

Strategic Development and Capacity-Building Model for Enhancing the Operations of Agricultural Housewives Groups in Chiang Mai Province

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the strategic development models and enhance the operational capacity of rural housewife farmers in Chiang Mai province. A qualitative research methodology was employed through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 20 rural housewife farmers, based on a conceptual framework that categorizes strategies into four types: proactive strategy (SO), corrective strategy (WO), defensive strategy (ST), and reactive strategy (WT). The data were analyzed using a descriptive approach.

The findings revealed that the proactive strategy, which focuses on product development in collaboration with the government and networks, as well as the establishment of learning centers and experience-sharing platforms, plays a crucial role in adding value and improving product quality. The corrective strategy emphasizes the development of digital skills and online marketing, along with enhancing evaluation systems and fundraising to support continuous development. Meanwhile, the defensive strategy focuses on cost management and improving product quality by integrating local wisdom with innovation. The reactive strategy focuses on improving production systems and management by building partnerships and systematically managing knowledge. When all four strategies are integrated, rural housewife farmer groups in Chiang Mai will become stronger, standardized, and able to compete sustainably in the modern market.

Keywords: Development Strategy Models; Enhancing Operational Capacity;
Rural Housewife Farmer Groups

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Introduction

The agricultural women's groups are an essential component of the rural community economy, as they play a significant role in enhancing household income and improving the quality of life at the local level. This is especially true in Chiang Mai Province, an area with high agricultural potential for producing both crops and traditional handicrafts. Agricultural women's groups, therefore, serve as a vital mechanism for driving grassroots economic growth. However, due to the changing economic and social environment, such as increased market competition, technological advancements, and internal management constraints, these groups face significant challenges in operations and in developing their potential to align with modern times (Moonnanut, 2024).

The principles for developing agricultural women's groups thus focus on creating effective operational strategies, which include strengthening management skills, developing market knowledge, building networks, and enhancing production capacity. These efforts aim to ensure the groups' sustainability and their ability to compete in the long run (Moonnanut, 2024; Pommarang, 2024). Meanwhile, agricultural women's groups in Chiang Mai also face problems that impact their ability to continue operating and developing. First, there is the issue of management that lacks systematization and the application of technology in production and quality control, resulting in high production costs and an inability to compete in a highly competitive market. Second, there is a lack of funding and resources to develop the group, as the management of finances and investments is not systematic, which hinders the group's development and expansion. Third, there are challenges in accessing modern technologies and markets, especially in the digital era, where adaptation and skill development are necessary. Many group members have relatively low levels of education, making it difficult to implement technology in improving production processes and marketing communications.

As previously discussed by the researchers, the focus is on analyzing and proposing strategic approaches for developing and enhancing the operational capacity of agricultural women's groups in Chiang Mai, integrating proactive, corrective, preventive, and reactive strategies to comprehensively address both internal and external challenges. The study results are expected to provide guidelines for improving management processes, innovating production procedures, and expanding marketing in the digital era. Furthermore, the proposed approaches

can serve as a foundation for developing policies and support from both public and private sectors, aimed at strengthening the sustainability and resilience of agricultural women's groups at the community and regional levels.

Research Objective

The objective of this study is to examine the strategic development models and enhance the operational capacity of the agricultural women's groups in Chiang Mai Province.

Research Methodology

This research employs a participatory action research approach driven by the process of collaborative action learning. The research process is as follows:

1 . Population and Sample: The research population includes agricultural extension officers responsible for supporting agricultural women's groups at the provincial and district levels, with 10 participants. The sample also consists of 20 representatives from agricultural women's groups in Chiang Mai Province.

2 . Research Tools: The research tools used in this study include in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, designed to collect information regarding the development strategies and capacity-building of agricultural women's groups in Chiang Mai. The tools were content-validated by experts, and the reliability of the questionnaires was tested to ensure the credibility of the data.

3 . Data Collection: The researcher utilized qualitative data collection methods, conducting in-depth interviews with agricultural women's groups to gather detailed information on the development strategies and capacity-building efforts of the groups.

