

Public Participation in Farmer Development of Agriculture Land Reform Office, Thailand

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were; 1) to study the level of people's participation in farmer development work of the Land Reform Office; 2) to compare the level of people's participation in farmer development work of the Land Reform Office, 3) to seek the ways to promote and develop the people's participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office. This study is a mixed method research, both qualitative research and quantitative research. The sample group consisted of 400 persons using a simple sampling method. In the qualitative research, the interview was conducted with 3 administrators of the Land Reform Office and the group discussion was conducted with 13 farmers. The research results revealed that the level of participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office was entirely found to be at a moderate level. In comparing the participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office classified by gender, age, education level, occupation, income, number of household workers, social position, and group membership, no difference was found. Problems and recommendations to promote and improve the level of participation revealed that the staffs lacked knowledge and understanding and lack of work skills. The promotion was without taking into account the needs of the people/farmers, the discontinued project implementation. There were rules, regulations, and work processes causing delays and not receiving information thoroughly. As for the suggestion of solutions, it was found that there were in 4 aspects; personnel, production, public relations, and knowledge development.

Keywords: Participation, Farmer Development, Agriculture Land Reform Office

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Introduction

Public participation is a distribution of opportunities for people to participate in politics and administration on decision making in various matters, including the allocation of community and national resources (Kalpangmark & Gluntapura, 2014; Kungsadan & Klinkeson, 2015; Sakulbongkan, 2015). This will affect the way of life and the well-being of the people by providing information, opinions, advice, participate in planning and co-operation as well as direct control from people (Mitprasat & Chansilp, 2018; Rangmeesrisuk, 2018; Toowichien & Sintao, 2022). It is widely accepted that public participation is an important component in building sustainable democracy (Chinnasri & Amornsiriphong, 2018; Rotprasoet, Dongjit & Webb, 2022). It is the distribution of opportunities for people as a citizen with human dignity. The Agricultural Land Reform Office (ALRO) is an agency under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives that has driven the development of the quality of life of farmers in line with the sufficiency economy along with supporting people to take part in development. The work of the development of agricultural scholars, learning center, land reform volunteer for agriculture, and representatives of farmers in the Provincial Land Reform Committee, etc. was linked. At present, ALRO is entering the 3rd year of its mission for the people in 3 main areas, namely organizing land to improve the quality of life for farmers and conservation of natural resources in which operations in the near future will have to be in the midst of changes in almost every aspect economically, socially, politically and technologically. This included agriculture, information, global climate change, and population structure. This will certainly affect future land reforms both directly and indirectly, especially the economic issues that go into the system of fully liberal capitalism and the opening of free trade with various countries as well as the country's economic development model or Thailand 4.0 that will begin to be used for the economic development of Thailand. This will drive policies or directions in the Thai agricultural sector by using the "Pracharat" driven approach. It aims to create cooperation from all sectors, including the private sector, educational institutes, and various financial institutes to work altogether. The focus is on the aptitude and strength of each organization to develop Thailand further into an agro-industrial processed agriculture for health, modern agriculture, digital agriculture and agricultural tourism. There are 5 target industries that have potential and can be expanded including the agro-food industry and biotechnology, health industry, intelligent equipment and robotics industry, modern technology digital industry, and the industry to create and add value to services amid the changing situation that affects the Thai agricultural sector. As mentioned above, ALRO needs to adjust its direction in land reform to be able to cope with these changes. It must be the duty of the executives and personnel of the ALRO, both at present and in the future, to be the main mechanism for driving the work. From the aforementioned reasons and necessities, we can see and realize the importance of education on the level of people's participation in farmer development of the Provincial Land Reform Office to create and develop the work process of the agency and guidelines for promoting public participation in farmer development work. This will enable to determine the direction to cope with the positive and negative factors possibly arising. If there is a suitable walking path, it will be able to walk stably in the midst of both desirable and undesirable changes. Therefore, effective and efficient development work must seek appropriate approaches and methods for engaging the people's sector in development.

The objectives of this study were; 1) to study the level of people's participation in farmer development work of the Land Reform Office; 2) to compare the level of people's participation in farmer development work of the Land Reform Office, 3) to seek the ways to promote and develop the people's participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office.

Research Methodology

This study is a mixed method research, both qualitative research and quantitative research. The sample consisting of 400 persons was obtained from a random sampling of 13,081 persons who had land in the land reform area of Sakon Nakhon Province. The tool used in the study was a questionnaire divided into 3 parts. Part 1 was Personal Characteristics. There were 8 questions in the Check List form including gender, age, education level, occupation, income, number of household workers, social position and group membership. Part 2 was the level of people’s participation in farmer development work of the Land Reform Office which was divided into 6 aspects; 1) Information provision, 2) Openness to opinions from the public, 3) Consultation, 4) Joint Planning/Co-operation, 5) Joint Monitoring, 6) People’s Control. Part 3 was Problems and recommendations for improving the level of people’s participation in the farmer development of the Land Reform Office. The questionnaires in parts 2 and 3 were in the form of questionnaires. There were five levels of Rating Scale; the highest participation, high participation, moderate participation, less participation, and the least participation. The statistics used in the analysis were the percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and f-test. In the qualitative research, interview was conducted with 3 administrators of the Land Reform Office and group discussion was conducted with 13 farmers.

Research Results

From the personal characteristics of the sample group used in this study, it was found that most of the respondents of 277 persons were male representing 63.3%, aged between 41-50 years for 55.8%, having completed primary school education for 91% and most were farmers for 80.5%. Most of them had incomes of not more than 5,000 baht per month representing 60%. There were only 2 workers in the household calculated as 65%. Most of them did not have a social position for 72.5% and were not members of the group accounted for 50.3%.

