

**FACTORS ENHANCING MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN
AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES OF MUANG DISTRICT
IN LAMPHUN PROVINCE, THAILAND**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF APPENDICES	xiii
INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problems	2
Objectives of the Study	3
Hypotheses of the Study	3
Significance of the Study	4
Scope and Limitation	5
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	7
Concept of Cooperative	7
History of Cooperative in Thailand	9
Principles of Cooperative	10
Types of Cooperatives	13
Concept of Agricultural Cooperatives	13
Socio-demographic Characteristics	15
Sources of Information and Communication Channels	17
Level of Expectation of Members on Benefits	20
Level of Participation	23

METHODOLOGY	26
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework	26
Operational Definition of Terms	28
Unit of Analysis	33
Research Design	33
Locale and Time of the Study	33
Sampling Procedure	33
Research Instrument	36
Pre-testing	37
Technique of Data-Gathering	37
Methods of Analysis	38
Level of Significance	39
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	40
Socio-demographic Characteristics	40
Sources of Information and Communication Channels	44
Level of Expectations of Members on Benefits	51
Level of Participation in the Activities/Programs of Muang Lamphun Agricultural Cooperatives	52
Participation in Specific Projects of the Cooperatives	53
Correlation Test of the Independent Variables with Level of Members' Participation in Cooperative Activities	56

	PAGE
Relationship between Socio Demographic Factors and Level of Members' Participation in Cooperative Activities	56
Relationship between Sources of Information/Communication Channels and Level of Members' Participation in Cooperative Activities	58
Relationship between Level of Expectation of Members on Benefit and Level of Members' Participation in Cooperative Activities	60
Test of Influence of the Independent Variables on the Level of Members' Participation in Cooperative Activities	61
Regression of the Independent Variables on the Level of Members' Participation on Capital Build-up	61
Regression of the Independent Variables on the Level of Members' Participation on Loan Program	63
Regression of the Independent Variables on the Level of Members' Participation in Organizational Meetings	64
Regression of the Independent Variables on the Level of Members' Participation on Trainings	66
Regression of the Independent Variables on the Level of Members' Participation on Buying and Selling Products	67
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	69
Summary	69
Conclusions	77
Recommendations	79

	PAGE
LITERATURE CITED	80
APPENDICES	83
Interview schedule	84
Letter-Request for permission to conduct interview	90
Budgetary requirements	91
Calendar of activities	92

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Distribution of the respondents by cooperative	35
2	Socio-demographic characteristics of cooperative group members	41
3	Summary of income based on sources	43
4	Sources of information relative to print media	46
5	Source of information relative to broadcast media	47
6	Interpersonal sources of information	49
7	Agricultural Extension Workers as source of information	50
8	Level of benefits expectation of members	51
9	Participation in activities/programs of the cooperatives in general	52
10	Projects of the cooperatives participated in	53
11	When cooperative projects were implemented	54
12	Assistance given to the cooperative projects	55
13	Relationship between socio-demographic factors and level of members' participation in cooperative activities	57
14	Relationship between sources of information and communication channels and level of members' participation in cooperative activities	59

TABLE**PAGE**

15	Relationship between level of expectation of members on benefits and level of members' participation in cooperatives activities	60
16	Regression of the independent variables on level of members' participation on capital build-up	62
17	Regression of the independent variables on level of members' participation on loan program	64
18	Regression of the independent variables on level of members' participation in organizational meetings	65
19	Regression of the independent variables on level of members' participation on trainings	67
20	Regression of the independent variables on level of members' participation on buying and selling products	68

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1	A paradigm showing the hypothesized relationship between the independent and dependent variables	29
2	Map of Northern Thailand showing the location (Lamphun) of the study	34

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX		- PAGE
1	Interview schedule	84
2	Letter requesting permission to gather data	90
3	Budgetary requirements	91
4	Calendar of activities	92

ABSTRACT

SATHIAN, KHEMNGREN, Institute of Graduate Studies, Central Luzon State University, Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, March 1999. *Factors Enhancing Members' Participation In Agricultural Cooperatives of Muang District In Lamphun Province, Thailand.*

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This study sought to determine the factors that influence the level of members' participation in the activities (capital build-up, loan program, organizational meetings, trainings, and buying and selling of products) of the Muang District Agricultural Cooperatives in Lamphun province, Thailand. The independent variables assumed to be the enhancing factors in participation were: the socio-demographic characteristics of the members, sources of information/communication channels, and benefits expectation of members.

Three hundred three respondents were randomly selected from seven cooperatives (consisting of 1,253 registered members) which belonged to the Muang Lamphun Agricultural Cooperatives.

Data were gathered using structured interview schedule. Descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis) were used in analyzing the data.

Most respondents belonged to age 47 years and below which was categorized as young. They had low years of schooling (about 5 years), low income at an average of 68,050.17 Baht per annum, and with short length of membership of about 9 years.

With the print media as source of information, majority (76%) read newspapers and 100 percent of newspaper readers had read about cooperatives from the newspaper. Eighty-nine (89%) percent did not read magazines. In terms of broadcast media, 91 percent listened to the radio while 99 percent watched TV. Agricultural and daily news were the programs watched on TV by the members (88 percent and 61 percent, respectively). Agricultural extension workers were not sources of information for 68 percent of the respondents.

Expectations were found to be high in patronage refund, knowledge and technology transfer, enhanced community development, agricultural inputs sourcing, and increased income. Participation levels of members in the five areas of the cooperative activities were all high. About 63 percent received assistance and had served as officers.

The socio-demographic factors, specifically age and length of membership were found highly significant but negatively related to members' participation in all cooperative activities. Income was, however, highly related only to capital build-up. Sources of information/communication channels especially TV, neighbors, relatives, friends and extension workers were significantly related to participation in all the activities of the cooperative. Similarly, expected benefits had high significant relationship with the cooperative activities (capital build up, loan program, organization meetings, trainings, and buy and sell). Newspapers, magazines, and radio as communication channels were found non-significantly related to participation in all cooperative activities.

Multiple regression analysis revealed that the benefits expected by members particularly, patronage refund and knowledge and technology transfer were predictors of capital build-up while neighbors and agricultural extension officer had inverse prediction on participation of members in the same activity. Friends, patronage refund, knowledge and technology transfer were positive predictors while income was an inverse predictor of participation of members in loan program. Radio, knowledge and technology transfer, agricultural input sourcing and increased income/standard of living of members' participation on organizational meetings were predictors, while income and length of membership were inverse predictors. Moreover, enhanced community development, increased income/standard of living were predictors but magazines and friends were inverse predictors of participation on training. Television, other interpersonal communication, knowledge and technology transfer, and increased income/standard of living were predictors of buying and selling products. On the other hand, length of membership, newspapers and magazines were likewise predictors of the participation of members in buying and selling products but on an inverse direction.

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