4. Data Analysis: To ensure accurate data that can be practically used to develop strategies, data analysis will be conducted in three main steps:

4.1 Analysis of Internal and External Environments, SWOT analysis will be employed to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the agricultural women's groups.

4.2 TOWS Matrix Analysis, A TOWS Matrix will be used to pair external and internal factors derived from the SWOT analysis to develop appropriate strategies, including: 1) SO Strategy (Proactive Strategy): Leverage

strengths to capitalize on opportunities. 2) WO Strategy (Corrective Strategy): Address weaknesses to take advantage of existing opportunities. 3) ST Strategy (Defensive Strategy): Use strengths to mitigate the impact of threats. 4) WT Strategy (Survival Strategy): Reduce weaknesses and prepare to address potential threats.

4.3 Synthesis and Presentation of Development Guidelines, The findings from the analysis will be synthesized into concrete guidelines to propose strategies for the development and capacity-building of agricultural women's groups in a sustainable manner.

Results

The researcher conducted a study on the strategic development model and capacity-building enhancement of operations within agricultural housewife groups in Chiang Mai Province. Data collection was carried out using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The findings are summarized according to the research objectives as follows:

Strategies for Developing and Enhancing the Operational Capacity of Agricultural Housewives' Groups	Explanation
Proactive Strategy (SO)	<p>Product Development Strategy in Collaboration with Government and Networks: This strategy aims to leverage the group's strengths in coordinating with government agencies and adopting standardized administrative systems to enhance the quality of products. Key approaches include market research, prototype development in collaboration with experts, continuous testing and improvement, and obtaining certification from relevant regulatory bodies.</p> <p>Strategy for Establishing a Learning and Knowledge Transfer Center: By utilizing the expertise and long-standing experience of senior members, this strategy focuses on consolidating knowledge, developing structured curricula and manuals, and preparing training spaces and facilitators. The objective is to build a collaborative network with educational institutions and development agencies to disseminate and share practical experiences.</p> <p>Strategy for Developing a Model Management System: This strategy seeks to enhance transparent and standardized management systems by developing a comprehensive database, administrative manuals, effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and verifiable reports to ensure accountability and operational efficiency.</p>

	<p>Strategy for Expanding Collaborative Networks with Other Groups: The focus here is to broaden the database of networks and alliances, organize knowledge-sharing and exchange activities, and develop joint production and marketing projects. This will create effective communication and coordination channels to drive the group’s continuous development and strengthen its operational impact.</p>
<p>Corrective Strategy (WO)</p>	<p>Developing Public Relations and Communication Systems: Utilize diverse communication channels and technologies to enhance the presentation of information and achievements of the group. This includes developing a website, social media platforms, and engaging content related to the group’s products, while also providing communication skills training and fostering networks with local media.</p> <p>Enhancing Knowledge and Skills of Members: Leverage support from government agencies and external networks to create a personnel development plan, conduct practical training workshops, organize study visits, and establish a mentoring system. These initiatives aim to enhance the knowledge and skills of members, particularly those with limited educational backgrounds.</p> <p>Establishing Evaluation Systems and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Develop a standardized monitoring and evaluation system, define clear KPIs, and create effective data collection tools to utilize evaluation results for the continuous improvement of the group.</p> <p>Strengthening Fundraising Systems: Implement government-supported policies and network collaborations to design an efficient business plan, develop grant proposals, collaborate with local financial institutions, and explore new alternative funding sources. These efforts aim to improve access to financial resources and ensure the group’s financial sustainability.</p>
<p>Strategic Prevention (ST)</p>	<p>The development of a mentorship system and succession planning to address the aging membership issue by creating a clear succession plan, developing an experience-sharing system, and motivating younger generations to participate.</p> <p>Adding value to products through the development of modern packaging, creating product identity, raising production standards, and integrating local wisdom with innovation to differentiate in the market.</p> <p>Developing an integrated marketing system by expanding sales channels both online and offline, building a strong brand, and developing digital marketing strategies to respond to changes in consumer behavior and technology.</p> <p>Creating differentiation through local wisdom and innovation in the production process by conducting product research and development, integrating traditional knowledge with modern technology, and adding value to local resources to support market competition.</p>

