

Enhancement of Competitiveness of Border Trade Entrepreneurs: Case Study of Su-Ngai Kolok Checkpoint, Narathiwat Province

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This research aimed to analyze the enhancement of competitiveness among fruit and vegetable export entrepreneurs, with the case study of the Su-ngai Kolok checkpoint in Narathiwat Province. This research focused on three objectives: (1) examining how competitiveness is enhanced through government support and the development of border trade zones, (2) studying the supply chain dynamics, including strategic factors and opportunities in agricultural product management, and (3) developing a model for border trade to strengthen exporters' capabilities. The research employed qualitative methods, with data collected from 25 informants through interviews and employed descriptive methods. The research results revealed that: (1) government agencies play a crucial role in improving competitiveness by developing border economic zones and trade policies; additionally, (2) the research highlighted the importance of strategic partnerships, network building, and efficient logistics along the value chain; (3) the proposed Border Trade Model includes elements for instance government policy, partnerships, entrepreneurial potential, and transportation channels, aiming to enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of vegetable and fruit exporters in the region.

Keywords: enhancement, competitiveness, border trade entrepreneurs

Introduction

The 20-year National Strategy Framework (2018-2037) outlines the wealth objectives as Thailand has sustained economic growth till achieving high-income country status: the reduction of development inequalities, equitable distribution of development benefits among the population, a highly competitive economy capable of generating income from domestic and foreign sources, the establishment of a robust economic and social foundation for the future, serving as a crucial hub for transportation, production, trade, investment, and business connectivity in the region. Additionally, preparing its significant regional and worldwide power, strong economic

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and commercial connections, and abundant capital for sustained development, plays a crucial role. These include human capital, intellectual capital, and financial capital, capital in the form of tools, machinery, social capital, and natural resource, and environmental capital, especially the Special Economic Zone of Narathiwat Province that emphasizes border trade, the food industry, and multimodal transportation. Thus, Narathiwat Province has the chance to receive help from this condition. There are three border crossing locations to Malaysia: Buketa Checkpoint in Waeng District, Tak Bai Checkpoint in Tak Bai District, and Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint in Su-ngai Kolok District, furthermore, transforming it into a novel manufacturing hub, distributing economic endeavors and growing affluence to the vicinity, providing stability in border regions, and setting up associates with neighboring nations through collaborative production and marketing channels (Office of the Secretary of the National Strategy Committee, 2018).

Narathiwat province, which borders Malaysia and is located on the Malay Peninsula's eastern coast, is the southernmost province in the nation. The province of Narathiwat relies primarily on agricultural products for its overall economy. Rubber plantations, coconut and fruit plantations, farming, fishery, and cattle rearing are the main industries. Therefore, the province's primary source of revenue is its agricultural produce, trade and service are the second-largest part of the province's revenue. Consequently, Narathiwat supplies raw resources for agro-processing industries that may use both oil palm and rubber as well as the cultural highlight factor that can contribute to the growth of the Halal industry. Besides, the service industry is significant following the agricultural sector due to its proximity to Malaysia, which has led to investments in tourism-related businesses. The Su-ngai Kolok District serves as a significant tourist hub, attracting an annual influx of around 40,000 Malaysian visitors. Likewise, key selling features include a wide range of entertainment venues, top-notch hotels, and diverse culinary options, complemented by the presence of captivating natural tourist sites. When assessing the prospects of Narathiwat, a border city, it becomes clear that it possesses the capacity to foster economic endeavors. Moreover, Su-ngai Kolok District crosses a border with Kelantan, Malaysia, both on land and via water. The boundary is 178.60 kilometers long without interruption. There are three checkpoints bordering Malaysia: (1) The Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint is in Su-ngai Kolok District and has an area of 61 rai. It serves as a connection point between the city of Rangtau Panjang and Kelantan State; (2) The Tak Bai Checkpoint, covering an area of 34 rai in Tak Bai District, serves as a connection between Tumpat city in Kelantan State; and (3) the Buketa Checkpoint, which spans an area of 49 rai in Waeng District, connects with Bukit Bunga city in Kelantan State (Free Encyclopedia, 2023).

Besides, these border communities occupy the benefit of being situated along the primary connection with adjacent nations. Apart from its role as a crucial commercial gateway, it also enhances prospects for the establishment of special border economic zones, which facilitate collaborative international investment. Historically, border trade has persistently faced unresolved issues. This is a result of the transportation difficulties at the border checkpoint and the specific requests of the Malaysian authorities, which include non-tariff barriers. Hence, our attention should be directed to the development of regions suitable for international collaborative investment in the form of special border economic zones that serve as crucial economic hubs and trade entry points, helping trade, investment, industry, infrastructure, and tourism, to enhance the efficacy of the private sector's trade, investment, production, and tourism. Also, it is necessary to provide provision and bolster their potential, the city is being ready to facilitate growth into a border city that will serve as the hub of the Narathiwat Special Economic Zone. It is the sector's new economic foundation within the framework of an essential concept: The clustering of cities and the formulation of strategies to transform border cities into export gateways, focusing

on enhancing logistics transportation and establishing these cities as important production centers in the region. Ultimately, the target is to attract investment and facilitate the export of products to foreign nations. In addition to constructing a transportation infrastructure that links border communities, the aim is to streamline the logistics of commodities and establish connections with adjacent nations.

Additionally, based on the development plan for the southern border provinces (2023-2027), which includes Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat, the gross product of these provinces is approximately 139,173 million baht. This represents 0.82 percent of the country's total and 9.44 percent of the southern region, whereas the Southern Border Provinces focus on cultivating key economic crops such as rubber, palm oil, and fruits (Southern Border Provinces Development Plan 2023-2027). The development plan aims to set up the region as "A hub for agriculture, tourism, and border trade industries, built upon a foundation of robust and enduring multiculturalism." The important strategic development issues on Strategic Issue 3 targets enhancing economic sustainability through the implementation of the BCG economic model. Also, Strategic Issue 4 aims to enhance tourism and border commerce by linking economic regions of bordering nations and ASEAN (Southern Border Development Strategy Group, 2023).

Narathiwat Province has a total agricultural area of 2,843,629.79 rai. The proportion of agricultural use area is 1,498,535.17 rai, accounting for 52.70 percent of the total area (Office of Agricultural Economics, 2024). The agricultural regions in Narathiwat Province consist of significant economic crops, for instance rubber, oil palm, Longkong, rice, durian, and coconut, respectively, through monoculture farming regions that include around 74 percent of the overall agricultural area. Conversely, the agricultural sector dedicated to cultivating food crops, for example vegetables, fruits, and rice accounting for approximately 20 percent of the total area. Narathiwat Province has devised a comprehensive strategy to effectively manage the food system under its control. The aim is to enhance and advocate for the well-being of individuals in the region, in line with the strategic vision of ensuring that Narathiwat Province achieves self-sufficiency in food production, the population attains optimal nutrition, and a sustainable high standard of living is maintained. The goal is that the yield per rai of economic crops for example coconut, durian, rambutan, Longkong, and mangosteen will experience an increase. The agricultural plots, livestock, and fisheries have obtained certifications such as GAP, PGS, COC, GFM, and Organic Thailand. The approach includes metrics such as yield per rai of economic crops (such as coconut, durian, longkong, rambutan, and mangosteen) which have increased by 2.5 percent (Food System Management Strategy, Narathiwat Province, 2020-2567).

