledge is practical and useful for consumers and the general public.

Knowledge Application.

All TMSR staff agreed that giving information or campaigning on certain issues to consumers is insufficient by itself to change people's behaviours or stimulate them to take action. According to Opas (N),

An important factor that is necessary before people willingly change their behaviours is to have options for them. . . . There should be some concrete things that they can work on. It should sustain what consumers learn which is difficult to do when they have only abstract ideas or concepts in their mind (Interview).

The TMSR staff argues that it is necessary to suggest and introduce practical ways to consumers so that they can apply what they learn in their everyday life.

It is important to provide consumers with knowledge about traditional medicine but we have to make sure that we find a way for them to use that knowledge. So we demonstrate how to use this knowledge and to make it available for people in the form of a product. People will not waste their time learning something which they are not given the opportunity to put into practice (Interview with Amporn (N)).

The Friends of Nature Store is an example highlighting TMSR's educational concept of putting knowledge into practice. As Rosana observed, "We educate people about new ways of consumption. Let's say, when people know more than before [about healthy eating etc.], they still cannot take any action if they have no option". The Friends of Nature Store serves as something consumers can participate in. It is a place where learning takes place in an informal way: that is, when store staff give advice to consumers about green products, or when customers exchange ideas with or give advice to each other. The store's uniqueness is, as Vipha (N), the store manager, points out, "the store encourages customers to call TMSR to discuss results after having used a product" (Interview). Vipha made every effort to learn more about the current health issues so that she would have updated information which she could share with the customers. She also tried most green products in the store herself and gave advice to customers from her direct experience in using them.

Farms as Sites of Learning.

As mentioned earlier, TMSR was the very first NGO to organize study tours for urban consumers to visit alternative farms in rural areas and to dialogue with farmers directly. Although there were only three study tours between 1993-94, they turned out to be successful and created a wide impact. Other NGOs, such as Green Net, started to use study tours as a major learning activity for urban consumers in their promotion of green consumerism (See Figures 35 and 36).

Figure. 35 TMSR's study tour organized for urban consumers to visit natural farming demonstration farms in Kudchum, Yasotorn



Note. From TMSR's picture archive

Figure. 36 Green Net's study tour to Supanburi province , 1997



According to Sunee (N), in 1994, one study tour to Khudchum consisted of 20 urban consumers. The study tour provided an opportunity for consumers both to see actual farming practices in a natural setting and to converse with farmers directly. TMSR hoped to create understanding among consumers regarding the farmers' situation through these study tours. When asked about the impact of the study tours on farmers, Sunee replied that,

The impact was such that farmers gained moral support from urban consumers. They felt that these were people who were seriously interested in organic rice. Farmers felt good and they discussed farming with consumers and asked about each other's well-being. . . . Money was donated by the consumers to the farmers' mutual fund to purchase chicken manure. At the beginning, farmers felt that growing organic rice was only to help reduce the farm investment cost. When they met consumers from the city, they realized there were people who wanted to eat good food to reduce health risks. Through such contacts the farmers were able to incorporate the consumer dimension into the farmers' production process (Interview).

Start from Personal Interest.

To ask the biggest questions, we can start with the most personal - what do we eat? (Lappe, 1982, p.8)

Rosana (N) told me that when TMSR began their work with consumers, their entry point was in emphasizing the personal interests of consumers, i.e. good health. In this respect, TMSR's educational effort was primarily to convey a message to consumers regarding what kind of health benefits they would gain. The main message given to consumers was

modifying your eating patterns will benefit your health in the long run. If you choose to eat only, let's say, vegetables or fruits with a nice appearance or that are out of season, and therefore normally require heavy chemicals to produce them, you will do harm to your health. Good food may cost more but it is worth it" (Interview with Opas (N)).

Personal interests also include benefits that family members would gain. Rosana (N) noted that, "When we campaigned on organic rice consumption, it worked well when we pointed out that they were buying rice not only for themselves but also for members of their families" (Interview).

Health Can Be Linked to Other Issues.

TMSR project staff use a holistic approach when working with urban consumers. They see that health problems are related to and can be linked with other issues, i.e. economic, social, and environmental. According to Opas (N), when TMSR works with urban consumers,

we start from health issues but in fact it is not only about health. There is a connection between health and other things. It would be unthinkable that people would only be interested in health but not concerned about the environment. Awareness will be built during the learning process (Interview).

Another important message disseminated to urban consumers through TMSR's educational work is, "There's got to be an aspect of 'we are part of the problem' in the message and suggest that we should connect ourselves with producers [farmers]", (Interview with Opas). Further, Opas emphasized the importance of helping urban consumers see the connection between all things as well as encouraged them to take concrete action.

Learning activities should help them see linkages between all the thingsto see the overall picture. But when it is time for them to take action, they should have something concrete they can act on (Interview).

From Individuals to Groups.

TMSR's strategy is to work with consumers both on an individual basis and in groups. Opas believes that individuals and groups will complement each other. As he

argues, "It is important to strengthen groups and there should be all kinds of groups" (Interview). Currently, according to Opas, there are many kinds of consumers groups with different goals, such as bicycling, Tai Chi, and vegetarian groups, that have emerged in Bangkok. This is seen as a favourable condition in which to promote health-conscious consumers groups. Amporn (N) also sees that urban consumers in Bangkok are ready to work as a collective group to help solve their health problems. As she points out " I feel that consumers are waiting for something and they may not be aware of the problems they are facing. Someone may have to stimulate or encourage them to form themselves into groups" (Interview). In light of this, Verapong (N) suggests that in the future urban consumers groups may decide to take part in the food production process; for example, as weekend farmers.

Continuity of Learning.

As mentioned earlier, many customers of the Friends of Nature Store and members of the Friends of Nature Club were previous subscribers of TMSR's traditional medicine magazine. In other words, when TMSR started working with urban consumers to promote green consumerism, they could identify a potential group of people who might be interested in joining TMSR's activities. The urban consumers group TMSR currently works with have already developed a relationship with TMSR for more than a decade through their magazine subscription. In fact, the learning process of this group was not so much affected by the obsolescence of the magazine rather than having taken on new directions, e.g. the learning process expanding to include both learning sites such as the green store, farms and holistic health clinic, and learning moments such as group discussions, seminars, and training.

Opas (N), who plays a major role in TMSR's educational work, also mentioned continuity of learning in terms of the linkages and sequences of contents.

