

Case Study #1 - Our Common Mission to Save Life, Thailand

A short documentary YOF: Journey of Hope, Our Common Mission to Save Life; introduces the story of Ms Pavinee Chaipak, a former activist who later turned herself into a farmer without planning. This was due to a personal illness, a tumor that may or may not develop into cancer. This incident lefts Ms Pavinee no choice but to recognise the seriousness of maintaining good health, and so she turned towards living a more nature-dependent lifestyle with an emphasis on homegrown food.



“Nowadays, if we don’t grow our own food, we won’t survive...food these days are contaminated with too many chemicals.” Ms Pavinee reflected on the ever-increasing urgency of the food sovereignty.

Pavinee admitted that when she first started, she didn’t know much about agriculture but with some trial and error, and learning from nature allows for her garden to flourish. Some of the plants she has are from seeds she had thrown off. She mentioned that naturally selected crops, those that survive on their own, are much stronger and require less care. She explained that there is no wrong in farming, and doing agriculture is the learning one does by getting their hands-on; that many things must be learned from experience and not through a book.

From these steady hands-on experiences, Pavinee was able to develop treatments for herself through the use of herbs, so much so that when she returned for a check-up on her tumour, it has seized growth. This event led her to believe that nature-oriented diet can help her maintain good health.

Ms Pavinee works to assist other farmers and her neighbours to turn towards home-grown crops. She does so by providing seeds for all and recommending ways to cook various vegetables.

Once her knowledge and collection of seeds grew, Ms Pavinee started a 'seed bank' where she goes and meet up with friends within her connection to exchange different varieties of seeds within over 14 seed banks all over Thailand. She believes that by exchanging seeds, she is creating diversity in plant biology and also, taking hold of her fate on food choices. When seeds are in the hands of farmers, no longer would she, and others like her, need to buy crops from large companies, allowing re-usage of collected seeds from these crops without having to buy new seeds for each cropping.

To Ms Pavinee, these seeds are the promise of a better future, the future that everyone takes care together. When people start to care more about crops, Pavinee believes that they would also care more about the land, the water, and agriculture as a whole. When the ecology is being disrupted, people will stand up to protect it.

Currently, her seed bank network comprises of 50 members who regularly exchanged over 300 types of seeds within their connection in a year. Pavinee planned to turn the seed bank into a social enterprise that opens for public-joint investment.

Ms Pavinee also coordinates with the Volunteer Project of Prince of Songkla University in creating an organic food restaurant. The restaurant had been opened for 4 months, holding about 30 customers a day with the total of 4 staffs - it provides not only homestyle organic dishes but also knowledge about the ingredients. The restaurant has its organic garden, managed by the young volunteers in the community that allow the 'in-house' organic ingredient to be over 50% when combined with their CSA scheme (Community Supported Agriculture). Ms Pavinee still works on increasing the yield from the restaurant's organic garden and finding more CSA members so that they can provide more natural ingredients to the customers.

From a woman who simply wanted to improve her health, Ms Pavinee had gone far beyond. She became the spearhead of the changes in the food system that allows the small-scale farmers and the consumers thrive in this market of sharing.

Case Study #2 - The Spirit of Young Entrepreneur, Cambodia

A Short Documentary YOF: Journey of Hope, The Spirit of Young Entrepreneur introduces the story of Tho Narith, a young graduate from Cambodia who turned himself from the middle-man of the agricultural crop into the young professional farmer.



Narith explained that after his graduation from the Royal University of Law and Economics - Development Economic, his friends and himself had a plan to deliver the organic products to the customer. However, after a test-run process and found that the cost overridden the profit rendering the infeasibility of the business plan. Narith learned that he would not survive in this business without being able to control the initial costs. Knowing this, he then planned to start a farm of his own.

Narith has no knowledge of agriculture, but thanks to his senior that introduced him to Dr Yang Siang Koma - an experienced Agronomist, Narith has had the chance to intern in Dr Koma's farm school in Takeo province for 4 months. A farm school is a place of learning for the young people want the hands-on experience of organic farming and agriculture-based business management.

Dr Koma's farm has over 40 acres of land. The 'students' will be divided into 3-4 groups, with 3-4 people in each group. Each group of students would then take care of 5 acres of land, learning how to grow crops and how to take care of animals under the supervision of Dr

Koma and other farmers within the community. The participants will get to learn techniques from planting the crops, collecting crops, team management, and market management through these hands-on classes. The profit gained from selling the produces at the market will be used for the reinvestment and then distributed to the members of the group as the startup money for their own farm.

After gaining some amount of money and knowledge, Narith and his friends, with the joint-investment with Dr Koma, bought their first piece of land to be the start of their farm in Kampot province.

Narith and friends turned a 24-acre land into an organic farm. Their farm had provided jobs for no less than 10 families within the community. Produces from the farm goes to two primary markets: the local market and the Natural Agri Product Shop of CEDAC(Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture), Civil Society Organisation found by Dr Koma that work to enhance the capacity of rural farmers.

Narith stated that 'running the farm, it always has the problems'. The challenges include lack of technical knowledge, weather, insects and disease, team working and financial management. However, he sees these problems as a part of life, something he cannot avoid. There were days that he wanted to give up, but he felt he couldn't, as no one else in his generation would do it.

Nowadays the majority of the agricultural market is chemical-grown crops. Narith sees the niche opportunity in organically grown vegetables, as those who do have the money to invest in these products had been ordering them from overseas. If he can provide these same organic crops for these customers, his business should be able to grow. He now works on getting his product certified.

Besides, his goal is to provide good accessible organic products for the community instead of regular chemical grown crops, but this goal is still far away. He also encourages the young generations that share the same dream of being the food producers to make a step to farming.

Currently, Narith's farm accepts intern students from the nearby University of Agriculture. In the future, Narith wants to turn his farm into a school that promotes the leading role of the younger generation in food production. Currently, there are farms of his network in 3 provinces; Kampot, Takeo, and Mondulkiri. Narith is confident that these farm schools would grow further soon.

Narith's story shows us not only his passion as a young farmer who wants to reclaim his role in food production but also exemplifies a practical model of the farm school that creates professional farmers with technical knowledge in producing, management, and marketing. The critical part that makes Dr Koma's farm school so successful is the hands-on learning environment for professional farmers supported by marketing channels to ensure the business survival and reinvest for the expansion of the farm schools, another model for creating the sustainable food chain.