In 2019, the agricultural industry holds a significant economic position for Narathiwat Province. The agricultural sector in Narathiwat Province generated a total income of 11,838 million baht. However, it is important to consider the future track of the agricultural sector, specifically in terms of cultivation area and total harvested commodities. In terms of productivity per unit area of the primary income crops in Narathiwat Province, there is a noticeable trend of decline in the production of durian, rambutan, mangosteen, rubber, oil palm, wet season rice, and dry season rice. This can be attributed to a range of factors, including climate change and volatility in both domestic and foreign markets, which prompt farmers to pursue alternative employment. Furthermore, Thailand lacks the ability to enhance the value of agricultural products to a higher value. It shows that in the future, the economic sector and agricultural labor force of Narathiwat Province may shift from agriculture to other producing sectors (Narathiwat Province Development Plan 2023-2027). In addition, the relevant agencies include the Narathiwat Provincial Agriculture Office and the Department of Agricultural Extension. Hence, it is crucial to advocate and motivate farmers in Narathiwat Province to take part in agriculture

or large-scale agriculture with the aim of establishing comprehensive agricultural product supply chain management models including the entire production process, which are the initial stages, intermediate stages, and final stages. Firstly, the actions at the upstream level involve the necessity to change the production process and production parameters. Secondly, midstream activities encompass the various stages of production, including processing, storage, and the maintenance of product quality and standards. Lastly, downstream activities encompass market competitiveness, product distribution, transportation, and logistics, all of which contribute to the creation of a supply chain aimed at enhancing value by using the supply chain system to improve production efficiency and quality. To deliver products efficiently and accurately to clients in the target country while adhering to customs requirements is done through the implementation of management mechanisms and the establishment of networks. Therefore, the organizations can enhance the performance of operations along the value chain, thereby reaching objectives and maximizing competitiveness.

Nevertheless, the entrepreneurs will be able to continuously create competitiveness. There is a need for cooperation between agencies, whether government agencies, the private sector and investors, trade associations, provincial chambers of commerce, the public and local sectors, local government organizations in border areas. In these various dimensions, data are used to analyze border trade strategies along with strategic development in driving to promote and support groups of border trade entrepreneurs. To have the opportunity to compete, increased export value should be created, and trade benefits in the eyes of entrepreneurs, investors, and customers should be created.

Previously, the trading near the border met unresolved issues. This is a result of the transportation difficulties at the border checkpoint and the specific demands of the Malaysian authorities, which include non-tariff obstacles. Hence, we should concentrate on setting up border special economic zones through collaborative international investment to serve as significant economic hubs and trade gateways to bolster trade, investment, industry, infrastructure, and tourism. This will effectively enhance and strengthen the trade, investment, production, and tourism capabilities of the private sector. In addition, the city should be prepared to facilitate the expansion of a border city and serve as the crucial point of the Narathiwat Special Economic Zone. The aim is to encourage investment, boost exports, and enhance transportation networks between border cities and to facilitate the shipment of products to neighboring countries. In 2019, a COVID-19 virus outbreak occurred, resulting in an impact on both citizens and entrepreneurs, lacking faith in the nation's economic state. Legislation has been enacted by the government to shut down the checkpoint. Imposing restrictions on international travel at the Sungai Kolok Customs House in Narathiwat Province has a minimal effect on cross-border commerce.

The Su-ngai Kolok Customs House is a customs checkpoint in the southernmost of Thailand. The boundary of this region is bordering with Malaysia, Pasemas District of Kelantan State, explicitly along the Su-ngai Kolok River. It outlines the boundary between Thailand and Malaysia, extending from the Waeng District to the Tak Bai District where it meets the sea. The geography primarily consists of flat expanses next to the river channels. The citizens of both nations often engage in trade with one another, utilizing the Malay language, which is the native language of the region. The predominant currency used for payment of commodities is the baht and ringgit, accounting for 76.71 percent. There are two options of transportation in Su-ngai Kolok District: by vehicle or rail. By analyzing the data and circumstances of Su-ngai Kolok Customs House in Narathiwat Province, it was discovered that there are still opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of managing the checkpoint in line with its goal. These opportunities can help maximize the checkpoint's potential, as follows: (1) enhance commercial transactions and advance the efficiency of transportation and logistics systems, (2) enhance the national economy

through the implementation of customs measures and the dissemination of international trade information, (3) enhance the ability to safety society effectively through customs surveillance systems, (4) ensure the fair, transparent, and effective collection of taxes.

Based on the examination of initial data, it is important to thoroughly investigate and analyze trade activities at the Thai border (Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint) with Malaysia. This investigation contains the full process, beginning with the value chain and the supply chain of border trade entrepreneurs, with case study of Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint, Narathiwat Province. The objective is to develop and enhance the capabilities of entrepreneurs, enabling them to effectively compete in a sustainable manner.

The research team recognizes the significance of enhancing the competitiveness of fruit and vegetable export businesses through a case study on border commerce at Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint, Narathiwat Province. The participants in this study were vegetable and fruit exporters located in the Su-ngai Kolok District, Narathiwat Province. To enhance and support the abilities and capabilities of businesses involved in exporting fruits and vegetables, enable them to effectively compete with neighboring nations to their utmost potential.

Research Purposes

(1) To study and analyze the enhancement of competitiveness in fruit and vegetable export entrepreneurs, with case study of Su-ngai Kolok checkpoint, Narathiwat Province.

(2) To study the supply chain of fruit and vegetable export entrepreneurs, with case study of Su- ngai Kolok checkpoint, Narathiwat Province.

(3) To study and develop a model of border trade on the enhancement of competitiveness in fruit and vegetable export entrepreneurs, with case study of Su-ngai Kolok checkpoint, Narathiwat Province.

Literature Review

An Enhancement

Porter (1990) discussed the enhancement of entrepreneurs' capabilities, specifically focusing on the capabilities of fostering a high-quality business atmosphere in the region through the use of four influential factors that impact the performance of enterprises, known as the "Dynamic Diamond Model". This model serves as a diamond model of advantage or a model for analyzing the capabilities of cluster networks which is an evaluation of the status of four internal business environmental elements that affect productivity. The productivity of the enterprise network group should be evaluated based on its characteristics, figuring out whether they facilitate or hinder improvement, or if the group is at an advanced stage of development. Additionally, it is crucial to examine the key stakeholders, particularly the involvement of the government sector in either facilitating or obstructing business. The examination of four environmental aspects within the business includes:

- The analysis of operating factors, also known as "Factors of production", in economics, encompasses human resources, including the quantity of workers and their diverse abilities and expertise; Capital resources refer to the many sources of funding, the cost of borrowing inside a country and understanding of marketing principles related to products and services and so on; And physical infrastructure encompassing transportation networks, communication systems, and public health systems as well as evaluating the overall quality of life in terms of people's living and working environments.

- Analysis of demand determinants or prevailing market demand circumstances: A study that examines the level of interest and need for products and services offered by local companies; A country benefits from an

advantage when the demand within its own borders forces entrepreneurs to adapt and innovate; Embrace swift innovation or consider the level of quality requirements influenced by consumers. This stimulates enterprises to innovate and enhance the manufacturing and distribution of items.

- Correlated and supplementary business analysis: An examination of existence and the caliber of local producers or suppliers, which enhances the value chain and sustains the level of coordination and cooperation in diverse businesses. The interconnections and interactions between activities are organized and developed into a network, as follows:

(1) Vertical integration refers to the production or service processes that occur within the supply chain.

(2) Horizontal integration refers to the interconnections between businesses or networks that are mutually supportive and contribute to each other's competitiveness. However, it is not included in the production line of the supply chain. The Diamond Model's vertical and horizontal integration analysis includes:

(i) Activity linkage refers to the examination of the presence and standard of local courier services. This contributes to fortifying and perpetuating the supply chain.

(ii) Cooperative linkage refers to a study that examines the degree of synchronization and collaboration among different companies within the enterprise network, for instance, engaging in knowledge and information sharing, collaborating to enhance staff skills, research, or promoting products and services. This would enable enterprises inside the network to get access to cost-effective manufacturing elements, services of high quality, accelerating efficient innovation.

- Competitive and strategic context analysis refers to the examination of the surrounding environment in which the organization runs. The investigation will examine the impact of local competition on fair competition and service efficiency, as well as the role of policy. Government controls competitiveness and company operations within the private sector. The competitive environment will influence the goals and competitive tactics employed by enterprises inside the network to execute their operations.

- The government's actions in governing the country have an impact on the determination of environmental elements in business throughout all four categories, both in a beneficial and detrimental manner. The positive policies include the government's role as a significant purchaser of various commodities and services, promoting the creation of products and services, curbing monopolies, and helping in other domains. The negative policies comprise the implementation of tax collection measures, the enactment of control laws, and the establishment of product standards aimed at prevention.