Educators should know what to expect from each activity and each time they perform this activity they should cover only one point. They also have to see the connections of each activity [or the linkages between lessons] with one another in terms of the whole process. Educators should know what activity and content should come first and last in the process. . . . There should be three or four basic learning activities which help to lay foundations to build basic understanding on the topic. Educators can do this by reflecting on past activities. They have to apply what they learned from reflecting on past activities and adjust the next activities little by little (Interview).

Impacts

Two positive impacts made by TMSR programs and worth mentioning are impacts on green consumerism and policy development.

Green Consumerism

In urban areas, especially in Bangkok, health food, green products, and traditional medicine have rapidly gained popularity. Although it is difficult to know for sure if there is a causal relationship between TMSR's green consumerism campaign and the growing popularity of green consumption, it can be said that in 1994, TMSR's campaign on traditional medicine and health food attracted a lot of attention from the media (TMSR Progress Report, 1994).

TMSR is recognized as an NGO originator of alternative marketing/ green consumerism. TMSR's work is also relatively extensive, having opened up new areas and developed approaches for green consumerism. For instance, TMSR was the first to establish a small business for marketing traditional medicine, organic rice, natural food and other green products. Their work includes revitalizing and popularizing traditional medicine by means of knowledge production as well as product availability.

The project also campaigns on green consumption and health food, initiates study tours for urban consumers to promote a consumer-farmer relationships, and sets standards for organic farm produce. Their work in general has been well recognized by the public. TMSR is well recognized by others in the green consumer business. Often newly-opened green stores and other business people would come to TMSR for green supplies, advice, and market information (Chutima, 1995).

Organic rice, first introduced by TMSR, also gained popularity in urban markets. TMSR has successfully set the production standards for organic rice which is grown without the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. In 1994, some rice trading companies announced their plans to produce and market organic rice on a large scale, using the standards set by TMSR as guidelines. The Department of Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture, also showed interest in organic rice (Chutima, 1995).

Policy

As above, TMSR's efforts to popularize traditional medicine and to make it available to the public has led the project to work with policy makers in the Ministry of Public Health in an attempt to change drug legislation which hindered processed traditional medicine from being registered as *intermediate medicine*.¹⁰ In 1996, seven out of ten traditional medicines proposed by TMSR have been approved by the FDA (TMSR, 1996). For example, *clinacanthus nutans* in Glycerine, which is used to relieve herpes symptoms has been approved as intermediate medicine. The FDA approval of *clinacanthus nutans* and the production of its modern form created other impacts. The use of the plant in the production of this medicine generated extra income for farmers growing these plants. Since the incidence of herpes is about 20 per cent of all skin diseases among Thais and all modern medicines used to treat this disease were

imported from overseas, the local production of *clinacanthus nutans* would help to reduce the country's budget for drug importation. The FDA approval of traditional medicines marked another step toward success in acquiring legitimate, legal status of traditional medicine in Thai society.

TMSR works as part of a larger coalition of NGOs, GOs, and people's organizations concerned with the protection of biological diversity and traditional knowledge. TMSR actively opposes the controversial Convention on Bio-Diversity (CBD) which the Thai government signed. In 1997, several NGOs insisted that improvements be made to relevant domestic laws before CBD ratification, which promotes the sharing of bio-resources between member countries, takes effect. The cabinet finally approved the Thai Medical Intellectual Protection and Promotion Bill, which was aimed at protecting traditional healers and the existing knowledge of Thai traditional medicine, in September 1998. Other domestic laws which aim to set up mechanisms to protect biological resources and traditional knowledge are The Community Forest Bill and the Protection of Plant Species Bill (Bhatiasevi, 1998).

Challenges

Like any effort at social transformation, there are challenges which need to be overcome in regards to TMSR's work. The three major challenges related to TMSR's work and that can be identified are educational challenges, women, and business and NGOs.

Educational Challenges

According to Opas (N), one of the weaknesses of the TMSR workshops and training programs is that " Participants are diverse and new groups of people show up

¹⁰ *Intermediate medicine* can be sold over the counter without a prescription.

each time” (Interview). The open-to-all admission process for some TMSR educational activities probably make it difficult for TMSR to work with any one particular group over a long period of time. Many TMSR educational activities were designed in such a way as to be equivalent to other continuing education courses for personal growth and wellness. If TMSR wishes to continue working with consumers, then TMSR needs to plan a series of courses for consumers to take part in over a longer period of time; for example, a four to six weekend training program in traditional medicine and healthy eating.

The variety of activities in training and workshops is perceived to be a challenge as well. As Opas points out, “Most of the time the activities were lecture style. When we learn about the environment, I think we should have exercises or practical activities” (Interview). I have to agree with Opas because my experience with the two day training program in traditional medicine and health food organized for urban consumers in 1993 confirmed his observation. The major activities of the training consisted of panel discussions and lectures by experts and TMSR staff on herbal medicine and the industrialization of food production. There were demonstration sessions on making herbal drinks and giving foot massages using coconut shells. Although the content of the panel discussions and lectures were interesting and critical and the presentations were lively and stimulating, the training was organized in a one-way transfer of information from experts to audience rather than in a way that would encourage self-reflection and social critique. Therefore, it is a challenge for TMSR workers to organize training experiences for consumers in a way which reduces power relations between experts and audience and to start from participants' life experiences rather than from other secondary sources of experience.

Women

Recently, many NGOs in Thailand, when working with farmers, adopted an integrated developmental approach which sees women as implicitly part of their target groups. Families and the community as a whole are normally reference points for NGOs in their work with target groups. It is a common belief among NGOs that once the goal of development work has been achieved, it would benefit both women and men equally. Since no distinctions are made, no consideration is given to the fact of differential benefit. As such, these assumptions have created an unwanted side effect: insensitivity toward the gender issue as a result of the assumption that women and men are given equal opportunity to access NGO resources such as training. However, in actuality, this is far from being the case. For example, often participants of study tours organized by NGOs are primarily or even exclusively men. Men, then, were given more opportunities than women to improve their skills and to broaden their world views (Chutima, 1995). When it came to training for farmers in the TMSR project, a problem of gender insensitivity similar to that of the PRO-CON Network project also occurred. Coincidentally, TMSR staff as well as male farmers reached a similar conclusion that women should be encouraged to engage in TMSR educational activities and that opportunities to participate in educational endeavors should be given to both male and female farmers. They realized that the key to a successful farm was the women's full and equal participation in the production process and knowledge acquisition.

In the early days of our work, we gave little attention to women's issues. In fact, we know that in a farm household, women are the principle family decision makers. We learned that some male farmers did not try natural farming techniques promoted by TMSR because their wives did not agree with them. Recently, TMSR has realized how important women's participation in agricultural activities is and we know it is essential to work with both gender groups. Currently, we promote, whenever possible, to have both women and men participate in our farming training (Interview with Sunee (N)).

