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**Exploring the enablers and barriers for farmers to
produce within Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS):
A case of organic vegetable farms in Thailand, with a
comparative study of Vietnam**



Master thesis

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Exploring the enablers and barriers for farmers to produce within Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS): A case of organic vegetable farms in Thailand, with a comparative study of Vietnam

Abstract:

The organic sector in Southeast Asia has undergone substantial growth, mirroring rising demand. Particularly, smallholder farmers turn to Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) certification due to challenges in third-party certification. PGS closely aligns with agroecology principles, allowing smallholder farmers to maintain sustainable livelihoods while providing safe, nutritious products to consumers. In Thailand, PGS plays a pivotal role in the organic sector, as it responds to demand. Despite PGS offering several benefits, challenges persist due to various factors. Its implementation remains confined to a relatively limited scale, hindered by insufficient supplies, institutional collaboration, and government support. Consequently, PGS needs to overcome these limitations to empower smallholder farmers effectively and promote the agroecology concept, ensuring a sustainable food system. This is the case not only for Thailand, but also for other developing countries like Vietnam. The primary objective of this study was to explore the intricacies of PGS in Thailand. It specifically focused on identifying the factors that enable or hinder PGS farmers' success in implementing the system effectively. The study also explored hidden influences on the development of organic PGS in this context. The study was conducted using organic vegetable production in urban areas as a case study. The research employed qualitative methods, specifically system analysis workshops and semi-structured interviews, to gather insightful information. This study reveals that the structure of PGS in Thailand is intricate. Findings from workshops and interviews underscore six domains encompassing enablers and barriers to PGS farmers' success. These domains are interrelated to the theory of change for achieving agroecology and the attributes of the system analysis method: knowledge, markets, collaboration and interaction, policy, physical infrastructure, and organisation management. Additionally, a multitude of hidden motives were uncovered in this context. In a comparative analysis between organic PGS in Thailand and Vietnam, while similarities exist, noteworthy differences arise. These aspects, whether convergent or divergent, impact not only PGS farmers but also involve various stakeholders. Hence, it is imperative for both nations to address barriers in order to propel the implementation of PGS within their respective contexts.

Keywords: Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), Enablers, Barriers, Organic vegetable production, Smallholder farmers, Developing countries

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