- Force majeure or opportunity refers to unforeseeable events or circumstances, such as economic crises, fluctuations in global financial markets, currency fluctuations, climate changes, and so on. These variables are crucial factors that lead to discontinuities, enabling shifts in competitive positions, the disruption of existing advantages, and the creation of opportunities for new enterprises to enter the market once they have adapted to the changes.

Business Grouping to Increase Entrepreneurs' Capabilities

In the current era of globalization, a country may only enhance its competitiveness by focusing on specific regions inside the country. This is inadequate on its own. The incorporation of multinational corporations (cluster of countries) has therefore started to employ encouragement and has brought about changes in the economic and investment framework. In the present day, it is essential for organizations or entrepreneurs to own specialized knowledge in a certain area of the production process. Additionally, the company would employ external services,

sometimes known as outsourcing, in several manufacturing sectors to optimize competitiveness by maximizing efficiency. Strive for excellence in both economies of scale (economies of scale) and specialization (core competencies). Therefore, a cluster refers to the consolidation of enterprises in all aspects, comprising a variety of shipment forwarders with distinct areas of expertise, as well as specialized service providers and infrastructure, entrepreneurs operating in interconnected sectors and utilizing various distribution methods, clientele and allied organizations, knowledge-generating institutions, such as universities, research institutes, and engineering corporations, those collaborate to form trade associations and industrial groups. Hence, cluster grouping holds significant weight in contemporary competition, regardless of its competitiveness. Simultaneously, a collection of entrepreneurs engage in collaboration, communicating, and interacting with one another. However, it is not needed to engage in connected sectors or be geographically concentrated in proximity. Interdependence facilitates a systematic transfer of information, resulting in a cluster that exhibits higher overall efficiency compared to entrepreneurs that are just focused on trading inside a specific sector (Nilsri, 2012).

Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs are those that start a business venture with bravery and resolve, aiming to achieve success by establishing a small-scale enterprise. Entrepreneurs should actively seek out lucrative company prospects and apply maximum effort to propel their own business towards success (Hiransomboon, 2013). An individual who has the ability to effectively handle risk and actively seeks out opportunities to generate profits, has the ultimate goal of fostering corporate expansion, and furthermore, owns a clear and compelling vision and inspiration that may effectively inspire and influence others to pursue. Entrepreneurs are thus a more necessary asset than invention or other elements and get knowledge from business networks (Wingwon, 2014). Economic power of entrepreneurs plays a crucial role in contemporary corporate endeavors. It is the originator of innovations and trailblazers in both local and global markets. Furthermore, it serves as the catalyst for economic expansion in other aspects. An entrepreneur is someone who harnesses their own personal force and ability, and confronts risk and ambiguity to foster expansion and development of the business. Annually, a significant multitude of entrepreneurs embark on establishing their own firms. This technique has effectively bolstered economic advancement and enhanced the nation's competitiveness (Theerawanich, 2010). The key factors contributing to entrepreneurial success are precision, expertise, creativity, and distinctiveness; The capacity to possess knowledge pertains to the practice of trading. They want a business-oriented profession, possess an intense sense of accountability, are willing to take calculated risks, have leadership attributes, are capital owners, believe in their own abilities, seek clarity, and pursue business profit. Moreover, entrepreneurs are a pivotal force in propelling the economy forward. This group includes those who generate appropriate innovative concepts and intellectual assets to develop products and services; Entrepreneurs are individuals who are responsible for generating employment, income, and contributing to official economic growth. Thus, a creator should possess comprehensive expertise in a specific skill; A comprehension of intellectual property is crucial, also, possessing the capacity to effectively oversee or facilitate the creative process (Wisetmongkol, 2010).

Border Trade

Border trade refers to the exchange of essential items or products between parties living in border regions to sustain their lifestyles. They were initially exchanged in limited amounts, but as production increased, larger quantities were transferred. The level of output surpasses the level of demand, specifically for household

consumption. Consequently, it evolved into a hub for commercial transactions and business profit. This hub also served as a meeting point for those living in the vicinity, who engaged in commerce through established border routes or natural trade pathways. In the present day, transportation has become more convenient. Consequently, the area for the exchange and commerce of products has significantly broadened. However, this trade is limited to countries that share borders with each other. Consequently, this form of commerce is referred to as the border trade. Accordingly, the border trade arose, resulting in the relations between trading partners based on conventions, cultures, traditions, and ways of life, which in turn contributed to the growth of border trade values and overall development (Waiyaratphanit, 2012). Besides, cross-border trade refers to the exchange of products between two countries, where individuals or traders from one country transport the commodities through another country to be distributed in a third country, or from a third country across to a second country, and then to a first country. Nevertheless, it is imperative for every nation to consent to the facilitation of commodities transportation across their respective borders, for instance, engaging in the trade of goods between Thailand and China. Products should be carried via Lao PDR to China, or if China intends to export products for sale in Thailand, they must be shipped down the Mekong River. Alternatively, they deliver commodities by employing the transportation over the R3A route, which passes through Lao PDR and leads into Thailand (Phonsaram et al., 2012).

Environmental Factors Affecting Border Trade

The crucial environmental elements affect international enterprises and cross-border trade. It stays categorized into four categories as follows: (1) Economic factors: Economic status of trading partners, for example inflation rate, deflation, unemployment rate, expansion of the economy. In addition to the currency rate, it directly affects international commerce operations that entrepreneurs should consider; (2) Sociocultural factors: Due to variations in customs, civilizations, traditions, and lifestyles, each country differs from one another. Hence, it is imperative for entrepreneurs to thoroughly examine and get knowledge about the conventions, cultures, traditions, and lifestyles of their trading counterparts, in order to mitigate disputes that may emerge due to a lack of comprehension regarding the culture and traditions of the opposing side; (3) Geographical factors: It includes the various qualities of a certain geographic location, fluctuations in the seasonal ecosystem, and occurrences of natural calamities that might have an impact on commercial activities; (4) Political factors: It involves the governmental policies of each country that have a direct or indirect impact on cross-border trade, for example, tax legislation, regulations for border trade in order to safeguard the interests of its citizens and countries (Hiransomboon, 2014).

Supply Chain

The supply chain is the process of connecting numerous operations in order to meet the needs of end customers in terms of products and services, resulting in optimum customer satisfaction. It contains essential points: suppliers, manufacturers, distribution facilities, and retailers/customers. However, success in the supply chain entails the movement of information, goods, and capital between each stage of the process in order to satisfy customers, a supply chain approach in which operations are based on consumer demand. There are two types of the process: Firstly, pull process is an operation that begins with the consumer's purchase order, understanding the specific consumer demand. Secondly, the push process is the operation conducted by production prior to the consumer purchase order. This is an unpredictable demand that should be anticipated in advance (Porter, 1990).

Research Conceptual Framework

The research on enhancement of competitiveness in fruit and vegetable export entrepreneurs through case study of Su-ngai Kolok checkpoint, Narathiwat Province. This is a study of the way how to enhance border-trade entrepreneurs' proficiency in business operations, how to expand their business potential through knowledge of government policies regarding border trade, and how to nurture their potential; how to grow entrepreneurs' readiness to attain efficiency, quality, innovation, and superior customer response. Through its development and promotion, entrepreneurs will possess the information and understanding, critical thinking skills, and practical application to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of their business. The conceptual framework is as follows.