When introduced to new agricultural technology, such as natural farming, the concerns of women in Kudchum resembled those of their female farmer counterparts in the PRO-CON Network project. They were afraid that the new agricultural techniques would not give as much economic return as modern, chemical farming which they have been practicing for years. Poor family income would affect their families' well-being which the women regarded as their responsibility. Only when TMSR started encouraging women to participate in natural farming training did they support their spouses in natural farming experiments. For instance, often in cases involving families, after a wife joined the natural farming training and other activities, she would become very supportive and would work collaboratively with her husband in the farm experiments and technology development (Chutima, 1995).

The majority of urban consumers whom TMSR works with are women concerned with their families' health. However, TMSR educational activities for urban consumers did not seem to be gender specific nor responsive to women's needs in particular. Therefore, it would be a challenge and perhaps time for TMSR to develop their consumer work to be more gender sensitive like what they have been doing in the case of farmers.

Business and NGOs

As mentioned earlier, TMSR has made a significant contribution to the development of green consumerism in Thailand. In response to this new green market opportunity, the business sector quickly and enthusiastically opened their own new line of green products and outlets. However, what happened was that "consumers were unable to tell the difference between the NGOs' green products from other products produced by commercial manufacturers" (Interview with Rosana (N)). As a result, the

social, environmental, and educational aspects of the NGOs' green consumerism promotion, the corner stones of green consumerism, suffered immensely. Other common problems Thai consumers encountered with the commercially produced organic foods include reduced quality and the lack of accountability.

Another concern TMSR has with business adopting green manufacturing and marketing of organic food and health products is that

right now there is greater competition in the green business. A few years ago, there was only a Green Garden Store which sold organic produce and green products. Currently, we have many business competitors. The business enterprise took away the green market section from us (Interview with Rosana (N)).

This means that TMSR may have to try to keep up with their business competitors in order to survive but at what cost. To survive in a competitive, market economy and at the same time to maintain their social ethics and their mandate for social change is a challenge for TMSR. The choice between the bottom line and being ethical seems to be an impossible situation. However, Rosana did not see this problem as two unresolvable and conflicting poles. Rather, she sees that the obstacle is with the NGO workers' attitude which views operating a business enterprise and advocacy work as two polarized issues. NGOs should learn to balance this conflict in themselves. As Rosana observes,

many NGOs now operate small businesses. In my opinion, they should work to minimize conflicts within themselves. We should work to create an ethical business. I disagree with Dr. Prawes Wasi who said helping others cannot be profitable. We do not seek maximum profit. Our business should be sufficiently profitable for us and the farmers to survive. We should find our balance (Interview).

CONCLUSION

In recent years, TMSR has expanded its project mandate to include nutrition and lifestyle modification education for urban consumers in addition to their original work in reviving knowledge in traditional medicine, promoting natural farming, and the production of the basic traditional medicines for public consumption. TMSR educational work, together with the promotion of green consumption and the adoption of a holistic approach to health and wellness, is considered to be the *turning of the tide* in countering and undermining the monopoly of Western medicine in the healthcare system. Their work is strengthened by a rich, accessible, scientific and credible collection and knowledge base in traditional medicine and the use of print medium to reach urban consumers. Another strength of the TMSR educational work is that they have been able to maintain and continue their relation with the same urban consumers group for more than a decade. Many educational activities have been provided to urban consumers in various forms such as training, workshops, lectures, and seminars. The loose structure of the Friends of Nature Club and the minimal time required from consumer volunteers to run the club seems to fit well with a Bangkokian consumers' lifestyle constrained by the demands of time.

TMSR was the first NGO to actively promote a new relationship between urban consumers and farmers groups interested in consuming and producing organic food, respectively. However, when compared to the PRO-CON Network project, the connection between the consumers and farmers groups seems to be flimsy, which suggests that more thorough development of this relationship is needed. Despite this weakness, TMSR has contributed significantly to environmental adult education with its strong emphasis on farmers' well-being and the promotion of the local economy in their

campaign on green consumerism through learning materials and activities for urban consumers.

Chapter 8

Summary and Conclusion

Summary of Research Problems and Method

The main purpose of this research is to explore the nature of environmental adult education for urban consumers using two case studies whereby Thai NGOs worked to organize and promote green consumerism. The Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers-Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand (PRO-CON Network) Project and the Traditional Medicine for Self-Reliance (TMSR) Project were selected as the two case studies. Three main research questions were identified as follows:

1. What are the underlying assumptions of the NGOs' promotion of green consumerism?
2. What are the characteristics of the environmental adult education programs provided for urban consumers within the context of
 - the Project for Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers-Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand (PRO-CON NETWORK), Chiangmai, Thailand; and
 - the Traditional Medicine for Self-reliance Project (TMSR), Bangkok, Thailand?
3. Does environmental adult education help influence changes in the nature of the personal, social, and structural relations within the context of the projects? If so, what are those changes?

A multiple-case study design was used in this research study. A variety of data-collection methods were applied: semi-structured interview, participant observation, and survey and documentary research. Field research was performed in two phases. The

first field research was conducted in 1995 from February to June and the second field research was undertaken from December 1996 to February 1997. Data from interview transcripts, field notes, and related documents were coded, categorized, and presented in the form of two individual case studies.

Summary of the Research Findings

The research questions, which produced the most data in this research study, included:

a) What are the characteristics of the environmental adult education programs provided for urban consumers within the context of the two NGO projects?

b) Does environmental adult education help influence changes in the nature of the personal, social, and structural relations within the context of the projects? If so, what are those changes?

a) Characteristics of Environmental Adult Education for Urban Consumers

The Production and Dissemination of Knowledge

In both the PRO-CON Network and TMSR projects, there has been a shift in the direction of what counts as knowledge and who produces knowledge. The direction was to break away from the present power monopoly of Western science. Traditional knowledge was utilized as a counterbalance to the dominant Western sciences in agriculture and medicine. Neither project, however, would go so far as to renounce Western science but rather considered this system of knowledge as only one among others.

Farmers and traditional healers are recognized as having legitimate knowledge. Their knowledge came from two sources: from their traditions and from an experiential

understanding of their lives and the environment. Farmers and traditional healers increasingly have established credibility with urban people and so-called experts with the knowledge the former has produced. There is, then, a growing recognition of the value and importance of farmers' experiences and knowledge among those educated within a Western science paradigm and who have in the past trivialized these experiences and knowledges.

