

# Network of Moral Rice Project

## Abstract

This project is participatory practical research. It is the follow-up to the organic Jasmine rice project which was done after the international organic standards were conducted ten years ago. Farmers can produce rice, vegetables, and fruit without chemical use easily but they continue to have problems with debt, market prices and health problems.

The leader of the farmers group in Yasothorn province and the province nearby came together to conclude their lessons learned many times and they found the main cause of the problems with farmers arise from their lifestyle choices that do not necessarily follow the Buddhist moral code. For example they still drink a lot of alcohol, smoke cigarettes, and engage in gambling activities.

The “Dhamma Ruamjai Foundation” came together with Cooperative Academic Institution of Kasetsart University to develop farmers groups who want to solve this problem by themselves by changing their lifestyle choices. For example, decreasing or quitting all kinds of intoxicating substances and immoral activities by coming to practice the five precepts and do organic farming together. The harvest of their rice they grow, we call “moral rice”.

In the year 2550 and 2552 the moral rice group started sixteen savings fund groups in the area. There are 160 farmer families who joined this project. They created an area based on peace, calm, and organic farming for about 4,134 rai spreading all over Yasothorn province Amnatcharoen and Mukdahan. The expected yield of rice this year is about 1,464 tons.

From this research we found that to improve consciousness of farmers to live in a sustainable lifestyle continuing the project is necessary. It's also important to have a process for farmers including registration, follow-up, continued support, evaluation, and conclusion of lessons learned from samples of farmers who have succeeded. Farmers who succeed will continue on as models for other new farmers and his farm will turn into an informal farmers' school.

The farmers' school will be the learning center for the moral farming group. Now we have 16 centers of farmers' school groups where the members and new people can come and exchange experience, local wisdom, culture, and techniques on how to grow and process foods, marketing, environmental conservation, and political situations that effect farmers. They come to learn many things that impact the way of life and community of the farmers. The main office of

the moral rice group organized a learning center for moral life and organic farming group of Yasothorn to offer trainings for villagers or farmers from the agricultural department of the province and from the Debt Relief Department of the Agricultural Cooperative Bank. We have been trained more than 1,254 people this year.

The effect from this project is that we can support peoples' practice of holding the five precepts, peoples' practice of working to understanding themselves more, and self-regulation. Now many people have become good models for organic farmers who have good practice, ability to work, wisdom, and developed land. We feel this shows good practice, theory, and results. To practice the Dhamma and develop the morals of a farmer and family is the way to develop the economy, society, and environment in a sustainable way. It is the way to try to follow the Sufficiency Economy of our Righteousness the King and helps to develop people and the country at the same time. The most important thing is that moral farmers help to change their fields into the land of peace and expand this idea more in the world.

If the society starts to do more activities like our moral farmers group life can have more value and we will have more ability to bargain the price with the market and solve market problems easier which moral farmers are starting to do now. They can sell their own rice at the price they want to sell it at. Their rice can now sell higher than the standard price of the government.

Now more moral farmers can decrease their debt and have more income because they do not need to spending money on alcohol, gambling, and other unnecessary things in their lives. They then have more money to pay off their debt and their family has a better quality of life. They have less quarreling, more food in their farms, and safe food they can pick from their farm anytime. They have a healthy body and mind.

The way to fight with greed to bring back pride in farmers can bring good values back to society including more moral economics and environments. This is the way to solve the farmers' problem in a sustainable way without protesting or asking for help for the government. To spread this project the moral rice group is open to accepting all farmers to join the project in every level. This can be individuals, groups, cooperatives, networks, or organizations. They can come to apply to be a member every April.

**Important words:** Moral rice , Network of value , Model of Raising Awareness ,Good Practice Good Work Good Theory , Moral Rice Farmer School, Supporting Fund , Pride of Farmers , Land of Peace