Level of people’ participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office

Table 1 shows the results of the analysis on the level of participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office entirely. It was found to be at a moderate level. When considering each aspect, it was found that they participated in the consultation, information provision, and aspect of receiving opinions from the public at a high level. Joint planning/co-operation and joint monitoring were at a moderate level and public control was at a low level.

Table 1 The level of participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office

Participation	Level of participation		
	\bar{X}	S.D	Interpretation of results
Information provision	3.49	.94	High
Openness to opinions from the public	3.39	.94	High
Consultation	3.82	1.64	High
Joint Planning/Co-operation	3.38	.63	Moderate
Joint Monitoring	2.67	.68	Less
People’s Control	1.97	0.52	Less
Total	3.12	.89	Moderate

Comparison on the level of people’s participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office

Comparison results of participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office classified by gender, age, level of education, occupation, income, number of household workers, social position, and group membership were found to have no difference.

Seeking ways to promote and develop people's participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office

Problems and recommendations to promote and improve the level of participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office of Sakon Nakhon Province were as follows. In terms of problems, it was found that 1) officials lacked knowledge, understanding, and work skills in terms of public participation, 2) promotion without taking into account the needs of the people/farmers, 3) there was a non-continuous project implementation resulting in failure of development, 4) having rules, regulations, various work procedures that caused the delay, 5) Inadequate information received. In terms of suggesting solutions to problems, it was found that 1) for personnel aspect, personnel must be developed at all levels in order to understand the working process with participation. 2) In the production aspect, quality production must be developed together with effective management of agricultural products throughout the supply chain. There is continuity in every process to emphasize public participation. In addition, there are periodic follow-up and evaluation in order to improve the work to be more efficient. 3) Public relations must have publicity of the news through the creation of network of leaders or land reform volunteers at the village level, sub-district level and district level. 4) For the knowledge development, apart from the knowledge of land reform, the agricultural innovations must be brought to disseminate and to promote the production process, create knowledge and understanding of sustainable land use as well as creating a new generation of farmers or the descendants of farmers.

Conclusion & Discussion

The level of participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office of Sakon Nakhon Province was overall found to be at a moderate level. When considering each aspect, it was found that they participated in the consultation, information provision, and receiving opinions from the public at a high level, joint planning/co-operation, and joint monitoring at a moderate level. The public control was at a low level. This was consistent with the research of Sinthuuthai (2017) studying the people's participation in the preparation of a three-year development plan of the Makrut Sub-district Administrative Organization, Khok Pho District, Pattani Province. The research results revealed that people participated in the preparation of the three-year development plan of the Makrut Sub-district Administrative Organization, Khok Pho District, Pattani Province. The overall income was at a low level. The monitoring/evaluation aspect was at the lowest level, followed by the implementation of activities, contributing ideas and suggesting guidelines and receiving benefits from people with different gender, age, marital status, educational level, occupation and income taking part in the preparation of the three-year development plan of Makrut Sub-district Administrative Organization, Khok Pho District, Pattani Province. The income was at a low level without difference. The most common problem was inadequate public relations, followed by management problems and the problem of not having time to attend public meetings. For the suggestions for improving public participation, the most suggested thing was that development projects should be carried out in accordance with the power and duties in various fields, in more areas of the village, followed by that the people should be involved in expressing their opinions. The executives should also visit more informal areas such as the Coffee Discussion to gather information about people's problems.

Comparative results of participation in farmer development of the Land Reform Office classified by gender, age, education level, occupation, income, number of workers in the household, social position, group membership revealed to have no difference. This agreed with the research of Rattanaphan (2000) studying the participation of village committees in village development: Case study of Chaturaphak Phiman District, Roi Et Province. It was found that most of the village committees were members of social groups to be trained and

receive information at a moderate level. They had opinions on the operation of the village committee at a high level. The village committee involved in the development to a large extent. When considering each aspect, the averages were sorted from the least to the most including participation in problem determination, participation in monitoring performance and participation in problem studies. Village committee participation in village development: Case study of Chaturaphak Phiman District, Roi Et Province, classified by sex, age, marital status, education level, occupation and income was found to have no difference.

From the study, the researchers had two recommendations as follows:

In Policy: 1) Develop the organization and personnel to have high performance and understand on the participatory work process. 2) Use the participative work processes concretely to provide opportunities for people to participate in public administration with a plan and a clear summary of reports and documents. 3) Promote technology or suitable new innovations by supporting farmers to learn from the initiatives and practice based on existing knowledge and skills combined with new ideas while participating in the learning process. 4) Promote the creation of a network of leaders, philosophers, and new generations of farmers to be able to be connected, share experiences and help one another. 5) The policy must be clear and has continuity. In addition, effective production and management of agricultural products must be promoted throughout the supply chain.

In Practice: 1) Encouraging farmers to manage and solve their own problems requires learning altogether by taking action in the real area. 2) Development must address the needs or problems of the people. 3) Quality production must be developed with effective management of agricultural products throughout the supply chain. There must be continuity in every process to emphasize public participation. In addition, there is periodic monitoring and evaluation in order to improve the work to be more efficient. They may be open to communication in both formal forms and informal, such as meetings, the use of technology systems to follow up on work, report problems, interruptions in operations to help in solving problems. 4) Promote the body of knowledge to farmers by considering the context of the area and the changing environment importantly.

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