

Taiwan's Small-Scale Farmers Unite for Future Growth and Development

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The agricultural management style in Taiwan is represented mainly by small-scale farms. This makes it difficult to accumulate capital, increase investments, and expand the scale of operations. It is also difficult to introduce mechanized cultivation methods to increase production. As a result, farmers lack bargaining power for their products' price.

In response to these conditions, various policies have been implemented to expand the scale of production and marketing, such as the policy of "Big Tenant-farmers, Small Landlords", hoping it will expand farmers' operational scale, so small farmers will grow stronger. In addition, in a demonstration of solidarity, the farmers in the same area produce the same farm products have joined together to form "Agricultural Production and Marketing Groups", which implement one of the most important policies COA is currently promoting.

Agricultural Production and Marketing Groups, which bring together small-scale farmers whose lands are connected and grow the same products, can reduce the cost of materials, facility equipment and other expenses through production materials, procurement cooperation, co-shipping as well as co-marketing. By sharing resources, small-scale farmers can increase overall benefits and bargaining power, so that they can enjoy the same benefits as larger-scale farmers.

Arranged according to major product categories, the groups are under the assistance of the COA's Agriculture and Food Agency, Fisheries Agency, Department of Animal Industry, and Department of Farmers' Service, respectively, as well as the local government. In addition, the groups select a local organization, such as a local farmers and fishermen's association, agricultural cooperative or related unit for assistance to upgrade their production skills and enforce their marketing management practices. This enables them to become more organized and fosters the specific product development, thereby making them more competitive in the markets both domestically or internationally.

In order to promote further development of Taiwan's Agricultural Production and Marketing Group, the authorities have set up rules for their establishment and assistance. The rules stipulate that the groups must be evaluated once every two years; this is implemented by the local entity selected by local government or groups. If the evaluation score is greater than 60 points, the corresponding group has priority to receive low interest loans, grants, or awards. If the annual evaluation score is 95 or above, the group can be recommended by the assisting entity to participate in the national selection of the COA's annual top 10 superior agricultural production and marketing group, which can win them NT \$ 200,000. In addition to this, any other group selected can also win the NT\$100,000 award.

The guidelines for establishment of Agricultural Production and Marketing Groups include requirements to have a certain number of farmers with adjoining lands or growing the same product, and their individual member's age must be above 18 years. In addition, the same household farmers is limited to participate only once.

Taiwan's agricultural environment and conditions are unlike those countries which possess larger agricultural sectors that operate in large economic scale. But it has many flexible modes of operation to remedy this. One way is through the Agricultural Production and Marketing Group, which famers cooperate together as a economic scale to compete with the domestic and international agricultural products in the world market.

(Data Sources: Council of Agriculture)

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