CHAPTER IV
AGRICULTURAL CERTIFICATIONS

Agricultural certifications, resulting from third party inspection of a regulated agricultural production process practiced by a farmer or farmer group, are discursive objects shaping an organic or safe agricultural commodity network. In this chapter, agricultural certifications will be analyzed as discursive objects leading to discourse coalitions of certifying bodies, producers, distributors, and consumers, as objects of power holding networks in shape, and as discursive objects distinguishing the local from the global, neoliberal objectives from Thai community culture.

The vegetable commodity network, which may be seen as a series of value adding nodes and processes, may be understood by examining certification strategies. Certifications become a consumer commodity, socially constructed through the meanings ascribed by both society and state. Regulations are practiced discourse; they are a set of relations between actors in a network supporting a particular production process (Foucault, 1972: 46). The act of certifying transforms the regulations into a single, unified discursive object capable of extending the meanings behind the practices into a symbol, allowing that symbol to have power and value, leading to commoditization. The commoditization of certification allows farmers to employ production strategies which may gain them access into different markets. Some vegetables marketed under a specific regulatory regime become repackaged and labeled under multiple certifications, using different logos suggesting various concepts of social responsibility, pesticide reduction techniques, as well as references to qualities such as freshness, health and safety. Retailers, “acting at a distance,” shape the market and influence farm techniques by marketing certified produce. Farmers organize themselves into farm groups to become certified under a set of regulations to meet the needs of retailers and consumers. These networks are framed by regulations accepted by consumers, retailers, and farmers. The networks are ordered by the scale of the farm groups, the policies of the retailers, the strategies of the farmers and the needs of the consumers. In Northern Thailand the ordering of

these networks is not established by governmental policies or global markets, but by tacit arrangements of actors with individual needs (Schon and Rein, 1996: 88).

4.1 Discourse coalitions

Specific regulations covering the production of organic, pesticide free or pesticide reduced production processes are established by institutions with standardized, certification policies to provide assurance of proper production practices. Actual certification is accomplished by third party certifying bodies to limit conflicts of interest. Certification holds the network in shape though a complex "set of relations" between regulatory institutions, certifying bodies, certified farmers, assemblers, retailers and health conscious consumers (Latour, 2005: 303-311). The various groupings of actors constituting the network may be conceived of as discourse coalitions, as actors linked together by a common purpose, engaged in relationships promoting not static rules and procedures, but objects subject to constant translation, renewal, and departure, organized into discursive practices constituting the network (Foucault, 1977: 47, 173). New formations of certified agricultural production breakaway and contest the normalized standards of exiting institutions (Williams, 1995: 67). They challenge the national and international forms of governmentality which problematize general situations of agricultural production and rendered technical processes of production unsuitable for local production (Li, 2007:,7). In the case of Thailand, both state ministries and civil society have created new technical discourse to allow existing farming practices to be seen differently. By establishing new organic agricultural regulations unique to Thailand, both state and civil society have brought "facts into line with their representations" (Scott, 1998: 90).

However certifying bodies respond to different networks of actors and for different purposes. Safe vegetable production networks operate on local, national, and international scales. Each of these networks satisfies the needs of distinctive groups whose objectives do not always overlap. Power and control come to play as networks overlap in the marketplace and products become distinguished by both the message of the certification and price paid by the consumer. International ideals are brought into Thai certifying body's networks of understanding through what has already been defined as neoliberal agenda. The process of translation, which is

discussed at length in chapter 6, influences Thai regulations at the national and local levels. The same processes occur between the state and local level. This chapter will help to unravel the power and reach of these networks and demonstrate how they are instrumental in constructing the commodity networks.

Third party agricultural certification informs the consumer of the undesirable and unobservable pesticides that may have been used during the production process. Pesticide use, the presence of GMOs, specific farming practices, the detrimental environmental affects of exhaustive planting methods and social problems caused by unfair labor and management practices are a few of the production processes monitored by agricultural regulations. Consumers do not have any absolute positions on these issues. Instead they have varying degrees of concern and these are tempered by price. Certification provides consumers with knowledge about particular production processes so they may make informed purchasing decisions. In Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand, groups of vegetable farmers, locally known as "chao suan," have found a new market niche by producing to different standards for these consumer groups. Certified farmers understand that consumers are willing to pay a premium for vegetables grown under different regulations and have changed their practices to fit different regulatory standards to acquire consumer confidence (Vitoon Panyakul, 2001: 29). These standards are made known to consumers through various logos representing the certifying bodies that inspect and regulate farm practices (Vitoon Panyakul, 1998 :22).

Certified vegetable commodity networks are constituted by horizontal and vertical linkages of actors constituting interrelated nodes. (Figure 4.1) Producers and consumers are linked vertically by a network of intermediaries, such as assemblers and resellers. These actors are linked horizontally to certifiers, NGOs and other third parties who bring various issues and statements of authenticity to products and actors. Certified network are distinguished by the issues surrounding the processes of production, produce, and in these case vegetables, become representations of politics, causes, and social aspirations.

