



PROJECT «NETWORK FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT THINK-TANKS FOR COUNTRIES IN MEKONG SUB-REGION (NARDT)»



Regional research

Agricultural innovations review in Sub-Mekong region countries

Hoi Quan “Clubhouse” model in Dong Thap province – Viet Nam

1. Introduction

In recent years, the agricultural and rural areas have made very important contributions to the country's economic development and have created livelihoods for nearly 40% of the country's labor force and more than 60% of the rural population. However, Vietnam's agriculture is developed in a small and fragmented manner with very low labor productivity and added value in production and has not been completely overcome during the past many years. One of the causes of this limitation is the lack of cohesion and cooperation in production. The fragmentation and small-scale lead to many consequences such as unstable production and consumption of goods, high risk of market fluctuations and unsustainability. The situation of agricultural products "in good season, the price will often be lost", "rescuing" agricultural products have become quite common phenomena for many years. The situation of producing goods that do not meet quality standards, food hygiene and safety is very common, causing distrust among consumers. Lack of linkages and cooperation restricts the construction of large commodity raw materials areas, hinders the application of scientific and technological advances to production, makes it difficult to consume goods, and causes environmental pollution. Lack of links and cooperation in production hinders the ability to increase labor productivity and reduce costs in production.

Resolution No. 13-NQ/TW of the 5th Plenum of the IX Central Committee on continuing to innovate, develop and improve the efficiency of the collective economy. The Party and State have focused on promulgating many mechanisms and policies to remove difficulties to support and encourage the development of collective economy, but the development process is still quite slow, with the quality and efficiency of the cooperative economy still has many shortcomings and limitations. The lack of connection between stages in the production process, as well as between production and consumption of output products, leads to inefficient production. The mechanism for building trust and coherence, subordination, interdependence between the parties in the link has not been established. Many cooperatives in Vietnam still have a lot of internal difficulties such as weakness in both physical facilities and management capacity, etc. There are many reasons leading to the limitation mentioned above, but the lack of mutual trust between the parties in the link is considered as the root cause of the phenomenon of "link" but lack of "link".

Therefore, the model of clubhouses was formed in some localities such as Gia Lai province (a model of agricultural association) linking farmers to share and exchange experiences and information on production and farming techniques, market information, jointly develop the household economy and the local economy; in An Giang province (agricultural extension coffee model) to create a living space, connect, share scientific and technical information, production and business experiences and guidelines, policies, and market prices to people. farmer; or in Ha Tinh province (Intellectual House model) community linkage was developed from the community cultural house model to promote the sharing and learning of knowledge and experiences in different

fields of life. socio-economic development and spreading the spirit of solidarity in the community. In particular, the model of clubhouse in Dong Thap province with a large scale of development has become a movement for agricultural and rural development to bring agriculture not only to create agricultural products but also to be a connection environment between farmers. with businesses and the government in the process of innovation to improve economic, cultural, and social life.

2. Model development

Clubhouse was established from the progress of finding new linkage forms in agriculture by both farmers, local authorities, and other stakeholders in Dong Thap province. The need of linking, sharing experience and knowledge, and finding consumption markets for agricultural production has prompted people to form spontaneous agricultural production in the province. The model of clubhouses was marked by the establishment of Canh Tan Clubhouse in 2016. After that, the province issued Official Letter No. 508-CV/TU dated January 25, 2018, of the Provincial Party Committee's Standing Committee on development of clubhouses in Dong Thap province. Agencies in the political system of the province, district and grassroots are interested in mobilizing many members to join the clubhouses, set up a clubhouse in eligible places, and at the same time pay attention to the meeting place. attach importance to improving the quality of activities of the clubhouses, consolidating, and establishing cooperatives on the basis of the clubhouses. After only 3 years (as of June 2021, the whole province had 111 clubhouses established and put into operation, of which 27 cooperatives were formed from 28 models of clubhouses. The model has shown its role as a center connecting farmers with each other, and between farmers and scientists, with party organizations and authorities at all levels.

The establishment of the clubhouses in Dong Thap province first comes from the needs of the people, and then from the interest of the Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee at all levels, the government, the Fatherland Front and other organizations from the province to the grassroots level, scientists and entrepreneurs support and create favorable conditions in the process of forming and operating the clubhouses. The scale of operation is mostly at the commune level, but there are several associations operating between villages and hamlets. The structure of members participating in the clubhouses is very diverse, including farmers, officials, party members, etc., without distinction of occupation or position, as long as they have the same interest in their profession. All members of the clubhouses are considered equally. For example, the "I love purple" clubhouse in Sa Dec city is simply an association of purple lovers with the same passion for developing and preserving new flower varieties, contributing to the construction of flower roads. famous in the Mekong Delta.

