

**“Good Life along the Southern Border”
Public Relations Office District 6 Songkhla**

No. 1

**Telagapalas Local Fisheries Group: An Example of Collaboration on Legal Fishing and
Local Fisheries Cooperative in Narathiwat Province
(30 October 2019)**

The Telagapalas Local Fisheries Group is a prime example of a community cooperative that has successfully helped enhance the livelihood of the local people in Narathiwat Province. At first, the cooperative was created simply as a group of local fishermen in order to work with the public sector on preserving and managing coastal aquatic animal resources and eradicating illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. The group has eventually become a success story, as the sole fisheries cooperative in Narathiwat.

Mustafa Seng, President of Telagapalas Local Fisheries Group, explained that local fishermen in two villages, Ban Khao Tan Yong and Ban Telagapalas, formed the group on their own in 2010, with the awareness that a ban on illegal tools and illegal fishing in the region was necessary in order to replenish and sustain a balanced quantity of marine flora and fauna as well as keep a balanced marine biological system. Later on, in 2015, the government began an active campaign to combat IUU fishing, which has significantly restored the abundance of marine animals. Subsequently, the Telagapalas Local Fisheries Cooperative was established in Narathiwat Province and currently has 58 members.

As stated by Mustafa Seng: “previously, there was trawl fishing, but ever since the government cracked down on trawls and push nets, marine animals became abundant. The village drew up a regulation to prohibit fishing on some days, with only rowboats and small boats allowed on the ocean. The objective in forming this group is to support fellow fishermen and to create a sustainable cooperative for fisheries.”

Meanwhile, Prapatpong Thaksinsampun, Chief of Fisheries Management Group, Narathiwat Provincial Fisheries Office, stated that the group gives high priority in working alongside government policies in combatting illegal fishing, which also benefits the group. The principles in the Sustainable Economy Philosophy of His Majesty King Rama IX which focuses on creating impact from within the local community, was used to empower and strengthen the capacity of the local fishermen, which then expanded to cooperation to other areas. The Local Fisheries Cooperative is therefore, an organic initiative, bred from the ingenuity of the local people, who know what is exactly right for their specific case and their specific community.

Chana Amornvat, Director of Cooperative Establishment and Promotion Group, Narathiwat Provincial Cooperative Office, added that “not only fishermen, farmers, regardless of which crops they grow, must form a group to support each other and increase their trade negotiating power. Forming a cooperative is better than other types of organisations because it is a legal entity, and is eligible for receiving assistance from government agencies.”

The Telagapalas Local Fisheries Cooperative has various advantages, but how can further development be achieved? Relevant agencies may have to promote the development of processed

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products to increase the value of their produces. More importantly, the other twelve individual local fisheries group in the area should take the Telagapalas cooperative success story as an example and consider forming a cooperative as well. Being united in a single, stronger cooperative group provides the fishermen with more resources and strengths pooled together, and empowers the fishermen with a sustainable income and livelihoods in harmony within their environment and community.

Papitchayanun Thepruk / Narathiwat Provincial Radio Thailand

No.2**Mr. Methee Bunruk: The only Thai farmer from Su-ngai Kolok District earning GAP, GI, and Organic Farm Standards certification**

Organic farming has brought great success to the agricultural career of Methee Bunruk, the only farmer in Su-ngai Kolok whose produces have earned GAP, GI, and Organic Farm standards certification.

Methee was formerly working as a specialist in heavy machinery in Malaysia with a high income. But since he had to live away from his beloved family, he decided to abandon his career and moved back to Thailand, choosing to become a full-time farmer on his family's four-acre land in Su-ngai Kolok District, Narathiwat Province.

Starting from "zero" and only hoping for a small income from cultivating long-gong, a popular local fruit, Methee learned everything he needed to know on "Smart Farming," from textbooks and advice from government agencies. However, smart farming required dedication, time and energy that Methee could not afford to spend. He finally decided to follow the path of natural farming, by planting a variety of trees and economic crops on the same plot of land without the use of any chemicals, instead of focusing only on a single type of economic crop like other orchards. Within two years' time, he found that although this method resulted to slower growth and yield, but rates of survival were much higher. Without the use of chemicals, only one percent of the crops would die, whereas, with chemicals, almost half of the crops did not survive.

Back in 2003, Methee decided to leave his job in Malaysia and to return to his hometown and become a full-time farmer. He chose to test out his own methods and apply the guiding principles on agricultural practice graciously bestowed by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great on self-reliant agriculture, organic farming that relies on nature, and not too much on theories in textbooks.