Defensive Strategy (WT)	<p>Improve production systems and management: Develop production systems to align with market demands, reduce costs, enhance efficiency through technology, and strengthen quality control and data management systems for greater effectiveness.</p> <p>Build business partner networks: Collaborate with partners in procurement, production, and distribution while exchanging knowledge and technology to increase business opportunities and enhance competitiveness.</p> <p>Develop new products: Research consumer needs, develop value-added products and modern packaging, and continuously test and improve products.</p> <p>Systematically manage knowledge: Collect, disseminate, and develop the knowledge of members, create a database and standard manuals, and promote learning for sustainability.</p>
Strategies for internal and external factors	Explanation
Proactive Strategy (SO)	<p>Strategy for Developing High-Quality Products: Establishing a research and development task force to study market demands and the use of natural raw materials, along with seeking certification from various standards organizations such as FDA, Thai Industrial Standards Institute (TISI), and Halal certification. Additionally, implementing a rigorous quality control system to enhance the product's credibility.</p> <p>Strategy for Expanding Online Marketing Channels: Developing an online inventory management system and creating stores on popular e-commerce platforms such as Lazada or Shopee. This also includes planning digital marketing strategies and training members in digital skills to support online marketing.</p> <p>Strategy for Developing a Local Brand: Creating a brand identity that reflects local characteristics by designing distinctive packaging that tells the story of the product. Furthermore, producing content that connects with local culture and continuously organizing promotional activities to increase brand awareness.</p> <p>Strategy for Promoting Innovation Participation: Organizing brainstorming sessions and forming innovation teams composed of skilled members, supporting the experimentation and development of new products, and providing continuous innovation training to enhance market competitiveness.</p>
Corrective Strategy (WO)	<p>Develop digital skills and online marketing: Focus on enhancing members' skills through training on e-commerce platform usage, online marketing, and social media. Create a mentoring system, monitor progress, and support the exchange of experiences within the membership network.</p> <p>Utilize technology and innovation to develop systems:</p>

	<p>Improve work processes by applying appropriate technologies, such as accounting systems, inventory management, and production, while also developing personnel to fully utilize these technologies.</p> <p>Develop welfare systems and management: Survey members' welfare needs, study appropriate models, collaborate with the government sector, and develop a transparent and participatory management system.</p> <p>Build business collaboration networks: Strengthen relationships with partners both within and outside the area through cooperation projects, such as product development, sharing marketing channels, and utilizing shared resources, with the establishment of fair agreements.</p>
Strategic Prevention (ST)	<p>Cost Management System Development Strategy: This strategy focuses on utilizing strengths in systematic management to reduce costs, emphasizing cost structure analysis, expense control, group purchasing of raw materials, and maximizing production process efficiency.</p> <p>Product Quality and Standards Development Strategy: The strategy aims to differentiate by continuously improving product standards, starting from raw material selection to finished goods. It also involves research and development to introduce new products and build consumer confidence.</p> <p>Community Fundraising and Internal Resource Mobilization Strategy: This strategy promotes member participation in establishing revolving funds, creating a network for shared resource use, and developing a transparent and sustainable fund management system.</p> <p>Brand Creation Strategy through Local Identity: The strategy focuses on preserving local wisdom and culture to create a unique identity for the products. This includes developing packaging, crafting product stories, and implementing marketing communications that reflect the value and uniqueness of local identity.</p>
Defensive Strategy (WT)	<p>Risk Management System Development Strategy: This strategy focuses on reducing risks arising from economic fluctuations by conducting in-depth risk analysis, developing a comprehensive risk management plan, and establishing an early warning system. It also aims to build a collaborative network to manage emergency situations effectively.</p> <p>Strategy for Enhancing Adaptation Skills for Members: The strategy emphasizes the development of members' potential through training in essential skills such as technology use, marketing, and management. It includes mentoring systems and supports practical hands-on experience to prepare members to adapt to changes.</p> <p>Welfare and Benefits System Improvement Strategy: This strategy aims to review and improve welfare benefits to align with the economy. It includes the establishment of welfare and savings funds, the development of a fair profit-sharing system, and the creation of supplementary income opportunities.</p>