The activities of the clubhouses are relatively diverse. If the first clubhouse is a collection of farmers growing longan, then there are associations in the field of agriculture such as rice, mango, lemon, orange, bamboo, partnership in agricultural production then up to now, the activities

of the clubhouses have been interested in other fields such as industry, tourism services or linking different fields such as the Flour Making Clubhouse, Ornamental Flower Clubhouse; Clubhouse of Hotels/Guesthouse and Tourism or Clubhouse “We do tourism together”, etc., which aim to connect farmers with other socio-economic activities to earn more added value as well as connect the community.

Hoi Quan “I love purple colour” in Sa Dec City



Source: IPSARD's research team 2022.

One of the basic and most important principles of the clubhouses is the principle of complete voluntariness. Mr. Sau Tuan, Chairman of Thanh Long Club, said: “His clubhouse was formed on the basis of a cooperative group, that is, people who grow dragon fruits like him, have the need to gather together to exchange information, to "talk to each other, listen to each other, and exchange business stories, village stories, neighborhood stories", completely voluntary. In the early days of establishment, he borrowed his house as a gathering place. Tea and cigarette at meetings have been shared among members of the clubhouse. Thanks to the positive effect that the clubhouse brings to the participants, the number of members of the clubhouse is increasing day by day. Up to now, the voluntary principle is still the principle of maintaining the operation of the clubhouses.

The second principle of the clubhouse is the cohesion of the village community. This is the glue that binds the members of the clubhouse, maintains the long-term operation of the clubhouse, and contributes to the socio-economic development of the hamlet in general, which is reflected in two major contents: to share experiences and improve the level of production - business; and unite to solve social problems of hamlets together, raise awareness about politics, society and law together.

Thus, most of the activities are associated with at least one industry, typical agricultural product of the locality. The members of the clubhouse are pioneers in agricultural production, building new countryside and civilized cities to link production and consumption of products as a basis for collective economic development. The clubhouses have connected many businesses to associate and consume agricultural products as well as establish close links with scientists and agricultural experts.

Hoi Quan “Clubhouse” in Dong Thap province: Diligence - Self-reliance - Cooperation



Source: Dang Quang Hieu, Dong Thap Department of agriculture and rural development

Socially, the clubhouses have provided a community space for all people to help them build a better life for themselves. The model of clubhouses in Dong Thap province have promoted the self-governing community in the activities of the clubhouses, whereby, in addition to production and business, the clubhouse is also a place to discuss life and solve common problems of society, road construction, bridge construction, housing, environmental sanitation, security, etc. Since then, gradually change people's views and way of life in solving community problems, step by step identify "the common story of society is the common story of each person, each family, everyone has the responsibility to participate in the implementation", thereby mobilizing social resources to build a new local countryside. The special thing is that the clubhouse helps members feel secure to participate in activities and give advice to each other, because this is really a people's organization, gathered and managed by the people, without appointment and interference. directly by local government. Therefore, the glue that binds the members of the clubhouse is not the rules and

regulations of the clubhouse, but the needs of the members and the cohesion of the social community of the members.

Sharing experiences in clubhouse “Hoi Quan” meeting



Source: IPSARD's research team 2022.

Because the operation is on a voluntary basis, the operating funding is still mainly based on the support of the local government. Most of the clubhouses when newly established were initially supported by the Provincial Party Committee, the Provincial People's Committee by donating some 'properties' such as laptops, projectors, and projection screens. Most of these clubhouses operate without collecting membership fees from members. There are some clubhouses that charge a fee to create a clubhouse's operating fund, but it is preserved and developed by using loans for members and paying a very small interest rate to maintain the money for the meetings.

In terms of economic efficiency, joining a clubhouse helps members to associate production and consumption of agricultural products, contributing to reducing the purchase price of input materials and increasing the value of products sold, no longer being pressured by commodity collectors/traders, and contributing to increase income for farmers. From the perspective of the community, the clubhouse model has contributed to changing the production thinking in agriculture for farmers, creating confidence for people when investing and doing business; followed by other positive contributions such as creating jobs, building value chains in agricultural production, and developing community-based tourism. For example, Sa Dec Flower Village Clubhouse has developed 3 site sightseeing places (Hai Cao ornamental flower garden, Hung Thy Happy land Entertainment Facility, Flower Viewing Station of Ngoc Lan ornamental flower Garden) and 2 homestays. At the homestays (Frog and Flower House, Bamboo House of Phong Levent), tourists can experience many types of services, eat together, stay with farmers to discover and experience how to grow ornamental flowers. Clubhouse of Tan Phu Dong Flour Village is a new attraction

that enable visitors to experience and enjoy a variety of folk cakes made from Sa Dec rice flour at weekends.

