

## The fruit of success

Fruit farmers in the country enjoy higher productivity and income with training by the Thai Crop Protection Association



Wuttichai Prakosub: His income in 2009 rose 25 percent as he cut expenses on pesticide. The higher earnings of 500,000 baht (US\$15,000) were possible despite inclement weather during the flowering period.

Wuttichai Prakosub is a young farmer with big dreams for growing his family's fruit business. The 24-year-old college graduate, who grows mangosteen and durian on a 6-hectare farm in Chantaburi, Thailand, is eyeing the European export market for higher income. He plans to produce mangosteen to meet global standards for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), which will enable him to export the fruit to countries in the European Union (EU).

He said, "Currently, I am selling mangosteen just to local cooperatives. What I'd like to do is make more money by working with major exporters and sell my fruit at higher prices to the EU."

The enterprising youth has started acting on his plan. Since early 2008, he has participated in two training sessions on GAP conducted by the Thai Crop Protection Association (TCPA), a privately funded industry organization representing the plant science industry. Prakosub has learnt about using pesticides responsibly, including using personal protection and carefully following product label instructions, including Pre-Harvest

Interval information (PHI). PHI is the minimum time period from when a pesticide is applied until it is safe to harvest the crop. In addition, he has also learnt about Integrated Pest Management, an environmentally friendly way of coping with pest infestations. The result: healthier fruit that sells for some 50 percent more in the local markets.

"Previously, I didn't follow instructions on product labels and was using pesticides excessively," he recalled. "These days, my costs are lower as I have cut pesticide use by about 30 percent. But I am growing better quality fruit that commands higher prices."

Success has motivated him to aim for greater heights. With a firm foundation on responsible pesticide use through training by the TCPA, Prakosub later went on to acquire global GAP certification for his business. He is hopeful that the certification will enable him to eventually sell his mangosteen to a large food company that exports the fruit to the EU.

"There are several requirements growers must meet in order to achieve global GAP, including ensuring food safety," he said. "In my village, 21 farms participated in the program and there was random testing of our produce, including tests for Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs)," he added.

Despite inclement weather during the flowering period, Prakosub's profit rose 25 percent in 2009 to 500,000 baht (US\$15,000). He attributed this to knowledge acquired from training, which helped him trim operating costs by a third.

"A large part of my cost savings came from reduced pesticide use," Prakosub explained. "If the weather is favorable in the next farming season, I am optimistic about achieving even higher profits in 2010," he added.



Suparporn Aranyanart, 38, grows durian and mangosteen on a 9.6-hectare farm in Rayong, Thailand.

"Knowledge about Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and the responsible use of pesticides has helped me save on input costs. I'm using pesticides more efficiently and effectively. I also like the fact that I'm farming in an environmentally responsible manner."

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