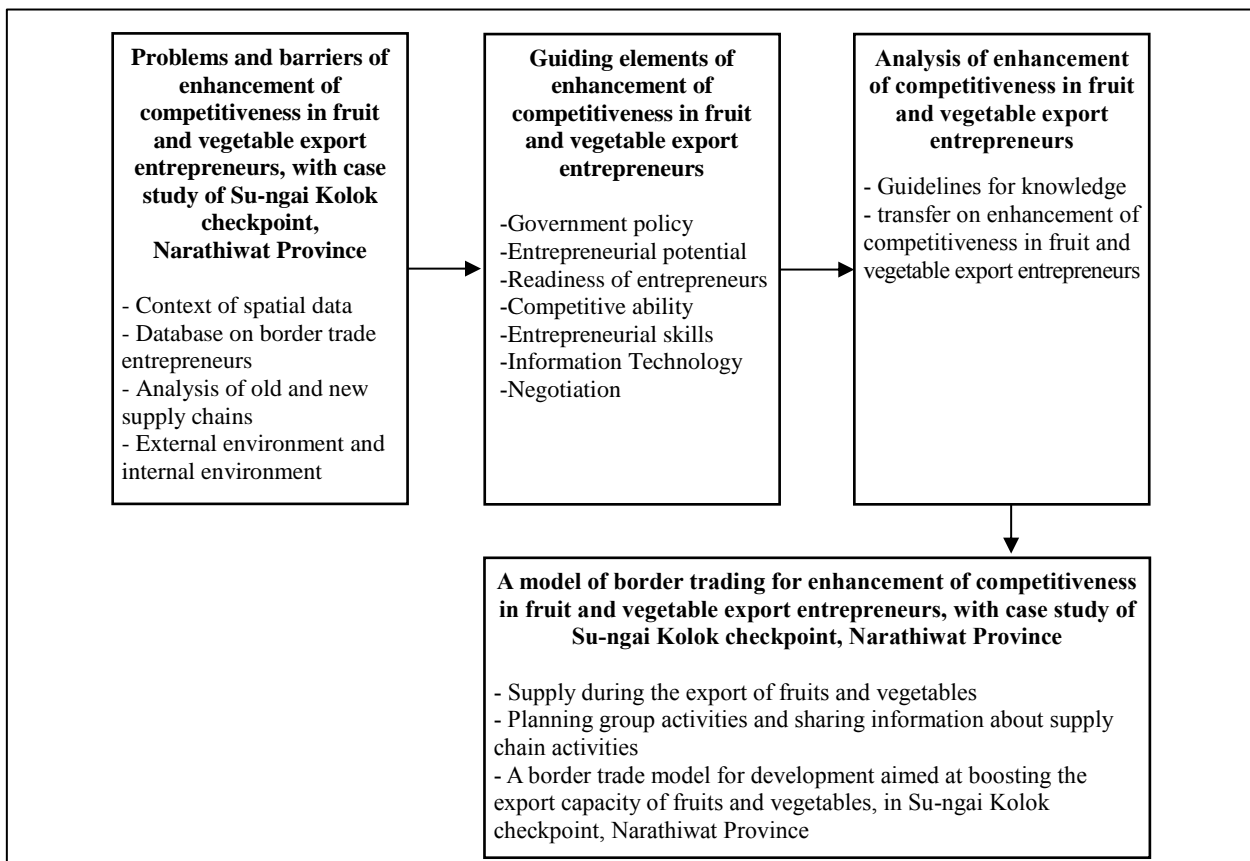


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Research Methodology

A study was conducted to investigate the enhancement of competitiveness of fruit and vegetable entrepreneurs, focusing on border trade at the Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint in Narathiwat Province. It is a qualitative research approach.

Key Informants

For the key informants, the researcher selected key informants for the in-depth interviews based on their decision to obtain specific features that align with the research objectives and to gather a diverse range of viewpoints from them. A total of 25 persons, comprise: (1) A consortium of entrepreneurs that involved in the export of vegetables and fruits, specifically engaged in Thai border trade, Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint in

Narathiwat Province, it was accommodating 10 persons; (2) Group of strategic and planning practitioners of the Department of Agriculture from Provincial and District Agriculture Offices, two persons; (3) Group of government officials performing duties at border trade checkpoints in Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint Narathiwat Province consists of officials from the Su-ngai Kolok Customs Checkpoint and Su-ngai Kolok customs officials, totaling three persons; (4) one person from executives working in the supervision and development of the trade economy; (5) Chief of the Narathiwat Provincial Office, Provincial Strategy Group, consisting of one person; (6) The Mayor of Su-ngai Kol Municipality, one person; (7) Two persons hold the positions of President and Vice President in the Narathiwat Chamber of Commerce; (8) Staff of Narathiwat Provincial Commerce department, one person; (9) One person, specializing in agricultural extension academics; (10) one person, from the Su-ngai Kolok Plant Checkpoint of the Department of Agriculture; (11) Shipping agent, two persons.

Research Instruments

The research instruments employed in qualitative research include in-depth interviews as a primary method of data collection. The researcher will utilize an interview questionnaire. The nature of the open-ended questions was derived from the study of data acquired from documents pertaining to the enhancement of entrepreneurs' competitiveness of Thai border commerce with Malaysia at the Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint in Narathiwat Province, which involves a group of 25 persons who are considered as key informants. A structured interview approach is used to create an interview form focusing on the challenges faced by fruit and vegetable export businesses. The case study is based on border commerce at Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint in Narathiwat Province. In addition to SWOT analysis and analysis of enhancement competitiveness of entrepreneurs in border trade, with case study of Su-ngai Kolok checkpoint, Narathiwat Province, the interview technique employed open-ended questions to allow the interviewer to respond freely based on the researcher's predetermined questions. Detailed knowledge of the subject is under examination. The qualitative research tools were evaluated by subjecting the created questionnaire to expert examination and soliciting recommendations for enhancement. The revised questionnaire was then utilized to gather data through interviews. Finally, the collected data were shared with stakeholders for verification of information.

Data Collection

In order to initiate discussions and gather data collected during the interviews, send a letter to the following addresses: the Commercial Office of Narathiwat province; Su-ngai Kolok Customs Checkpoint; Provincial Strategy Group; and the Narathiwat Provincial Office. To seek assistance and obtain clarification regarding the appointment's objective, date, time, and the group consisting of 25 persons of key informants who are associated with border trade, to schedule a meeting for a face-to-face interview and arrange a suitable place for the interview request area, the researcher will personally visit the requested interview site. The interview employs a conversational approach to gather comprehensive information thoroughly. Audio recording was used during the interview to ensure independent retrieval of material. After the interview settles, the researcher will retrieve the recorded audio for additional data analysis.

Data Analysis

Using qualitative data analysis, the researcher conducted a structured interview. Throughout the interview, the researcher will use a voice recording device to ensure comprehensive information is captured. Subsequently, the researcher will transcribe the audio recording of the interview into textual form and meticulously examine and comprehend it for the purpose of content analysis. This involves organizing and categorizing the information

into separate ideas and scrutinizing the crucial elements, then, generating and constructing detailed and concise content that aligns with the research objectives.

Research Results

Enhancement of Competitiveness of Fruit and Vegetable Export Businesses Through a Case Study of Border Trade at Su-Ngai Kolok Checkpoint in Narathiwat Province

Government agencies in border trade zones have supported strategies for enhancing business competitiveness. The undeniable aspect is the development of border trade policies that are backed by government support and cooperation. The border area is the Su-ngai Kolok Border Trade Zone, which is considered an area where there has been border trade with Malaysia for a long time. Amid globalization, the trade system becomes more intertwined. This poses issues, particularly for government entities, who are primarily responsible for the development of border economic zones and cities. The article discusses the significance of enhancing trade competitiveness as well as participating in the development of border trade policies. Border trade in Narathiwat province generates a significant annual income for the government, particularly impacting many stakeholders, with a notable influence on Thai-Malaysian border trade at Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint. This sector is important for the import and export of several products. Government agencies participate in shaping policies and providing guidance to drive development. They also educate entrepreneurs to enhance their business capabilities, enabling them to compete effectively in the future, likewise, establishing policies for the development of border cities through collaboration with Malaysia. The aim is to enhance the border city area, particularly the Su-ngai Kolok checkpoint, to facilitate trade, investment, tourism, agriculture, agricultural industry, halal food industry, and environmental development.