The two projects used various forms of educational medium to disseminate knowledge and information to project participants. Printed materials, radio and television programs, seminars, and workshops were used in both projects. TMSR used printed materials, primarily for disseminating and popularizing knowledge on traditional medicine and holistic healthcare to the general public, to a greater extent than did the PRO-CON Network. The PRO-CON Network project, on the other hand, initiated many more face-to-face encounters and direct associations for formal and informal exchanges of knowledge between urban consumers and farmers than did TMSR.

Although knowledge is occasionally passed on from the so-called experts through formal training, conferences and workshops, it is often the case that farmers and urban consumers exchanged knowledge within a horizontal learning network, either within the group or across groups. The horizontal learning network creates a learning process which is more fluid and egalitarian than the top-down process of *expert* knowledge transfer.

Educational Practices

Educational Activities.

In both cases, education promoting green consumerism and aimed at urban consumers has been integrated into the general NGO project activities. Some can be

described as planned, non-formal group learning activities such as workshops, panel discussions, and training. Some locations or activities, for example, a green cooperative store or farm, became sites of learning which helped create learning moments for urban consumers and farmers. Many educational activities, especially those of the PRO-CON Network project, were organized in such a way as to include the participation of both farmers and consumers. Emphasis was placed on encouraging networking between urban consumers and farmers groups through a variety of activities. The PRO-CON Network Project planned their activities in such a way as to take advantage of the close proximity between farmer and consumer groups living in the same province of Chiangmai which allowed both groups to meet more often and directly to create long-term partnerships. On the other hand, TMSR intensively and effectively used printed materials to disseminate information on traditional medicine and alternative healthcare to urban consumers in general.

Green Products Are Only a Means, Not an End in Themselves.

The goals of NGOs working with urban consumers are to raise awareness of problems associated with food, agriculture and healthcare, and to encourage consumers to patronize green products. The selling of green products is seen only as a means to access, include and work with urban consumers regarding health, environment and food production and should not be seen as an end in itself. Promoting the use of green products among urban consumers is about selling ideas, changing attitudes and encouraging desirable behaviours. Their primary intent is to influence social behaviours which will benefit the target audience and society in general; businesses bottom line of making profits is only of secondary concern.

Putting Knowledge into Practice.

Both PRO-CON Network and TMSR projects organized learning activities for urban consumers on the issues of food safety, alternative agriculture and healthcare. The diverse educational activities and learning moments provided by the projects helped urban consumers become more aware of the environmental impacts of consumer choices. The projects also made it possible for consumers to apply and integrate the knowledge they learned into everyday practice. The projects gave suggestions for actions (i.e. green consumption) and helped urban consumers pursue the most appropriate ones. In addition, the projects worked to provide organic food and traditional medicine for urban consumers so that they could possibly put what they learned (i.e. benefits of green consumption to health, farmers, and the environment) into practice (i.e. green consumption).

Things That Urban Consumers and Farmers Learned.

The most pressing issue that urban consumers learned from their participation in the PRO-CON Network project activities was that farmers' hardships occurred as a result of their participation in modern cash crop production and when switching to organic farming. Urban consumers participating in the TMSR Project learned to value the knowledge on traditional medicine as a legitimate and practical knowledge for helping to alleviate a range of health problems. They learned to take charge of their own healthcare and to approach health from a holistic perspective.

Farmers, on the other hand, learned new organic farming techniques. There had been some changes in their farming practices and attitudes regarding farming. Farmers would often try or improve upon new and/or old farming techniques to use on their farms. During these moments, their attitudes toward modern farming, and the latter's

reliance on the intensive use of chemicals, would often gradually change in favour of working more cooperatively with nature. By having direct relations with urban consumers, they clearly saw their role as food providers and as being responsible for the health and well-being of consumers. Their attitudes toward urban consumers also changed once they realized that many urban consumers did not know much more than farmers themselves about organic farming.

Educational Medium Which Worked Best for Consumers' and Farmers' Learning.

Learning tools in the form of printed materials as well as study tours worked well for urban consumers. Farmers, in fact, are the best teachers to educate urban consumers about farming and environmental problems. Farmers reported that they learned a lot from participating in the horizontal learning network. In addition, farmers reported that visiting organic farms and talking directly with organic farmers experiencing success worked effectively well as a learning tool.

Working at the Individual and Group Levels.

Both NGOs recognized the need for both individual and group oriented activities in working with urban consumers and farmers. There were efforts to form groups of urban consumers and farmers either in the semi-formal setting of a club with an elected committee to administer the club or as a temporary, issue-based group forming itself only on special occasions and for a specific period of time. However, while the PRO-CON Network put their efforts into organizing semi-structured, formal groups of consumers and farmers, TMSR chose to establish a more flexible, loosely organized network of urban consumers as their principal strategy.

Connections Between the Local and Global Contexts.

There has been implicit as well as explicit links made between local and global contexts in educational work for these two NGOs. When working with consumers, the approach for both projects was to start with those food and health issues which were of personal concern to consumers and then link these to the broader issues. For example, some of these broader issues, and the reasons behind them, include the continued widespread use of chemicals by farmers which serves only to destroy both farmlands and their health; the continued participation in the export-oriented agri-business which in the long run destroys the livelihood of many small-scale farmers; the loss of genetic resources due to the promotion of modern farming techniques and deforestation¹; lifestyle changes due to modern development and how it adversely affects people's health.

b) Changes the NGOs Educational Activities Brought About

There are some indicators which suggest that the educational activities embedded in the PRO-CON Network and TMSR projects have helped stimulate changes in the nature of personal, social, and structural relations within the context of these projects. The following highlights some of these changes.

Personal Changes

Urban consumers said they gained new understanding about farmers' lives and the effects of modern agriculture on the livelihoods and well-being of both farmers and consumers. They began to see the complexity of the interconnections between their

consumption pattern, health, agriculture, and farmers' well-being. They worked toward becoming less dependent on Western, modern medicine and instead strove to gain knowledge on self-care and alternative healthcare. Some began to patronize green consumption and alternative healthcare, incorporating it into their overall lifestyle.

Farmers began to look at themselves differently as well now that they were asking more critical questions about those aspects which they had taken for granted such as the benefits of modern farming methods, agri-business, or the role of urban people and experts in the production of knowledge. For farmers, switching to alternative farming methods has meant changes in farm inputs and the farm ecosystem. In addition, the changes have meant that although supplementary income is often generated from organic farming, only a few farmers are able to live solely from this income.

