

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences

journal homepage: <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/kjss>

The mutual influence of managerial ability and social networks of farmers on participation in an organic vegetable group in Khon Kaen province, Thailand

Panatda Utaranakorn ^{a, *}, Kumi Yasunobu ^b

^a The United Graduate School of Agricultural Sciences, Tottori University, Tottori 680-8553, Japan

^b Department of Agricultural Management and Information Science, Faculty of Agriculture, Tottori University, Tottori 680-8553, Japan

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 February 2015

Received in revised form 4 January 2016

Accepted 13 January 2016

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

farmers' group
managerial ability
sharing information
social network

ABSTRACT

The main objectives of this study were to analyze farmers' managerial ability, social networks, and information sharing, and to describe the two-way relationship between managerial ability and social networks. We collected data through face-to-face interviews, using a structured questionnaire with a purposively selected random sample of 34 farmers in Khon Kaen province, Northeastern Thailand, in September 2013. All respondents belonged to an organic vegetable group. The findings revealed that almost all of the farmers have a high ability level in marketing, information searching, communication, and technical skills. Farmers with high ability, especially group leaders and group managers, have more chances to increase their networks through becoming consultants and transferring knowledge/technology. As a result, their social networks are more active and stronger, both inside and outside their villages. In addition, farmers with larger networks have more opportunities to assess information and exchange knowledge, so their ability can become even more effective.

Copyright © 2016, Kasetsart University. Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Introduction

Organic vegetable production is an important economic activity for farmers in Thailand as it brings in an attractive income in a short time. The Thai government has encouraged farmers to grow organic vegetables as well as to form groups in order to increase their marketing power. However, owing to various problems and constraints, organic vegetable farmers have trouble producing enough to meet the high market demand. Previous studies have stated that organic vegetable growers have recently faced low vegetable production, lack of modern knowledge, and low-level management ability, such as in pest and marketing

management (Mondal, Haitook, & Simaraks, 2014; Mukiyama, Suphanchaimat, & Sriwaranun, 2014; Timprasert, Datta, & Ranamukhaarachchi, 2014). Moreover, the vegetable growers suffer from such difficulties as seasonal shortages of water, aging farmers, problems accessing capital, being too poor to enter the market, and low market values for their products (Andreas, Mizuno, Schad, Pakakrong, & Franklin, 2012; Jitsanguan, 2001).

Given the aims of promoting vegetable growers, improving their managerial ability is an appropriate solution. "Managerial ability" refers to a farmer's degree of capability in managing farm inputs (labor, land, and capital) and farm resources, including farm operations, to reach farm goals (Allahyari, Saburi, & Keshavarz, 2011).

However, improving managerial ability is not easy because it is commonly determined by a farmer's characteristics, such as age, educational level, farm experience,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: panatda003@hotmail.com (P. Utaranakorn).

Peer review under responsibility of Kasetsart University.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2016.08.001>

2452-3151/Copyright © 2016, Kasetsart University. Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Please cite this article in press as: Utaranakorn, P., & Yasunobu, K., The mutual influence of managerial ability and social networks of farmers on participation in an organic vegetable group in Khon Kaen province, Thailand, Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2016.08.001>

training programs, and source of labor (Lawrence, 2011; Nuthall, 2009; Yarmohamadi, Samani, Poursaeed, & Vahedi, 2014). In addition, previous research has shown that social networks promote improvement in managerial ability (Hoang, Castella, & Novosad, 2006; Isaac, Erickson, Quashie-San, & Timmer, 2007). For example, social networks play a pivotal role in farmers' decision-making about adopting new technologies (Matuschke & Qaim, 2009; Tatlonghari, Paris, Siliphouthone, & Suhaeti, 2012). Furthermore, Seeniang and Thaipakdee (2013) pointed out that it is necessary to consider how farmers/stakeholders share problems and exchange knowledge/experiences.

To the best of our knowledge, studies that discuss how managerial ability supports the formation of social networks are limited. Therefore, this study aimed: 1) to investigate farmers' managerial ability, social networks, and information sharing within their connected networks, and 2) to describe the mutual influence of managerial ability and social networks.

Methods

Sampling and Data Collection

The study was conducted in two sub-districts of Khon Kaen province—Wang Hin and Ban Han—where an organic vegetable group is located. The farmers' group had produced and sold surplus organic vegetables in both local and urban markets. The group consists of a group leader, group managers, and group members. Purposive random sampling was used to select the sample farmers. In all, 37 farmers who belonged to an organic group were listed as possible respondents. The list of potential respondents was obtained during a consultation meeting with the local people, including the group leader and the development officers.

We interviewed 34 farmers (92%) using a structured questionnaire in September 2013. The questions focused on farm management skills and the number of farmers' networks. Managerial abilities were assessed via a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = very low ability, 2 = low ability, 3 = moderate ability, 4 = high ability, and 5 = very high ability.

Information on farmers' social networks can be obtained by asking farmers either "to name a maximum of three people with whom they often discussed agricultural decisions" (Matuschke & Qaim, 2009) or "to name an unlimited number of other people within their social network". For this study, we chose the second method, asking farmers to provide the number of people they frequently consulted and with whom they discussed agricultural issues. We believed this question would elicit more information about the exchanges between the farmers and other network members. After reviewing the literature and considering our options, we included the following two questions: (1) "To whom do you usually turn for agricultural information?" and (2) "What agricultural issues do you discuss within your networks?" in order to access the topics of information discussed within connected networks. The data derived from answers to the first question were used to analyze the social network.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used for the level of the farmer's managerial ability and frequency of discussions within the networks. To interpret the mean score of managerial ability, an interval scale was employed. Five rankings were set as follows: very low = 1.00–1.79, low = 1.80–2.59, moderate = 2.60–3.39, high = 3.40–4.19, and very high = 4.20–5.00. For the social network analysis, UCINET 6 for Windows Version 6.487 (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002), was applied to draw farmers' networks.

Results and Discussion

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Farmers

The age of farmers ranged from 29 to 67 years (mean = 48 years) and the average farm size was 3.6 ha, with an average area of 1.7 ha for rice cultivation. The number of vegetable varieties planted averaged seven. The average household income was 233,133 baht per year, with approximately 75 percent of the household income of group members being generated from farming. Farm income was derived from selling rice, sugarcane, cassavas, fruit and vegetables, and livestock products.

Managerial Abilities of Farmers

Figure 1 shows that about 59 percent of the respondents have a high level of managerial ability, implying that the major farmers have good skills in farm management. As farmers' participation in the organic vegetable group increases, they have more chances to increase their skills through training programs, learning from farming centers, and exchanging experience and knowledge among group members/connectors.

In addition, not only were marketing skills improved, but also information, communication, and technical skills were developed to increase farmers' marketing power.

As a result, about 75 percent of the farmers in the study area have very high or high levels of marketing skills. Moreover, the results revealed that most of the farmers have high levels of technical skills (79.4%), communicative skills (64.7%), and information skills (61.8%).

Structure of Farmers' Networks

In Figure 2, the numbers refer to the number of connectors that the sample farmers usually meet to access and share agricultural information. Figure 2a shows that farmers with high managerial ability have larger networks than those who have low ability. They often connect with other actors, and other actors customarily consult with them. In particular, these farmers hold high positions within the farmers' group, such as head or vice-head and marketing manager. They also often meet with other group members to discuss agricultural conditions and problems, as well as with other farmers from nearby villages and the staff of farmers' organizations outside the villages (Totterdell, Holman, & Hukin, 2008).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6844094>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6844094>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)