Supply Chain of Fruit and Vegetable Export Entrepreneurs, Through a Case Study of Su-Ngai Kolok Checkpoint, Narathiwat Province

The supply chain of durian entrepreneurs. It includes: (1) Upstream, where farmers harvest the product and send it to merchants for collection. The production plan considers a variety of manufacturing elements, including chemical fertilizers/chemicals, expenses, raw materials, equipment, and distributors. (2) Midstream and downstream levels, stakeholders are brought together to drive the local economy. It is grouped into three major groups, as follows: agricultural cooperatives, department stores, and merchants who provide products for transportation durian both locally and throughout the country, totaling 5,402,657 baht. The processing factory group distributes products domestically and internationally within the country 30% of products are dispersed for a total value of 11,345,579, while 70% are shipped to China via the Su-ngai Kolok Customs Checkpoint and Su-ngai Kolok Plant Inspection Checkpoint, in which by using durian shipping innovators from SBPAC research programs, the total value is 113,941,905 baht. The third segment consists of entrepreneurs (sorting and shipping) and exporters who deliver durian to Lhong. Then, 30% of the items are distributed both locally and internationally, totaling 7,563,719 baht, and 70% are sent to China, totaling 10,805,314 baht, via the Su-ngai Kolok Customs Checkpoint and the Su-ngai Kolok Inspection Plant Checkpoint. There are durian shipping innovators formed from research initiatives using a border commerce model under the administration of the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre (SBPAC). The final group consists of farmers who deliver durian throughout the country, 30% in the local and 70% in other areas, for a total value of 749,545 baht, which adds value by developing new products in the agricultural, food, and biological industries and promoting high-end processing.

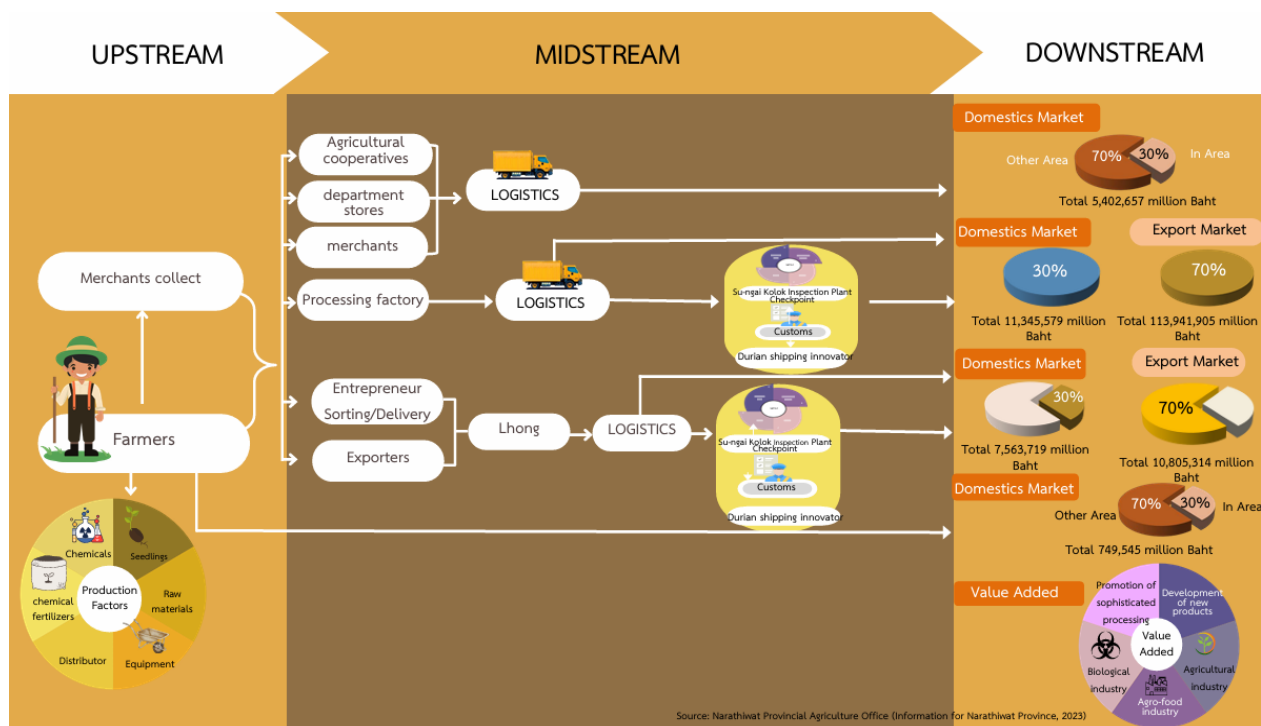


Figure 2. Supply chain of durian entrepreneurs.

The supply chain of mangosteen entrepreneurs. It includes: (1) Upstream mangosteen cultivation by farmers in Narathiwat Province, approximately 38,408 farmers, cultivation area 51,762 rai, yield 44,938 kilograms per rai, and 100% harvest. Additionally, it was also discovered that the number will double when the upstream level leverages knowledge of production and online marketing, merging groups to integrate production and marketing, strengthening management standards, applying technology to improve shelf life. In addition, processing technology applications that use production factors include technology and innovation, managing leftovers materials and waste, boosting management standards, generating product identity, and developing mangosteen variants. (2) At the midstream level that connects upstream and downstream activities, in terms of looking for a market, the process begins with middlemen in the area in charge of checking product quality, and the purchasing process involves making purchases to Lhong, who is in charge of warehouse management, procurement process information, and distribution, where products are directed within the domestic and exported abroad. (3) Downstream, items are sold nationally 60%, provincially 20%, and locally 20%, for a total value of 323.72 million baht, and shipped to overseas markets, specifically Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia nearly 100%. Nevertheless, a mangosteen shipping innovator has emerged from studies employing the border commerce model under the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC), who carried out various operations through customs checkpoints and the Su-ngai Kolok Inspection Plant Checkpoint, until developing a new value chain consisting of the development of new products, industrial products, the agro-food industry, the biological industry, and the promotion of sophisticated processing.

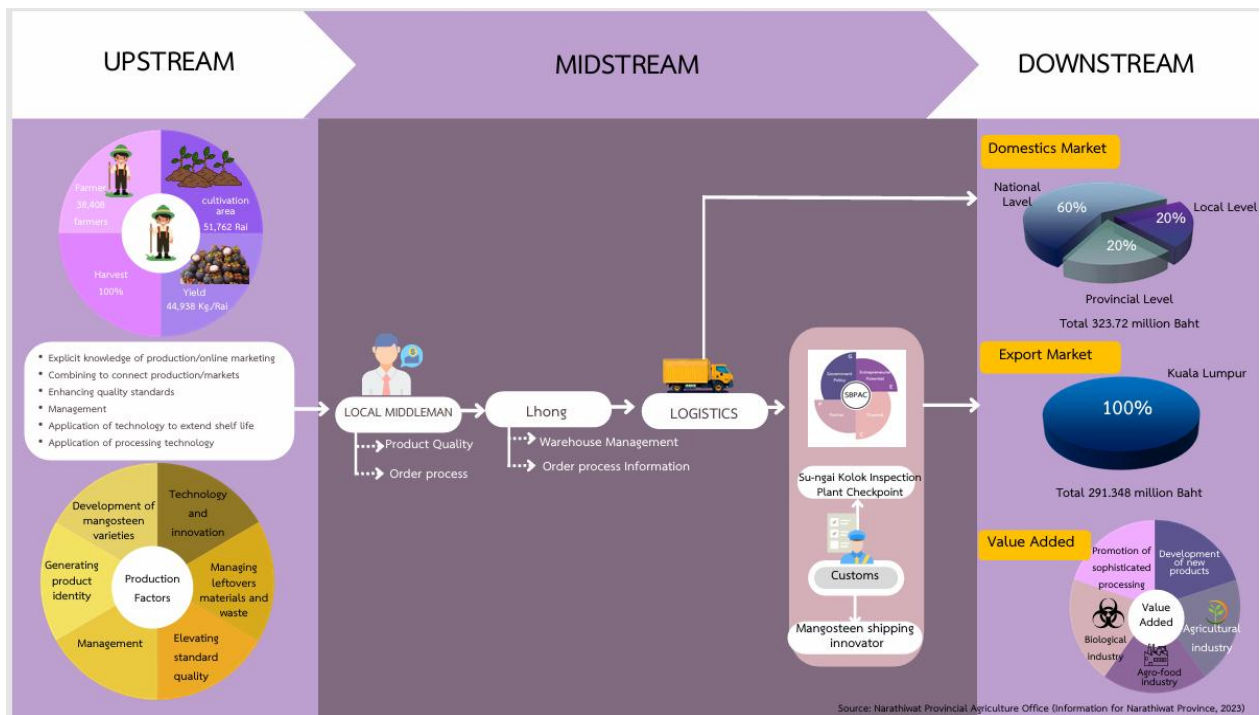


Figure 3. Supply chain of mangosteen entrepreneurs.