The Creation of Alternative Marketing in the Existing Economic System

Both NGOs made efforts to establish alternative marketing, or green consumerism, among farmers and consumers, as these activities were seen to be of mutual benefit for consumers, farmers, and the environment. It has created a space within the existing economic system wherein the green market can take root and thrive while allowing farming communities to survive with an adequate income and provide healthy food for consumers. It also has stressed the importance of environmental adult education for urban consumers in bringing about social change.

Direct Farmers-Consumers Network

The idea of establishing a direct farmers-consumers network as a necessary component of the green consumerism campaign was originally undertaken by TMSR.

¹ Deforestation destroys plant communities which results in the loss of many food and medicinal species.

Although TMSR did not go further to emphasize this area of work, it was able to create a *demonstration effect* by providing a new learning model for urban consumers. For example, educational activities such as organic farm tours for urban consumers were often used by other NGOs including the PRO-CON Network Project and Green Net. TMSR, however, still emphasizes the holistic view of seeing the connections between the well-being of urban consumers, the health of the land, and the health and livelihood of farmers in the promotional and learning materials on green consumerism and related training for urban consumers.

Policy Changes

The two NGOs worked collaboratively with a wider network of NGOs, governmental agencies, people's organizations, and academics in lobbying the local and central government for policy changes. The policy areas the two NGOs focused on are: alternative agriculture; traditional medicine and healthcare; and biological resources protection. The result is that the alternative agriculture policy has been addressed in the present Eighth National Economic and Social Development Policy and that a government budget has been allocated for the promotion of small-scale alternative agriculture projects. Another change in policy is the approval by the FDA of traditional medicine as generic drugs to be used locally.

Biological resource piracy by the global market economy and foreign companies is a new threat to traditional knowledge, medicinal plants, and indigenous seeds. Both projects worked in collaboration with a wide network of NGOs, government agencies, and scientists to advocate for a policy change in domestic laws which would help protect Thai biological resources from being pirated.

Challenges

Women.

The two NGOs realized that farm women are the key to a successful promotion of alternative farming practices and that the majority of urban consumers with whom they worked were women. Although, at the time of the study, both NGOs had started to work with female farmers groups on issues of gender sensitivity, the directions of NGO consumer work as related to women issues were still unclear. As mentioned in previous chapters, women's socialized role in family reproductive work established them as the first to experience environmental problems and to articulate environmental concerns in the family. Responding to women's concerns will therefore mean responding to the needs of women and of their families.

It should be underscored, however, that focusing on women's needs and women as active agents in development work should not add more responsibilities to women or intensify their work burdens. In order to avoid this, Kabeer (1991) suggests that the productive and reproductive activities of women's lives need to be taken into account when planning development projects. We need to rethink the meaning of labour and production. Work that is productive should not only mean work that relates to income and profit but also the reproductive work that women contribute to the family's well-being.

Kabeer also points out that women's needs can arise out of the day-to-day reality of their lives and the need to transform that reality. Women's need to transform their reality is based on the assumption that there are unequal gender power relations which place women in a subordinate position to men. The needs of women which arise out of their subordinate position in society require a radical transformation of interpersonal relations between men and women which is often ignored by development agencies. To

respond to this kind of need requires that NGOs put efforts into transforming these unequal relations so that women have greater power over their own lives and men have less power over women's lives. Education for women's empowerment and men's conscientization would play an essential role in this process.

There are many possibilities for NGOs to work with urban women consumers and farmers. Some of these possible directions are: to raise issues about consumption and environmental problems more specific to each gender group and to respond to these issues appropriately; to encourage both urban and farm women to work collectively and collaboratively in green consumerism campaigns using Mies' consumer educational strategies (1989, 1991); to utilize women's ways of knowing such as personal experience, feeling and subjectivity more in their educational work; to work toward change in the gender concept of labour which would help men to regain their autonomy and the wholeness of their own bodies and minds (i.e. sharing responsibilities between men and women for the care of family members and other nurturing roles considered as *housework*) (Mies, 1986).

Consumers' Solidarity with Farmers' Political Struggle.

In both projects, urban consumers' support for farmers mostly happened at the individual level: patronizing green products; donating money to farmers groups; assisting with marketing green products; and providing moral support. In the case of the PRO-CON Network Project, urban consumers did not collectively support farmers in their political struggle to influence changes in state policies regarding land and natural resource ownership. Many urban consumers saw farmers' struggles and NGO support for farmers' protests as too radical and could not critically understand and relate to farmers' political resistance. Seeking a unity of interests, goals, and sympathies for

farmers' political resistance, in other words, solidarity, among members of the urban middle class is a big challenge for the NGOs. In addition, the majority of urban consumers who participated in the project have never experienced such problems as the destruction of their livelihood which would otherwise lead them to collectively organize for political action. It is, then, not that simple for urban consumers to understand and relate to social justice issues from the relatively privileged perspective of their middle class background. The first step toward this goal would be to raise urban consumers' critical awareness and analytic abilities regarding the farmers' situation. Adult education which focuses on critical social analysis such as popular education should be applied to this purpose.²

Business Co-Optation.

The *raison d'être* of NGOs' green consumerism suffered once mainstream business bought into the idea of green consumerism since there were more competitors in the green market. Companies that are well-established in the food retail business have an extensive infrastructure in which to reach consumers and to influence green marketing directions. As a result, the line between the NGOs' production of socially-responsible green products, which reflected concern for farmers' well-being, healthy food for urban consumers, fair trade and environmental balance, and other green products in the market, mostly produced by large-scale or sub-contracting farming system whose primary interest is in profit making, has been blurred in the eyes of consumers. Environmental adult education for consumers is therefore still an essential part of the NGO green consumerism campaign to enable consumers to understand the NGOs' social and green agendas and to continue supporting their work in green

² See, for example, Arnold et al. (1991), *Educating for a Change*.

consumerism. Furthermore, how NGOs, in the near future, can balance their social obligations and at the same time be successful in the existing market system which tends to favour big business operations is a big challenge for them.

Implications of Environmental Adult Education

This study of environmental adult education for urban consumers has shown that

1) environmental adult education is holistic in its approach. It makes connections between consumer choices and food, medicine, agriculture, industrialization, consumerism, ecological sustainability, and rural, urban and global issues. The starting point of environmental adult education can be a single issue such as food choice or health, but it needs to help learners to discover the connection of that issue to other issues and to examine how complex social structures function to create environmental problems. It needs to assist people to see the larger picture of consumption and environmental problems.

2) it is a process to broaden consumers' self-interest from having healthy, unadulterated food to including farmers' welfare, local economic revitalization, and ecological sustainability. The approach is in accordance with the Buddhist educational concept of assisting a person to enhance her self-interest to include the interests of others and the environment. The process of redefining self-interest was accomplished by encouraging people to see a connection among all factors in the food system and how ordinary people can take action to change it.