	<p>Strategy for Fostering Cooperation Among Groups: This strategy promotes group consolidation and strengthens bargaining power by creating cooperative networks among farmers' groups. It also focuses on the development of an information exchange system, organizing learning exchange activities, and empowering joint procurement and product sales.</p> <p>High-Value Added Product Development Strategy: The strategy focuses on research and development of unique and high-value products. It involves improving packaging to make it more appealing, incorporating local wisdom and stories into the products, and creating appropriate distribution channels for enhanced market reach.</p>
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Table 1 outlines the objective of this study: to explore strategic development models and strengthen the operational capacity of agricultural women's groups in Chiang Mai Province.

Discussion

From the research study on the development strategy and capacity-building model for the operation of agricultural housewife groups in Chiang Mai Province, several key points for discussion are as follows:

1. Proactive Strategy (SO): Proactive strategies are essential for product development and collaboration with the government and business networks to promote the development of high-quality, standardized products. These strategies not only enhance production capacity but also build market confidence and increase opportunities to expand online sales channels. Investing in technology and creating a local identity in the brand will effectively raise market awareness both domestically and internationally. The strategy of product development in cooperation with the government and networks aligns with Intase, Y. (2024), which found that when farmer groups collaborate with government and research institutions in product development, they can access markets effectively and sustainably. This collaboration enhances credibility and enables competitiveness in a highly competitive market. Additionally, the strategy of creating learning centers and sharing experiences, as proposed by Pan, S. L. (2001), about the creation of "abstract knowledge" through experience sharing and the establishment of learning networks, is a principle that can further develop agricultural housewife groups by increasing knowledge and skills applicable to local economic development. Furthermore, the strategy for developing a management system aligns with Brown, P. (2005), on the Balanced Scorecard, which can be used to create an efficient management system by monitoring and evaluating performance effectively,

providing agricultural housewife groups with transparent and accountable management tools.

2 . Corrective Strategy (WO): The corrective strategy focuses on developing communication systems and digital skills training for members, enabling agricultural housewife groups to utilize digital tools to promote products and build relationships with markets. Using technology in accounting and inventory management will increase operational efficiency and reinforce confidence in management systems, while also helping groups access new funding and revenue sources. This strategy of developing public relations and communication systems is supported by Oladosu, T. L. (2024) in his work on "Influential Communication," which emphasizes that the use of new media such as websites and social media can strengthen the group's image and increase awareness among target audiences effectively. Moreover, the strategy of enhancing knowledge and skills of members, as suggested by Rubel, M. R. B. (2021) on Self-Efficacy, can be used to develop skills and boost members' confidence, enabling them to perform effectively. Additionally, the development of evaluation systems and indicators, following Zhang, Y. (2023) on formative and summative evaluations, helps agricultural housewife groups create systems that not only evaluate but also ensure the quality and efficiency of product and operational development processes.

3 . Defensive Strategy (ST): Defensive strategies focus on preparing for potential issues from both internal and external sources by developing cost management and quality control systems to enhance the stability of agricultural housewife groups in the face of market competition. Using technology to increase product value and differentiate it from ordinary products creates a significant competitive advantage. Furthermore, building partnerships and developing a digital marketing system can create more opportunities for business expansion. The development of mentoring systems and succession planning, as suggested by Sisabai, S. (2023) on organizational development and succession planning, can be applied to ensure that knowledge and experience are not lost in agricultural housewife groups. Additionally, the strategy of creating value-added products, aligned with Chotiko, A. (2023) on Competitive Advantage, recommends that developing product identities and differentiating through modern packaging can add value. An important strategy is the development of an integrated marketing system, following Leksuma, P. (2023) on Integrated Marketing, as a tool for expanding both

online and offline marketing channels, helping groups adapt to changes in consumer behavior and technology.