The supply chain of capsicum entrepreneurs. It includes: (1) Upstream level, capsicum cultivation by farmers in Narathiwat province has 718 farmers, cultivation area 359 rai, yield 27,940 kg/rai, farmers harvest 100%, and the numbers will increase to double. However, due to the upstream level, there is the use of knowledge in production/online marketing, grouping to connect production and markets, boosting quality standards, management, applying technology to improve shelf life, and application of processing technology. In addition, by depending on producers, who include landowners, distributors of capsicums, distributors of pesticides and fertilizers, and distributors of agricultural supplies. (2) The midstream level that connects upstream and downstream activities consists of retail/wholesale merchants that wholesale to local merchants before reselling to wholesale merchants in other provinces. Brokers and export traders, who help to encourage the marketing media, serve as a network to promote and support Thai restaurant operators, gain benefits from employing capsicum as an ingredient in food for sale, manage agricultural businesses and food in culture, and enhance product quality and standards. (3) At the downstream level, marketing operations include acquiring mainly capsicums, both domestically and internationally, because they serve as the link to the end customer. By market buying capsicums, which consists of three levels of capsicum buyers: local, provincial, and national markets, 90% fresh capsicums and 10% culturally processed food products, totaling 9,553,200 baht, and also exported to Malaysia in Traditional Store of Terengganu nearly 40%, Yahor Bharu 30%, Kuala Lumpur 20%, and Penang 10%, totaling 8,597,880 baht. However, a capsicum shipping innovator has emerged from studies employing the border commerce model under the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC), who carried out various operations through customs checkpoints and the Su-ngai Kolok Inspection Plant Checkpoint. Moreover, it is until establishing a new value chain that includes the development of new products, industrial products, the agro-food industry, the biological industry, and the promotion of sophisticated processing.

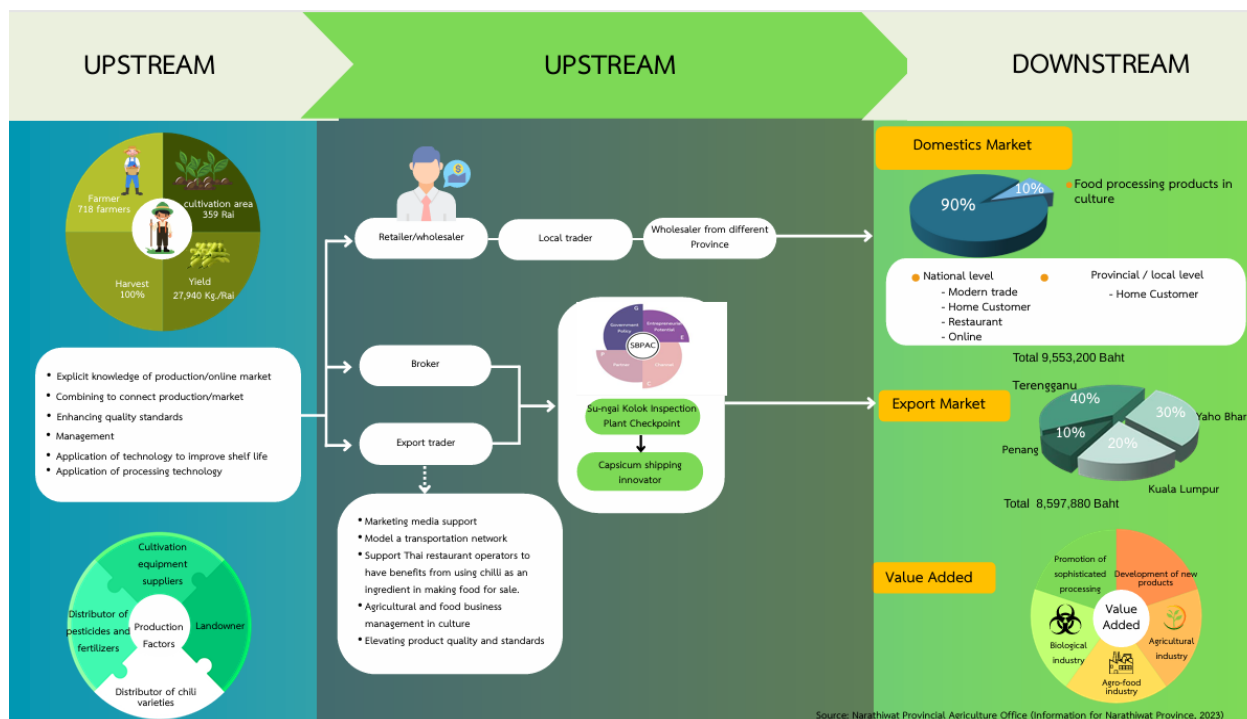


Figure 4. Supply chain of capsicum entrepreneurs.

The supply chain of grey oyster mushroom entrepreneurs. It includes: (1) At the upstream level, 50 farmers in Narathiwat province cultivate fresh mushrooms over a 10-rai region, yielding 360,000 kilograms per rai and ensuring a 100% harvest. The number is expected to double due to explicit knowledge on production and online marketing, integration to connect production and market, elevating quality standards, using technology to improve shelf life, and applications of processing technology based on production factors include distributor of mushroom varieties, greenhouse material and mushroom cultivation equipment suppliers, and landowners, all involved in the production process. (2) The midstream level is made up of local, provincial, and national merchants who collect, and package produce for the domestic market and sell it to brokers. The information will then be submitted to export merchants and brokers. (3) At the downstream level, products are primarily distributed within the country, with four main markets: restaurants (30%), stores (40%), consumers (20%), and online marketing (10%), totaling 8,640,000 baht for export brokers exporting to Malaysia, including Yaho Bharu and Terengganu (40%) and Kuala Lumpur and Penang (10%), totaling 7,776,000 baht. In addition, a grey oyster mushroom shipping innovator has emerged from studies employing the border commerce model under the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC), to carry out various operations through customs checkpoints and the Su-ngai Kolok Plant Checkpoint. It is until establishing a new value chain that includes the development of new products, industrial products, the agro-food industry, the biological industry, and the promotion of sophisticated processing.