Methee's method is the use of three natural elements, namely, soil, water, and forests, and consists of cultivating vetiver grass to enrich the soil, building a trench to release water, as well as an irrigation system and a dam. He upholds the principle to cultivate everything he eats, and to eat everything he cultivates. In this regard, he has built an area of agroforestry, combining the cultivation and conservation of trees, with three types of forests. The first type is the cultivation of economic trees, such as makha, Siamese rosewood, resin trees, and golden teak. The second type is plants for use, such as Azadirachta Excelsa (Jack) Jacobs. The third one is plants for consumption, such as mangosteen, longong, wild Melientha and coffee.

This cultivation is in line with the rules of organic farming, which are divided into four levels namely; operation on the plantation, protection from contamination, factors in production, and postharvest, with all levels being chemical-free. Methee calls the combination of natural agriculture, agroforestry, His Late Majesty the King's New Theory Agriculture, and his own methods on organic farming as "Methee's Agriculture." This method has made him the only

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person in Thailand to be recognized for the best three agricultural standards, which are Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Geographical Indication (GI), and Organic Farming registration.

Methee reaffirmed that organic farming is not difficult if people change their preconceptions and are willing to learn. He predicts that the government's policy to ban chemicals from farming will make more Thai farmers turn towards organic farming, a positive future he looks forward to. The key principle of organic farms is to use natural products as substitutes for chemical products to eradicate and control pests. Methee found that this method works 100 per cent. For example, in getting rid of grass growing under the shade, farmers can use plastic covers to control humidity. Falling leaves will cover the grass and when the grass is not exposed to sunlight, it will turn into fertilizer. As for the grass in an open area, cultivating vetiver grass to cover soil will keep the soil within a perimeter of two meters from being exposed to light, making the grass growing underneath to eventually die. With regard to other weeds and fungus, farmers may opt for biological fertilizers to deal with them.

Methee's agricultural method earned him the 2018 Smart Farmer Award. Today his happiness comes from doing organic farming on his four acres of land, all on his own. Despite labouring in his 60s without any machinery and chemicals, he can earn 180,000 baht per year and barely has any other expenditures. In the year 2019, Mr. Methee was nominated as Thailand's Best Farmer of the year.

For those who are interested in visiting the Learning Centre on Organic Farming Productivity in Su-ngai Kolok District, Narathiwat Province, and Methee, he can be reached via his mobile number 089-968-2944.

Guslin Suwanno/ Su-ngai Kolok Radio Thailand

No.3**Najmuddin: The 300 Years Mosque Harmonising Buddhist and Muslim Art**

The Sai Khao community in Khok Pho District of Pattani Province is known for its enchanting atmosphere of coexistence between Thai Buddhists and Muslims which has been attracting travellers to visit this area for quite some time.

Important evidence of this religious solidarity is a 300-year old mosque, the so-called Masyid Ba-ngo-yla-nga, or Najmuddin, which was built by Phra Kru Sri Rattanakorn, a former Buddhist abbot of Wat Sai Khao, the former local Imams, and locals in the area.

The mosque is a combination of Thai and Muslim architecture. The construction is similar to a Thai sermon hall and incorporates Langkasuka art. The building, which is estimated to have been established in 1634, was made from wood from Hopea Odorata and hummingbird trees, joined together by wedges instead of nails. These intricate details manifest wisdom and harmony in the interreligious local community.

Muhammad Bahembu-nga, an Imam of the mosque, reflects on his sentiments regarding the Buddhist-Muslim brotherhood, which is a legendary bond that has been conveyed from generation to generation.

The mosque is full of interesting details, such as the drum or "Nang-ya," which is made by hollowing a gigantic tree and wrapping it with buffalo skin. Characteristic of the drum is a beautiful and resonating sound triggered by vibrating bamboo sticks installed from the inner side. As the sound of the drum can spread as far as three kilometers, the drum is used to signal the time for prayers. In the past, it was also used to alert people of possible danger. The 300-year old hand-written Koran is another highlight of the mosque that has been preserved for younger generations to study. In addition, the local community still keeps its old traditions, with people helping and supporting each other since the time of their ancestors.

The mosque has become a centre that displays the love and solidarity of the people through its uniqueness and its architecture that combines the Buddhist and Muslim religions. The mosque is also a centre for the exchange of ideas and a source of pride for both religions.

Thawatchai Wannaroj photograph

Suphawadee Boonmee, Lalitwadee Kaewsongmeung / NBT Songkhla