

INDEPENDENT EX POST EVALUATION

A Southeast Asian Partnership to Build Capacity for Fresh and Processed Fruit and Vegetable Products in Thailand and Vietnam (STDF/PG/326: MACBETH Project)



**Evaluated by:
A. Graffham**

**Natural Resources Institute
University of Greenwich**

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STDF/PG/326 (MACBETH)

- **Partners:** Michigan State University (MSU) in cooperation with Kasetsart University (KU), Thailand and Can Tho University (CTU) Viet Nam
- **Goal:** To improve market access of fruits and vegetables from Thailand and Vietnam to high-value domestic/export markets.
- **Approach:** Development of a competency-based education and training platform for selected fresh/processed fruit and vegetable value chains, and provision of customised training.
- **Implementation dates:** Jan. 2011-June 2013 (including 6 month, no-cost extension)
- **STDF contribution:** US\$581,665

Evaluation

Evaluator: Andrew Graffham, Natural Resources Institute, UK

Evaluation mission:

- Thailand: 30 Nov. – 4 Dec. 2015
- Vietnam: 6 -11 Dec. 2015

Methodology:

- Review of documents and websites to gather information relevant to the evaluation questions and assess whether the training materials developed were easily accessible to potential users.
- Interviews with project partners and representatives of beneficiaries (government extension services, research institutions, farmers, cooperatives, pack-house and processing facilities, retailers, exporters, etc.)

Key Findings: Positive Impact

- Better management of food safety risks within the supply chain
- Improved access to higher-value markets (domestic and export)
- Increased sales (volume and value)

Thailand:

- One Vegetable Cooperative said project training increased customer base ~10%, sales ↑18%, ↓ in post-harvest losses
- SIAM-MAKRO reported reduction in detection of contaminants and rejections since FSM programme implemented after project and increased procurement from small-scale farmers and processors

Vietnam:

- One fruit and veg exporter saw project as springboard to obtain ISO22000:2005 certification → access to higher value markets (EU, Japan, US)
- Farmers from Onion Cooperative said implementation of GAP after project increased farm incomes by reducing the number of product rejections

Conclusions: Overall Judgement (1)

- Project was (and continues to be) highly relevant for the beneficiaries.
- Delivery was effective. Most outputs achieved within project lifespan. However, unfortunate that trainee assessment tools were not developed as planned as they would be an important element to build into future programmes.
- Limited internet access in rural areas forced the project away from blended learning towards a purely face-to-face approach (supplemented by e-resources in local languages).
- Project overcame numerous difficulties and delivered a wide reaching training programme.

Conclusions: Overall Judgement (2)

- The project had a significant and lasting impact on enhancing management of food safety risks within fruit and vegetable value chains.
- Beneficiaries gained benefits from the project, e.g. improved market access, higher incomes and lower levels of product rejections.
- Project outputs are being sustained through integration into government extension services, private sector's own training programmes, and KU/CTU professional/academic programmes.

Specific Recommendations

1. MSU should share trainee assessment tools it subsequently developed (under GFSP activity in Vietnam) with CTU and KU.
2. MSU should provide electronic copies of English language source materials to STDF as these could be valuable for future projects.
3. KU and CTU should update their project websites to remove errors/omissions identified.
4. KU should revise and re-issue their project training DVD for beneficiaries.
5. CTU should consider producing a DVD (with its training modules, films, etc.) for beneficiaries.
6. There is a case to support KU and CTU to work with their respective governments to promote wider uptake of the projects outputs at national level, via extension services.
7. Explore options for future GFSP supported activities to refine, further develop and roll-out the materials developed under this project (with due credit to this STDF project).

General Recommendations

1. This type of project should really run for 3-5 years and have more resources to allow for greater mentoring support of trainees.
2. Private sector should be involved more actively at the project design stage and cost-sharing options explored.
3. Projects with multiple countries and partners should not be over-ambitious – substantial time needed to finalize operational arrangements.
4. Future e-learning platforms should incorporate trainee assessment tools developed against recognised standards, to add value to any training certificates issued.
5. Consideration should be given to extend project outputs to ASEAN member states to support development and adoption of harmonised training systems for ASEANGAP, as a mutually recognised and harmonised standard for trade within ASEAN.

Lessons learned

- Valuable to tailor food safety training to value chains -- much better uptake of messages.
- Difficult to fully engage national government stakeholders in project activities when they are not fully involved at design stage.
- Potential to build more PPPs to strengthen food safety management and address training needs on a cost-sharing basis.
- Food safety risks continue to evolve and it's essential to invest in updating knowledge on an ongoing basis.
- Growing potential for blended learning in Asia but internet access in rural areas (even within 50km of Bangkok) is still limited.