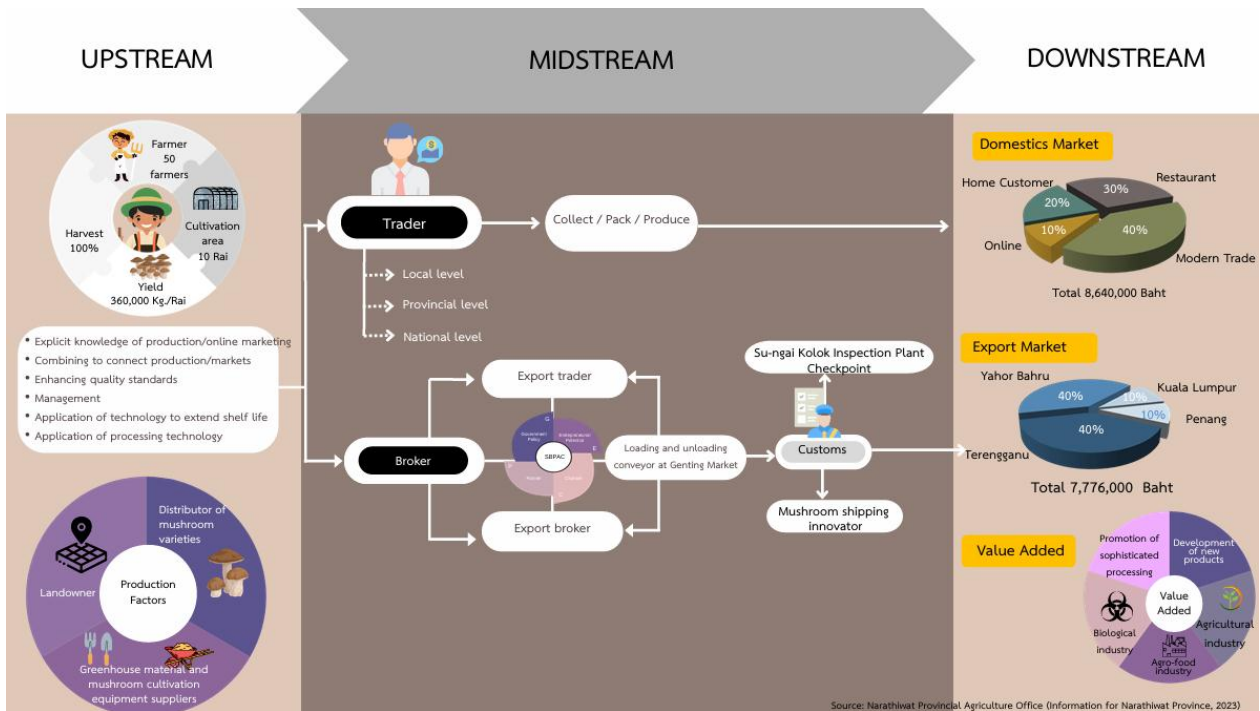


Figure 5. Supply chain of grey oyster mushroom entrepreneurs.

Development of a Border Trade Model to Enhance the Capability of Vegetable and Fruit Export Businesses in Su-Ngai Kolok District, Narathiwat Province

The research results are as follows. In terms of improving the competitiveness of border trade operators in the case study of Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint, Narathiwat Province, the research team is devoted and determined to promote entrepreneurs who trade fruits and vegetables at Su-ngai Kolok checkpoint, to design a development model that depends on collaboration from all pertinent sectors to implement certain policies concretely. There is a sector in the cooperation network that acts as an agency which encourages and supports the development and drives many policies. According to research results, a model for border trade may be developed, through case study of Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint in Narathiwat Province, as depicted in the image below:

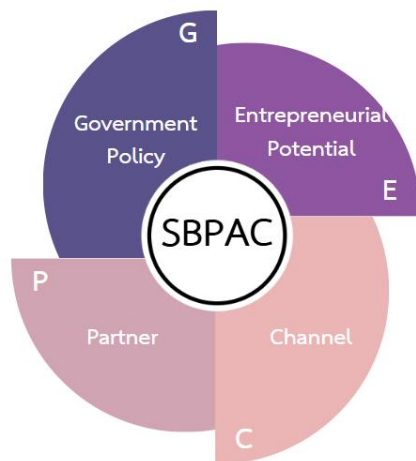


Figure 6. Su-ngai Kolok border trade model.

The border trade model, shown in Figure 6, was developed in Su-ngai Kolok District, Narathiwat Province, to enhance the capability of vegetable and fruit export businesses. In terms of acquiring ideas from participants in every relevant sector and creating by the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center, or SBPAC, which is a framework for the development of border trade and entrepreneurs. The development of the southern border provinces is associated with several strategies and operational plans that are related to the coordination, expediting, and monitoring of work to ensure policy execution. These can be detailed in detail in each problem as follows.

Government policy. Government policies and relevant institutions, both the private and public sectors, are crucial mechanisms for developing border areas, to improve the development of the Thai-Malaysian border trade checkpoint, where various agencies have dissimilar objectives. It assists in endorsing and supporting by offering information on customs regulations, trade and investment, news dissemination, and recommending funding sources or financial institutions for import-export planning, advising funding sources or financial institutions for low interest rates, and steps or processes in import-export planning. Moreover, to enhance the distribution of products expected to rise in the future, focus on expanding distribution channels to Malaysia, improving the logistics system, ensuring consistent product quality, offering information on plant diseases, and obtaining agricultural product standard certifications. This information will be beneficial and offer guidance for spatial development. The material will help streamline and enhance border trade operations by addressing many aspects including infrastructure, benefits, border trade rules, and the IMT-GT cooperation framework.

Partner. An agreement is to collaborate amongst agencies to fulfill their respective missions and obligations in various capacities to assist entrepreneurs in effectively achieving common objectives. Entrepreneurs are content with conducting business, facilitating collaboration to progress effectively. The network partners will engage in many activities, for example: (1) Acting as a mediator in creating group activities with business stakeholders; (2) Communicating between departments and trading partners; (3) Open to listening to opinions, complaints, and problems arising from operations to find solutions; (4) Exchange news between business partner organizations in order to increase revenue and diminish competition; (5) Seek marketing partners who have the same goal to reduce administrative costs of marketing; (6) Gather with business partners and allies who have business goals; Lastly, (7) develop entrepreneurs to have potential according to market needs, consisting of Su-ngai Kolok Customs Checkpoint, Immigration Checkpoint, Su-ngai Kolok Plant Checkpoint, Shipping agency, Narathiwat Chamber of Commerce, Southern Thai Fruit Exporters Association, Provincial Agriculture Office, and Provincial Commerce Office.

Entrepreneurial potential. In terms of knowledge and abilities, the entrepreneurs should possess a strong understanding of marketing, product development, entrepreneurial skills, communication skills, media skills, online society, information technology, network communication, social networks, online product promotion, negotiation techniques, rational negotiation principles, and interpersonal relationship-building skills.

Channels. Channels, the transit across borders, should primarily utilize road transit, employing vehicles and trucks for distribution. Modern trading demands increased speed and dependability. Hence, it is essential to depend on Just-in-Time Delivery Systems that operate through the interchange of more detailed and extensive information, to contribute to the advancement of transportation and service. The service will operate daily from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. utilizing vehicles, four-wheel trucks, and six-wheel trucks. There are two types of service available: (1) Inspect the trucks on the Red Line; (2) Trucks on the Green Line do not require inspection upon opening. Additionally, the cross-border transport process comprises four definite processes: (1) verifying data

and inputting it into the system (Matching); (2) releasing items through X-ray inspection (X-ray); (3) verifying the release for export; and (4) confirming the information for release beyond the border.

Discussion

The Enhancement of Competitiveness of Fruit and Vegetable Export Businesses Through Case Study of Su-Ngai Kolok Checkpoint in Narathiwat Province

It obtained government agency assistance for enhancing competitiveness in growing border trade sectors, thus creating the trade system more integrated, which plays a crucial role in the development of border economic zones and cities, regarding the significance of enhancing trade competitiveness and involvement in shaping border trade policies. As a result of the enormous influx of revenue into the nation each year, Narathiwat province's border trade is exceptional, notably the Thai-Malaysian border trade at the Su-ngai Kolok crossing. This sector is crucial for the import and export of various products. Therefore, the government agencies participate in setting policies and providing direction to drive development. It is consistent with the research of Samikul's (2014) research, who studied on the guidelines for developing the border trade economy, and the case study of Friendship Market at Su-ngai Kolok border checkpoint. The study's results revealed that government agencies have established guidelines for the economic development of border trade at Su-ngai Kolok Checkpoint. Policy ideas were presented to the government, to launch the Friendship Market area at the Su-ngai Kolok checkpoint as a special economic zone. To enhance trade value and invite Thai investors for trading, enhancements are needed in the tax system, to facilitate the process of importing and exporting products to be efficient and expedited. A blueprint of the Su-ngai Kolok Border Friendship Market should be created, along with the building of extra facilities including parking spaces, restrooms, and food outlets to accommodate the increasing number of travelers. Additionally, a public relations center should be established to provide information about the Su-ngai Kolok Border Friendship Market, in order to serve as a hub for providing information to travelers.