Thus, the model of the clubhouse in Dong Thap province has overcome the limitations of the socio-economic, social-professional organizational models, to truly become the farmer's own space, but it does not exist. not separate from the management of the local government. Activities of socio-political organizations, socio-professional organizations with "permanent staff", "budget" and property contributions or membership fees to serve the purposes of the clubhouse, sometimes as one of the reasons that do not attract people to participate despite being actively mobilized. Compared with the cooperative model, the clubhouse model overcomes the limitations of the cooperative model and becomes an organization with the cooperative to help strengthen the association of agricultural production. With the participation of many stakeholders, from farmers, businesses to party committees and local authorities, the clubhouse is really a place to meet, exchange and find a common voice, forming important links. in the production and consumption of agricultural products, gradually developing large-scale commodity agricultural production.

With these outstanding features, Dong Thap province has been welcomed a lot of study tours from other provinces in recent years.

3. Opportunities and challenges of the model

The model of the clubhouse could be replicated in many communities and localities because it meets the development needs of the agricultural and rural development. It was born on the basis of voluntary participation of the people. The organizational structure is simple and compact with the operating mechanism of no "permanent staff" or "budget". Participants, industries, and fields are various with many subjects in society (farmers, cadres, civil servants, public officials, party members, businesses, youth, women, the elderly) in many fields different sectors (agriculture, industry, services; economic, social, political, etc.). The content of activities is rich, can share production experience, home stories, neighborhood stories; discuss production linkages and output solutions for products; but it can also be discussing current issues, prominent news related to economy, politics, society, guidelines or transfer scientific and technical applications, etc.

However, this model also has challenges related to sustainability. At present, the existence of the clubhouse depends mainly on the role of the head of the clubhouse. Most of these people lack management skills on the model of the clubhouse as well as the knowledge of the market. A second important factor is the support of the management agencies (government, mass organizations, politics) as well as the unsustainable operating budget, which is the cost of the activities that invite scientists to exchange and research to help people solve problems arising in the locality. This also partly affects the renewal and expansion of activities of the clubhouses as well as to improve quality and scope of issues sharing in the members meeting.

4. Conclusion

The establishment of the clubhouse is an indispensable part of the agricultural restructuring process in Vietnam, meeting the practical needs of farmers, which is to associate and cooperate to develop agricultural production in the market economy. The operation of the association has brought certain results, effectively solving the biggest bottleneck of the cooperative model - farmers' trust in the cooperative's activities. The model of the clubhouse has proven the vitality in the community, shown not only through the increasing number of clubhouses established and the increasingly diverse content and fields, but more importantly, this model has influence to make each member of the clubhouse richer in both knowledge and property.

To develop and expand this model to other provinces, there are some certain conditions must be met such as:

- Build a team of leaders for clubhouses, especially the head of the clubhouse who is good and dedicated. The government and local authorities need to have a mechanism to find, attract and retain talented and dedicated clubhouse leaders. Currently, the governing boards are elected/elected/recommended mainly based on prestige in the village, community. The clubhouse has no source to pay salaries if it attracts a professional management team. In addition, the board of directors should be trained in management and marketing.

- There is leadership and guidance of all levels of Party committees and authorities at all levels. Building and developing a model of the clubhouse must have a unified determination in the leadership and direction of the Party committees and authorities, and the efforts of the political system. Party committees, authorities, Fatherland Front, and socio-political organizations regularly participate in clubhouse activities to grasp the thoughts, aspirations, and reflections of members to promptly remove difficulties. Forming portals on market, cultivation, and husbandry techniques for farmers to access their production and business activities easily and effectively.

- It is necessary to have a stable and sustainable funding source to maintain the operation of the clubhouses. To maintain long-term operation and attract more new members, the clubhouse needs a physical foundation to operate. A principle that the local government sets forth when developing the clubhouse model is "co-build, jointly manage, and enjoy together", not relying on the support of the state budget, so the development of the clubhouse must be based on the economic development of its members.