3) it starts from the real needs in a learner's life situation and is linked to everyday living skills which prove to be relevant to the circumstances of learners. It encourages learners to apply their knowledge at personal and group levels by changing

their eating habits or using alternative healthcare. In other words, it demonstrates the logical connections between individual actions and solutions to environmental problems.

4) a variety of educational strategies are employed. There is an educational component embedded in green consumerism which created learning moments for both urban consumers and farmers. Farms, green cooperative stores, and organic farmers markets have been converted into informal educational experiences. In addition, environmental adult education utilized formal group learning strategies (i.e. workshops, seminars, panel discussions, and training) for the transmission of new skills and information; the revival of traditional knowledge; and the sharing of participants' experiences.

5) it builds upon a face-to-face relationship between the urban consumers and farmers eliminating the impersonal nature of the modern market economy. It created the opportunity for learners to dialogue or converse with those who were most affected by environmental problems. It emphasizes caring, responsible, and reciprocal relationships between the two groups rather than conflicts between self-interested buyers and sellers. This is an idea in tune with a feminist's ethics of care and concern for personal relations (Booth, 1998).

6) it helps to stimulate dialogue and cooperation among individuals and institutions in order to create new lifestyles based on meeting everyone's basic needs and the ecological sustainability of society. Environmental adult education activities provided opportunities for urban consumers and farmers to create dialogue on an equal basis on issues they have in common such as food and health. According to Orr (1993), authentic dialogue or conversation is possible if we were to fully acknowledge the existence of others: "In conversation we define ourselves, but in relation to another" (p.

206).

7) through study tours, natural settings such as farms were used as part of the environmental adult education program. Study tours worked well because people learned best when they experienced the environment directly. On the farms, many environmental issues could easily be addressed especially in relation to alternative agriculture techniques, the environmental impact of modern agriculture, the relationship between farmers and agri-business, rural and agricultural development policy, health and nutrition. The use of natural settings as sites of learning conforms with the guidelines of environmental adult education proposed by Clover et al. (1998).

It can be concluded that the nature and characteristics of environmental adult education for urban consumers as it has been described in this study involve the interplay of many forms of adult education drawn from various sources. However, the overall direction of environmental adult education was in tune with the transformative character of environmental adult education (See *Environmental Adult Education with an Ecological Context* section in Chapter Two). Some principles and assumptions of environmental adult education examined in this study can be applied as environmental adult educational strategies. Two principles which I wish to highlight are:

a) the redefinition of a person's self-interest to include others and the environment. This requires that learners should realize that they cannot separate their own well-being from the well-being of others and the planet. Learning activities should be geared toward raising learners' awareness of the interconnectedness of our self-interests with the interests of others and the earth. The food system is a good example to illustrate to learners how the earth, other living beings, agricultural technology, and economic, cultural, and political systems are intertwined and affect each other. In other

words, environmental adult education should affirm interdependence and mutuality, particularly in relation to other people and the surrounding environment (Jones, 1993).

b) the face-to-face interaction between urban consumers and farmers which can initiate a sense of connection between people who produce food and those who eat it. Meeting face-to-face helps both consumers and farmers see each other as people, not as faceless and abstract consumers and farmers. It also encourages the two groups to associate with each other as active participants, not as mere spectators.

Final Conclusion

The research findings have illustrated that environmental adult education can be an alternative form of education for the Thai urban middle class because it integrates knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and actions. Environmental adult education helps reconstitute traditional knowledge as legitimate knowledge and recognizes farmers and traditional healers as the producers of knowledge. It demonstrates the interconnections between consumption patterns, food, health, farmers' welfare, the erosion of small-scale farms, and the negative effects of industrial, global, and political economy on the food and health systems. The self-interest of consumers, expressed here as the need to have safe food for consumption, was redefined to include farmers' economic and physical well-being, the health of the environment, and a critical world view of the existing modern development model. It also encouraged people to take action at both an individual and group level to create change. Adult educators should pay more attention to adult learners as consumers and encourage them to take environmental action at the point of consumption. As Smith (1998) notes, the focus on a household's everyday experience can be a channel for political action.

The major change the two projects brought about was a change in individual

consumption patterns, attitudes, and values. This kind of change should not be underestimated. Francis Moore Lappe (1982) who wrote *Diet for a Small Planet* states that a small change in life such as changing one's diet can empower ordinary people and deepen our insights which lead to a series of further transformations: "Changing the way we eat will not change the world, but it may begin to change us, and then we can be part of changing the world" (p. 15). Jones (1993) also emphasizes the importance of self-empowerment through committing one's time and energy to building a green transitional social culture in whatever ways possible. Similarly, Buddhist education acknowledges the importance of personal as well as social development.

In a similar vein, environmental adult education from a transformative perspective sees that personal transformation and social structural change can complement each other (Scott, 1998). Lauzon (1995) explains that,

the development of the individual is instrumental to bring about social change, but also social change is instrumental in promoting the development of the individual. They exist in a dialectic tension giving rise to new forms of knowing and learning and this gives rise to new structures which then support new ways of being-in-the-world (p. 364).

The new network of urban consumers and rural farmers in the green consumerism campaign promoted by the two NGO projects seem to coincide with the call from Buddhist scholars and NGO leaders for middle class people to work with the lower class in the process of social transformation. The strength of the green consumer movement is in its connection with farmers which can be seen as a corner stone for the development of productive and meaningful relations between these two groups.

Creating good friends, or *kalayanamitta*, across various groups is the first step toward gaining the trust and understanding necessary for the shared dialogue and articulation of a collective vision to create a new lifestyle based on meeting everyone's

basic needs regardless of their class or gender background. As Prawes Wasi observed, " What the villagers [poor farmers] need most is understanding. This is very important, especially among people who have different living conditions." "Society", he said, "will be more powerful if people's groups are interrelated" (Thai Development Support Committee, 1994, p. 88). Above all, we cannot transform the society into a just and sustainable one alone. We need to work together in order to make it happen.

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Appendix A

Consent Letters

Consent Letter to be used in the First Field Research

84/129 Wangsingkham Mansion
#511, Wangsingkhan Rd.,
Chiangmai 50300
Date.....

To: (Name of participant).....

My name is Noulmook Sutdhibhasilp. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Adult Education, University of Toronto, Canada. I am doing a research study on environmental adult education in Thailand. This research is being undertaken as part of the dissertation requirements for the fulfillment of the doctoral degree program in adult education.