4 . Reactive Strategy (WT): Reactive strategies emphasize risk management and creating operational flexibility by developing risk management systems and training members to adapt to unexpected situations, which helps reduce the impact of economic uncertainty. Building partnerships and developing new products that meet market demands will help groups expand markets and increase steady income. The strategy to improve production systems and management, aligned with Kheawyuong, S. (2024) on reducing production costs and increasing efficiency through technology, can be used to enhance the production system of agricultural housewife groups. Additionally, creating business networks aligns with Krämer, N. C. (2021) in "The Strength of Weak Ties," which shows that building strong business networks can open new opportunities for business expansion and increase competitiveness.

New Knowledge

The research on the strategic development and capacity-building model for the operation of agricultural women's groups in Chiang Mai Province emphasizes the need for the integration of both internal and external strategies. The new knowledge derived from this research includes the following key points:

1 . Integration of Proactive and Corrective Strategies: The proactive strategy, which focuses on developing high quality products, establishing learning centers, and improving management systems, plays a crucial role in driving the growth of the group. Meanwhile, the corrective strategy, which emphasizes the development of digital skills, fundraising, and communication strategies, helps the group overcome challenges and limitations effectively.

2. Network Building and Collaboration: Creating alliances both within and outside the group is fundamental to expanding market channels and enhancing competitiveness. The exchange of knowledge and experiences between agricultural women's groups and government and private sector organizations strengthens the group's database and resources, supporting product and innovation development.

3. Utilization of Technology and Local Wisdom: The research highlights the importance of combining modern technology with local wisdom in product

development and production processes. This not only adds value to the products but also creates uniqueness and differentiation in the market.

4 . Development of Management Systems and Knowledge Transfer: Developing transparent and standardized management systems, along with the compilation and transfer of knowledge through manuals and databases, provides tools that allow agricultural women's groups to continuously assess and improve their operations, strengthening the internal structure and preparing future generations for continued growth.

The new knowledge gained from this research offers a comprehensive approach that spans product and management system development, network building, and the integration of technology with local wisdom. This can be applied to enhance and sustain the strength of agricultural women's groups in the future.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The research findings summarize the overall strategic development and capacity-building strategies for the operations of the farmer's housewife group in Chiang Mai Province as follows: 1) Proactive Strategy (SO): Develop products in collaboration with the government and networks, create learning centers, develop standard management systems, and expand cooperation networks. 2) Corrective Strategy (WO): Develop public relations and communication systems, enhance members' knowledge and skills, develop evaluation systems, and establish fundraising systems. 3) Preventive Strategy (ST): Develop mentoring systems, add value to products, implement integrated marketing strategies, and utilize local wisdom in production. 4) Defensive Strategy (WT): Improve production systems, create business partner networks, develop new products, and manage knowledge for sustainability.

Based on these findings, the researcher offers two key recommendations: one for the practical application of the research results and the other for future research.

1. Recommendations for the Application of Research Findings:

1.1 Improve management practices: Utilize the data and approaches derived from the study to enhance the group's management systems, focusing on production planning, quality control, and data management.

1.2 Promote product and innovation development: Apply strategies for developing new value-added products and modern packaging design within the farmer's housewife group to enhance competitiveness and meet market demands.

1.3 Strengthen cooperation networks: Use the research findings as a foundation for creating partnerships with both government and private sectors, as well as for knowledge and experience exchange among groups to expand business opportunities and markets.

1.4 Develop training and knowledge transfer systems: Apply the concept of establishing learning centers and sharing the experiences of knowledgeable and capable members in organizing training programs to strengthen the group in the long term.

2. Recommendations for Future Research:

2.1 Study in other regions: Future research should focus on other provinces and farmer's housewife groups to compare and analyze the different factors influencing development and sustainability in each area.

2.2 Examine external factors: In-depth studies should explore external factors such as the impact of government policies, technological advancements, and market changes to create a comprehensive understanding and develop more effective strategies.

2.3 Follow-up and evaluation: Research should include monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the developed strategies within the farmer's housewife groups to assess their success and identify potential issues for future improvement.

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