Supply Chain of Fruit and Vegetable Export Entrepreneurs Through Case Study of Su-Ngai Kolok Checkpoint, Narathiwat Province Involves Three Parties: Producers Including Farmers, Buyers

Also, distributors including produce collectors or farmers, agricultural cooperatives, wholesalers in the domestic market, local retail traders, export agents, and logistics service providers, wholesale and retail business in foreign countries, and final consumers, are divided into two groups: domestic and foreign consumers. Additionally, the process of production includes: (1) pre-production process, (2) production, (3) post-production process. These processes facilitate creating an impression and assist in resolving issues that arise from using goods or services, for examples, offering convenience during and after product purchases, offering technical guidance on how to use goods efficiently and to their fullest potential, and gathering feedback and opinions to help develop goods and services that satisfy customers to the fullest extent possible. In accordance with studies conducted by Boonpitak et al. (2022), "The Study and Logistics and Supply Chain Management Analysis of Thai Fruits in Chanthaburi", according to the study's findings, all three varieties of fruit—longan, mangosteen, and durian—occurred in each of the following fruit supply chains in Chanthaburi Province: (a) The durian fruit supply chain, firstly, route 1: Farmer→middlemen→Lhong→Export merchants, secondly, route 2: Farmer→Lhong→Export merchants; (b) The mangosteen fruit supply chain in terms of route 1: Farmer→middlemen→Lhong→export merchants, and route 2: Farmer→Lhong→export Merchants; (c) longan supply chain, for route 1:

Farmer→Lhong→export merchant, the farmers that plant durian and mangosteen should plan ahead of time how they will sell their products. The market functions similarly to the longan supply chain in terms of reducing difficulties and impacts on logistics activities, middleman transportation, and product collectors. Additionally, in operations that do not create trade value, such as needing to wait to buy a truckload of fruit, and in procurement logistics activities (procurement), products have to be purchased from farmers who produce durian and mangosteen. Lastly, eliminating waste will improve the overall efficiency of Chanthaburi Province's logistics system as well as the durian and mangosteen supply chain.

Development of a Border Trade Model to Enhance the Capacity of Vegetable and Fruit Exporting Entrepreneurs in Su-Ngai Kolok District, Narathiwat Province

The border trade model is to enhance the capacity of vegetable and fruit export entrepreneurs. The Su-ngai Kolok Border Trade Model was established in Su-ngai Kolok District, Narathiwat Province. It includes government policy, partners, entrepreneurial potential, and channels. It aligns with Kasemsuk's (2019) research on enhancing the competitiveness of Thai border trade entrepreneurs with Malaysia at the Su-ngai Kolok checkpoint. The research results identified the conditions of issues and obstacles in border trade as follows: (1) Government strategies: Some policies in border areas hinder the competitiveness of entrepreneurs due to challenges in accessing investment benefits, complex implementation conditions, delayed services, akin labor costs to Thailand, incomplete government support for entrepreneurs, and uncertain knowledge management promotion policies; (2) Entrepreneurial readiness: It does not involve examining the comprehensive view of conducting business, lacking independent financial resources, obtaining funds externally to facilitate business cash flow, expecting entrepreneurs from neighboring countries to retrieve the merchandise for resale, inability to secure commercial partners, and failure to innovate and design their own products; (3) The enhancement of competitiveness: Government's promotion of logistics systems is insufficient to enhance competitiveness; insufficient staff proficient in the Malaysian language; Current policies and activities lacking specificity and hampering Thai investment. It is challenging to implement the moderation policy for entrepreneurs on the blacklist and offer more product options that do not originate from Thailand and so on.

Conclusion

Government policies directly affect the circumstances of border traders. Each policy has its own set of pros and cons. The policy is to offer comprehensive services at the Su-ngai Kolok Customs House. Speed and efficiency in obtaining the service have benefits, however, they might worsen the issue of unfair queuing. The policy of exempting corporate income tax and decreasing taxes by 50 percent for an additional five years fails to adequately address the interests of Thai investors. The main emphasis is on providing investment rights to foreigners, resulting in meddling in different Thai firms and a lack of effective resolutions to the arising issues.

Regarding entrepreneurs' readiness, they are equipped to identify methods to enhance prospects. Operating a production facility and possessing expertise in business management, involves researching regulations and laws pertaining to one's business. However, many entrepreneurs lack the ability to analyze business operations comprehensively, understand financial jargon, identify funding sources, conduct financial audits, and provide collateral when seeking loans from financial institutions.

Lastly, with the enhancement of competitiveness in the border trade and operational factors, the entrepreneurs perceive that Thailand's infrastructure nowadays features numerous land connectivity routes. However, the

government promotion of logistics systems is still insufficient. It should advocate for relief points to be established as permanent checkpoints and broaden freight checkpoints to alleviate congestion. Also, the absence of an initiative-taking public relations policy targets entrepreneurs, inadequate cooperation among sectors and limited financial resources. Small entrepreneurs face challenging eligibility standards. The Thai border market is a hub for selling products from different countries like Thailand, China, and Vietnam. Chinese and Vietnamese products are cheaper than Thai products of the same type. However, Thai products remain popular in the border markets and dominate the market share. This is because most Malaysians enjoy Thai-made products and brands, which is a result of their constant stimulation from news from Thailand. The Malaysian tourist sector is considering increasing visitation but has not achieved expected growth. Regarding different segments, there are distributors of Thai products in Malaysia, operating under specific organizational strategies, structures, and competitive environments. However, Thailand still lacks official support and is challenging to reach. Furthermore, the personal traits of Malaysians are always evolving. Entrepreneurs in Thailand face a challenge due to the lack of supportive investment policies in the country, unlike competitors such as China, which offer credit terms that prioritize product delivery over payment, putting Thai entrepreneurs at a funding disadvantage.

Suggestions, Limitations, and Implementations

Research Suggestions

Academic dimension. The research results can be applied by educational institutions, professors, students, and other interested parties, along with relevant public and private organizations, to learn about value and supply chains and to identify and address flaws in public and private organizations' organization strategies and transportation systems. Additionally, enhance its competitiveness, supports sustainable economic growth, and makes it more competitive with its neighboring countries.

Policy and strategy dimensions. The relevant governmental and private sector authorities can use the research data to improve entrepreneur competitiveness and cross-border trade, hence adding value to the export business. This research data can serve as a foundation for policymaking aimed at boosting the border trade economy and increasing export potential. Furthermore, this data can be used to successfully encourage activity development at the upstream, midstream, and downstream levels.

Economic dimension. The research data on border trade and entrepreneur competitiveness enhancement, with a case on Su-ngai Kolok, Narathiwat province, can be utilized by pertinent governmental and private sector agencies. Additionally, it can serve as a roadmap for planning at the outset of the production process to ensure that the final product meets the qualities and requirements of the destination nation. This is a chance to boost farmers' and entrepreneurs' earnings. This would result in a distribution of income to local communities and residents and support the revitalization of Narathiwat Province's border trade sector.

Limitations

(1) In the first phase of the study and data collection, the entrepreneurs were apprehensive and reluctant to provide information. This is anticipated to be a factor influencing researchers. As a result, in order to gain acquaintance with the region and inform our research goals of developing the careers of entrepreneurs engaged in trade with Malaysia, we depend on regular trips there.

(2) On-site data collection and organizing training, due to low participation from entrepreneurs in the training, the implementation was not perfect. As a result, the training was repeated numerous times to ensure that

the training activities met the project's objectives and equip entrepreneurs with the skills they need to compete while exporting products to Malaysia.

Implications

(1) This research study may be expanded to include locations bordering additional adjacent countries. This extension intends to provide a variety of perspectives on establishing an efficient border trade economy, transportation, and logistics system, as well as to improve border trade competitiveness.

(2) Large-scale research studies necessitate collaboration from relevant government and business sector agencies. It might be carried out in partnership with a more diversified set of enterprises. It discusses many aspects of efficiently managing the value and supply chain.

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