The main purpose of this research is to do an initial determination of the learning experiences of those participating in the Development of Producers-Consumers Network (PRO-CON Network) project and the results of these learning experiences. Participants in the PRO-CON Network project which are included in this research study are:

- organic food producers (farmers) who are the member of the Organic Food Producer Club of Chiangmai
- consumers and members of the Chiangmai' Consumer and Environmental Protection Club
- green store retailers
- non-governmental organization (NGO) workers

Three data collection methods were applied: 1) documentary research 2) participant observation 3) and interviewing a minimum of 10 PRO-CON Network project participants. It is the latter which is the principle concern for the remainder of this letter.

The purpose of this interview is not to evaluate your job performance or learning ability. I only would like to know how you feel about your learning experiences. I hope that the information gained from you will be beneficial for others who participate in similar projects like the PRO-CON Network project.

Regarding the interviews, I would like to have your permission to tape record our interview which should take no more than one hour. In this interview, I would like you to tell me briefly about yourself; in what way you participate in the project; what learning experiences you gained from participating in the project and other groups who were involved in the project. Afterwards,

I will transcribe the recorded interview and send it to you for revision. After having read the transcription, please let me know if you wish to change, add or delete any part of the transcription.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please fill out the consent form at the bottom of this letter. Your personal information will be kept confidential and only pseudo names will be used. In addition, any personal information that may lead others to identify you will be altered as is appropriate. Please be informed that not only you may withdraw from this study at any time but upon so doing, I will destroy all personal data related to you. Finally, upon completion of the research work, I will send you a copy of the abstract of my dissertation. Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Sincerely yours,

Noulmook Sutdhibhasilp

Consent Form

Dear Noulmook Sutdhibhasilp,

I have read the attached letter describing the research project you plan to do, and i agree to participate. It is clear to me that I ma free to withdraw from the study at any time. If I do, all my data will be destroyed or returned to me.

I hereby consent to the use of the recorded interview and transcripts of my interview by the researcher. I understand that my name and identity will be withheld in the research study.

Signature.....

Date.....

Address:.....
.....

Consent Letter to be Used in Second Field Research

136/175 Siwalee Village, Soi 25
Rangsit-Nakonnayok Rd.
Tanyaburi, Patumthani 12100
Date.....

To:
Subject: Research Interview
Attachment: Consent Form

My name is Noulmook Sutdhibhasilp. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Adult Education, University of Toronto, Canada. I am doing research on a case study focusing on environmental adult education in Thailand. This research is being undertaken as part of the dissertation requirements for the fulfillment of the doctoral degree program in adult education.

The main purpose of this research study is to describe the nature of environmental adult education organized and implemented by two NGO projects involving the promotion of toxic-free food production, consumption and distribution. These projects also support and encourage farmers and consumers to participate in the development of alternative marketing. The two NGO projects That will be part of the above case studies are:

1. The Development of Alternative Agriculture Producers-Consumers Network in Upper Northern Thailand Project (PRO-CON Network), Northnet Foundation, Chiangmai province
2. The Traditional Medicine for Self-Reliance Project (TMSR), Thai Health Foundation, Bangkok province

The two conceptual frameworks used for data analysis are green consumerism and transformative learning. Three major research questions are:

1. What is the history of green consumerism in Thailand ?
2. What is the nature and role of environmental adult education in the context of the two NGO projects ?
3. What are the factors which enable environmental adult education to be successful ?

Three data collection methods will be used: 1) documentary research 2) participant observation, and 3) semi-structured interviews of project participants.

Since it is the interviews that concerns in this letter, I would like to ask your permission to conduct a tape recorded interview with you which should take no more than an hour. If you agree to participate in this research study, please fill out the consent form at the bottom of this letter. In the consent form, please identify if you wish to use a real or pseudo names in this study.

Please be informed that not only may you withdraw from this study at any time but upon so doing, I will destroy all personal data related to you. Finally, upon completion of the research

work, I will send you a copy of the abstract of my dissertation. Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Sincerely yours,

Noulmook Sutdhibhasilp
Researcher

Consent Form

Dear Noulmook Sutdhibhasilp,

I have read the attached letter describing the research project you plan to do, and i agree to participate. It is clear to me that I ma free to withdraw from the study at any time. If I do, all my data will be destroyed or returned to me.

I hereby consent to the use of the recorded interview and transcripts of my interview by the researcher.

- () I agree to use my real name in this research study.
- () I request that my name and identity be withheld in this research project.

Signature.....

Date.....

Address:.....
.....

Appendix B

Guided Interview Questions

Guided Interview Questions For Urban Consumers

1. Please tell me briefly about yourself
2. Please tell me about your experience with the Chiangmai's Consumer and Environmental Protection Club
 - When did you join the club?
 - What motivates you to join the club?
 - Your role, responsibility in the club
3. What was your experience with the club ? Positive experiences
4. Did you foresee any problems of the club ? If you did, what were the problems? Please explain.
5. What are your suggestions to solve the above mentioned problems?
6. Your future vision about the consumers' club.
7. Were there any changes that happened to you after you participate in the consumers' club/PRO-CON Network project activities ? If so, what were they?
8. What are the educational activities that PRO-CON Network project has organized for urban consumers ?
9. Are there any activities of the PRO-CON Network project which you think helps to promote relationship between consumers and organic farmers? If yes, what are they ?
10. Please evaluate the relationship between urban consumers and organic farmers.
11. What kind of educational activities that you think worked best for urban consumers?
12. If you wish to change consumers' attitudes and behaviours to have them patronize organic food, how would you (the consumers' club) do it?

13. Do women play any significant roles in the consumers' club? If so, what are they?
14. Do you think PRO-CON Network project has created any impacts in a wider social context ? If yes, what are they ?

Guided Interview Questions for Organic Farmers

1. Please tell me briefly about yourself: birthplace, age, education, marital status, work experience
2. Please explain to me about your life in general before you joined the organic farmers' club and PRO-CON Network project: farming practice, income, relationship with outside merchants and land.
3. When and how did you start growing organic vegetables? Who convinced you to join the group?
4. Did you know how to grow organic vegetables before you joined the project? If you did, where did you learn about it?
5. Did you ever join any organic farming techniques training ? If so, how many times did you join? What was the training about? Did it help you with farming ? If yes, how ?
6. Have you ever encountered any problem when practicing organic farming ? If so, what kind of problems you had: production, distribution, or with the organic farmers' club?
7. When you had problems with organic farming techniques, whom did you ask? Or where did you seek help ?
8. When you started organic farming, what did your partner, neighbours said? Did you discuss this with your partner first?
9. Future vision of your life and the farm.
10. If you are asked to advice someone how to grow organic vegetables, how would you do it?
11. Do you eat organic vegetables you grow in your farm?
12. Where do you sell your products? How do you sell them?
13. Please tell me briefly about the organic farmers' group in your village that you are the member of.

