

THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF VCO TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER IN THAILAND

Wilaiwan Twishri

One of the strategies adopted by the coconut research team from the Chumpon Coconut and Horticultural Research Center (CHRC) / Horticultural Research Institute (HRI) / Department of Agriculture (DOA) Thailand in sustaining the main coconut producing areas in southern Thailand is by value addition of coconut products to increase coconut farmer's income. In this regard, the Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) processing technology was a key strategy to produce high value products from mature nuts.

This technology was first introduced to the 3 groups of coconut farmers in the project titled *Overcoming Poverty Reduction in Coconut Community in Thailand*, with the cooperation between the International Coconut Genetic Resources Network (COGENT) - IFAD and HRI / DOA. Later, this technology was transferred to coconut farmers in the Farmer Field School under the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) project supported by the Asian Pacific Coconut Community (APCC)-FAO, CFC and DOA.

At the beginning, this VCO processing technology was disseminated through TRIS-FAO project, while the coconut research officers were also doing R&D activities back-to-back with the mission

of technology transfer. As there were a lot of questions and some unclear points from participants, the training manual of VCO and VCO-based products was released by coconut research team. Within 6 years (2003-2010), the VCO and VCO-based product processing technology was transferred not only through the Coconut Farmer Joint Project but also to the other organizations, extension officers, school teachers, university students, SME investors or people who lost their job and finding new career including private companies.

Regular transfer of technology was done by training / workshop at CHRC, demonstrators in various exhibitions / events, and via the various multimedia channels; national radio programs, TV for agricultural programs, Agri-Magazines, as well as website of HRI and Private companies. Moreover, CHRC welcomed any consultation via daily telephone calls and provided services for sending brochure of VCO and VCO based product processing free of charge. We also always welcomed the group study visits and demonstration upon their requests.

From the 3 year-record of CHRC (2008-2010), there were more than 1200 trained

people, 5,800 visitors in the exhibition organized by HRI&DOA, 200 joined study tours to CHRC. Moreover, there were various technology recipients through radio and TV stations and daily consultations through CHRC telephone calls. The technology recipients do not only live in the south, but some of them also live in the North, North East, East, and Central part of Thailand.

At the end of CY2010, CHRC coconut research officers evaluated the VCO and VCO based product processing technology transfer by face to face interview and sent a set of questionnaires to some of technology transfer recipients. The collected data were analyzed and the results showed that:

- 1) In terms of usefulness of VCO technology transfer: 39.3% of respondents produced VCO for home consumption, 26.2% produced VCO for sale as well as transferred the technology to others, 16.7% produced VCO for home consumption and sale, 15.5% produced VCO for sale as additional income, 4.8% produced VCO as their main livelihood.
- 2) In the aspect of marketing management: 38.1% selling VCO and VCO-based products in the form of end products and 28.6%

selling VCO as raw material without brand,

- 3) On income generation: 53.6% had income from VCO production.

The following are brief stories of successful VCO technology recipients

Arrom Sutjaritrat is a leader of Agricultural Youth Group from Saeng Arun sub district, Tap Sakae district, Prachaub Kiri Khan. She joined in the COGENT-IFAD project and attended the VCO training workshop. Furthermore, she joined a group who conducted a study visit to CHRC. After that, she started VCO production and her sister who worked for a packaging company assisted her on marketing.

Later, the provincial government supported the Agricultural Youth Group to develop VCO based products. The VCO produced by this group received the award of 5 stars OTOP. Fortunately, the VCO-bamboo charcoal soaps produced by her group can be exported to Japan. Nowadays, her group produces various VCO based products and the Bank gives a soft loan to her group to expand the VCO business and factory. In the production process, she also buys mature nuts from her



Arrom Sutjaritrat

neighbors especially from coconut organic farms.

Sirinthip Rungrassami is a coconut farmer who joined the COGENT-IFAD project and attended the VCO training workshop. Furthermore, she joined a group who conducted a study visit to CHRC.



Sirinthip Rungrassami

Nowadays, she does not only produce and sell VCO but also train students in the local school. Her VCO was sold without brand to her relatives. She said that the income from VCO afforded her kids the tuition fee.

Karnjana Prommas is a coconut farmer from Chumphon who joined the COGENT-IFAD project and



Karnjana Prommas

attended the VCO training workshop several times until

she had confidence on VCO production as well as the knowledge on usefulness of VCO. Nowadays, she has her own VCO product named "KUN KARN". She was invited to present her VCO processing on TV program (Channel 9 Thailand). She said that her income from VCO and VCO soap affords her children the daily payment and monthly school bus.

Thitima Ardchaiporn is a committee of Thungka Coconut Community, Chumphon. She produces and collects VCO from her neighbors and does the packing and marketing. Her group is supported by the local government to sell the VCO and VCO based products in the local government events and exhibitions. The group members receive a little shared revenue for their additional income.



Thitima Ardchaiporn

Lamyong Thongkam is a leader of the housewives' group from Ban Nam Khaw, Maung District, Prachaub Kiri Khan. Her group was supported by the provincial government on training workshop. Later, this group of women produces VCO and



Lamyong Thongkam & Her products

Lamyong's daughter who works in Bangkok does the marketing for the group. "The income is not much but at least we have activity to do and we can meet once a week" said Lamyong.

Saowaros Suriyachantananon is a daughter of a coconut farmer who has an MBA. She learned from her father, who is the chairman of the coconut farmers group at Seang Arun Subdistrict and joined the COGENT-IFAD Project, knowing that CHRC is a VCO training centre. She followed up and requested training on VCO and VCO-based soap at CHRC. Since she is knowledgeable on business management, it is an advantage for her to run the VCO business. Nowadays, her VCO products, especially, VCO with aromatherapy, are sold in 5 star hotels. She also created products for special occasion like New Year gifts. She is very happy to do the business in her hometown and has a home office. Moreover, she can stay with her own family in the province instead of Bangkok.

Sukpradaporn Songkram was a technical/Research assistant at CHRC. She has learned a lot



Sukpradaporn Songkram

because she was a VCO training assistant. Luckily, she found a counterpart who was really interested in running a VCO business, then she resigned from CHRC. Nowadays, she is a VCO factory manager. Not only VCO and VCO based products are produced from this factory, but also Nata de Coco in syrup. She provides jobs to more than 30 local people and buys coconut from middlemen and organic coconut farmers. She also sells

by-products like coconut shell and husks to other entrepreneurs.

Porntip Rithan is a technical assistant in the Tissue Culture



Porntip Rithan

Laboratory of CHRC who attended the training course of VCO and VCO-based product processing for village scale which was held by the COGENT-IFAD project and Farmer Field School-APCC-FAO-CFC&DOA project. She gained valuable experience and learned a lot from the training. VCO and VCO-based products have been her part time business since 5 years ago. Right now, her additional monthly income is increasing at around 6,000 – 8,000 Bath and makes her family happier.

Wilatwan Twishri is Assistant Director, Asian and Pacific Coconut Community, Jakarta. She was also former COGENT / IFAD Project Country Facilitator for Thailand and VCO Processing Trainer from CHRC, Thailand.



Saowaros Suriyachantananon