14. How does the group work with the consumers' club?
15. What do you think of urban consumers, from your own experience?
16. How would you like the consumers' club help organic farmers?

Guided Interview Questions for NGO Staff

1. Please tell me briefly about yourself.
2. Please explain your job responsibilities.
3. Are there any problems that you encountered under your job responsibilities ? If so, what are they?
4. What did you learn from working with the project ?
5. What are the things you think PRO-CON Network/TMSR project have accomplished (Strength) ?
6. What are the things you think PRO-CON Network/TMSR project needs to improve (Weaknesses) ?
7. What do you think of urban consumers who participated in project activities ?
8. What kind of activities PRO-CON Network/TMSR project organized for urban consumers?
9. What are activities organized for urban consumers that worked well ? What did not ?
10. How do you understand the role of PRO-CON Network/TMSR project in terms of consumer-farmer relationship?
11. If you were in a management position of PRO-CON Network/TMSR project, how would you operate the project ? What is your priority?
12. What do you think of green consumerism in Thailand ?

Appendix C

Different Forms of Alternative Agriculture in Thailand

The *organic farming system* is the most popular form of alternative agriculture. The heart of organic farming is proper soil maintenance. Organic farming uses inter-cropping, organic manure, and biological/botanical pest management. Nitrogen-fixing leguminous crops are normally planted during the dry season, reducing the need for the application of chemical fertilizers. It emphasizes the use of organic fertilizers; natural predators or microbes to control pests; and crop rotation techniques. Some organic farming techniques such as the use of green manure and compost production were originally developed in the East but popularized in the West.

The *integrated farming system* is a revival form of the Thai traditional mixed farming approach and is considered the oldest form of alternative agriculture. It is a farming system that emphasizes the symbiosis of crops and animals raised on a farm. Shrubs and small plants are planted under a thick canopy of high trees which provide shade. The use of fallen leaves as compost and nitrogen-fixing plants help enrich the soil. Excrement from animals, such as chickens, pigs and cows, is applied as manure. Fish ponds in the rice field help increase rice productivity as well as control pests.

The *natural farming system* was started by Masanobu Fukuoka of Japan. According to Fukuoka (1978), "the ultimate goal of farming is not growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings" (p. XII). Fukuoka's approach to sustainable agriculture is deeply grounded in his distrust of Western science. His proposal of *do-nothing* farming, as he calls it, is the abandonment of human will in favour of the guidance of nature. His four principles

of natural farming are all stated in negative forms: no cultivation, no chemical fertilizers or prepared compost; no weeding by tillage; and no dependence on chemicals. Natural farming was well received in Thailand, but some Thai farmers argued that the practices were not suitable for tropical farms. In later years, farmers worked cooperatively with NGOs to do field experiments and adjusted natural farming techniques to suit their farms.

Agro-forestry is less well-known than other farming systems. The system's emphasis is on the coexistence of people and the ecosystem. In the highlands, ally cropping is often used to help prevent top soil erosion, whereas in low lands, agro-forestry means orchard farms mixed with variety of perennial fruit and fodder-fuel trees. Vibul Kemchalerm and his farm in Chacherngsao province is one of the best examples of an agro-forestry farm in Thailand.

Note. From Agriculture or Agri-Business by Penny Levin and Witoon Panyakul, 1993, Thai Development Newsletter , 27-28 , 104-108.

Appendix D
Survey Questionnaire

Part I

General Information About Consumers

Part I: Please write X in front of the statement which is relevant to you most.

1) Age

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Younger than 20 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 years old |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 31-40 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 years old | <input type="checkbox"/> Older than 60 years old |

2) Gender

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Male |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|

3) Marital statue

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single | <input type="checkbox"/> Married |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Separated/divorced | <input type="checkbox"/> Spouse passed away |

4) Educational level

- Lower than elementary education
- Elementary education
- High school
- Certificate/ college diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Higher than bachelor's degree

5) Occupation

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Students | <input type="checkbox"/> Employee of companies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NGO workers | <input type="checkbox"/> Government officers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retired | <input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)..... |

6) Average income per month

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No income of his/her own | <input type="checkbox"/> Lower than 5,000 Baht |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5,001-10,000 Baht | <input type="checkbox"/> 10,001-20,000 Baht |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20,001-30,000 Baht | <input type="checkbox"/> 30,001-50,000 Baht |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More than 50,000 Baht | |

Appendix E

Examples of Activities Organized for Urban Consumers:

PRO-CON Network Project

- Arranged Chiangmai's Consumer and Environmental Protection club annual meeting
- Organized a study tour for 15 urban consumers to visit organic farms in Samueng district, Chiangmai province
- Organized a preparation meeting for the upcoming Producers-Consumers Day seminar
- Organized a study tour for seven urban consumers to visit organic farms in MaeTae, Chiangmai province
- Organized Producers-Consumers Day Seminar
- Organized a study tour for 10 consumers, eight farmers, and five NGO workers to visit organic farms in the Northeast and Central region, and Bangkok.
- Organized a meeting to discuss about setting up a nation-wide standard of organic production process (PRO-CON Network, 1995).

Appendix F**Examples of Activities Organized for Urban Consumers:****TMSR Project**

- TMSR staff gave a talk at the “Plant Growing and Pruning” workshop organized by Office of the Social Welfare, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Forty people attended the workshop.
- TMSR staff gave a talk at a workshop of herbs organized for Rak Look Kindergarten staff and teachers.
- Organized 3 discussion groups on three different topics: Staying Healthy in the Summer; Herbs for Obesity-related Illnesses; and Herbs for the Treatment of Allergic Disorders.
- Co-organized “Herbs for Health” workshop with Matichon daily newspaper for 200 people. The workshop activities included lectures and demonstrations on how to prepare herbal medicine.
- Organized a panel discussion on “Producers’(Farmers) Moral Obligations and Consumers’ Awareness” for 100 people as part of the TMSR’s 14th anniversary event.
- Co-organized a lecture and demonstration on “Macrobiotics in Our Daily Lives” with Villagers’ Technology Magazine for 100 people.
- Participated in the “Toxic-Free Food” Fair and Exhibition organized by *Mor Chao Ban* (Village Doctors) Foundation.
- Co-organized a study tour to visit a medicinal garden of Mr. Wiboon Khemchalerm, an well-known farmer in the Eastern region for 50 urban people (TMSR, 1994, p. 7)