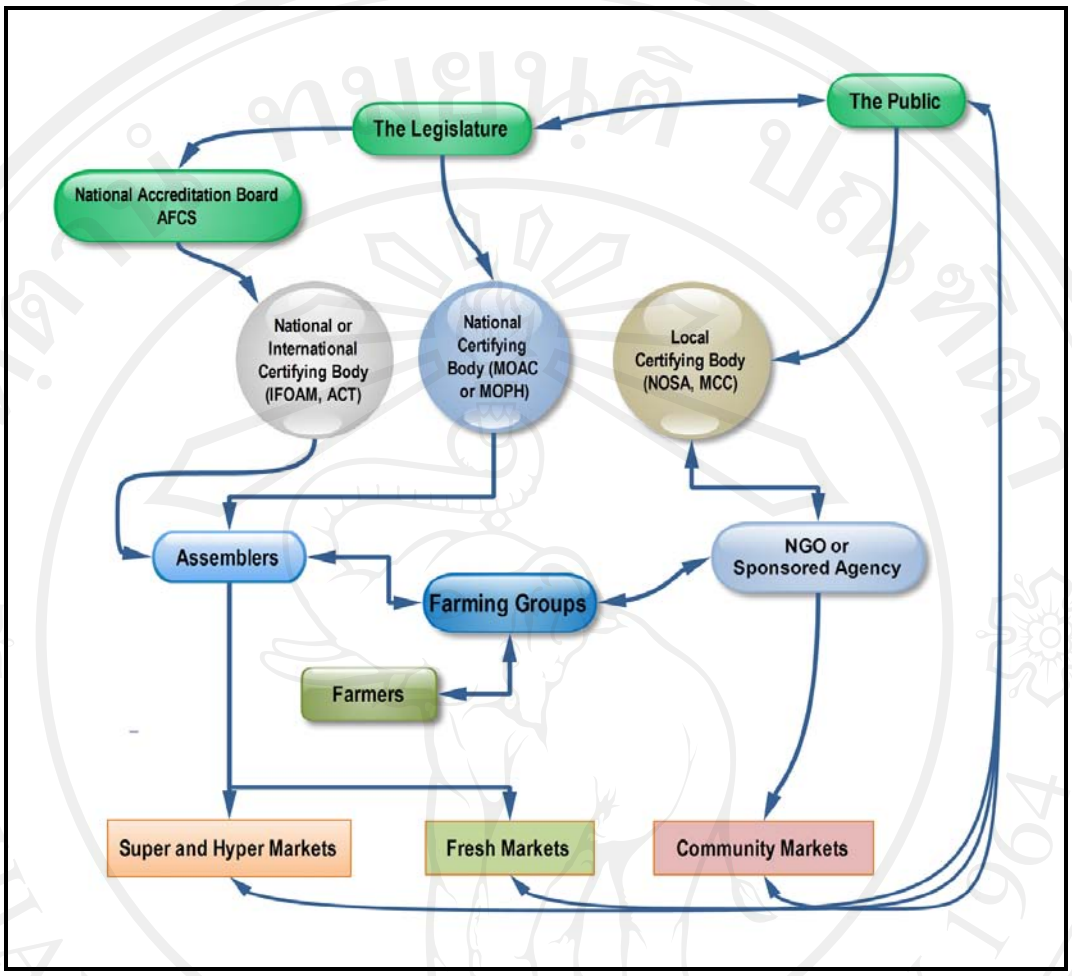

Figure 4.1 Certified Vegetable Commodity Network in Thailand

There are many organic and safe agricultural production standards currently being used in Thailand. Each one has an official certifying body and codified set of regulations. Some of these standards originate in Thailand, but most have a global reach, originating in other nations and competing for world-wide acceptance in the global food commodity network. Organic regulations represent highly complex, social-political discourse constituted by agreements, coalitions, and advocacy from farmers, retailers, consumers, worker's rights groups and environmental factions. Many countries endorse their own particular standard. As of 2003, there were 364 certification bodies in 57 different countries. There are 130 different standards in the European Union alone. In the USA, the standards originate from the United States Department of Agriculture. In England, the Soil Association is most favored (Rundgren, 2003). All of these standards regulate the processes of "organic,"

chemical-free farming. They are used to certify growers who can then place a representative label on their product to inform consumers that the regulatory standard was met. According to the FAO, products labeled as 'organic' are those certified as having been produced through clearly defined organic production methods. In other words, organic "is a claim on the production process rather than a claim on the product itself" (FAO, 2001). IFOAM was organized in 1972 to help set an international standard. IFOAM is currently accepted in 108 different countries. The IFOAM standards help to establish equivalency between those practicing IFOAM regulations in different countries. Therefore, the organic production process in one country can be understood as equivalent to the organic production processes of another. Translation facilitates the global transfer of agricultural products between producers and consumers. It enables the different agricultural practices of over 750 member organizations to compete in the global organic foods market (IFOAM, 2009). IFOAM positions itself to help local organic agricultural communities by giving them credibility of an international institution. IFOAM acknowledges the problems of global food programs and the neoliberal agenda behind them as disempowering local initiative and subverting local farm enterprise by the expansion of global trade and food industries (Einarsson and Luttikholt, 2006). Still, there is no general consensus on the rules of practice for organic agriculture. Although IFOAM's regulatory policies concerning no chemical use and provisions for biodiversity are laudable, not everyone wants to be governed by global standards. Yet even IFOAM with its global reach of unyielding organic standards is not accepted by other certifying bodies. Each network clings to its own power and authority to maintain its own agricultural commodity networks.

Thailand has multiple forms of organic regulations and certifying bodies. The Thai government established the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (ACFS) in 2002 to consolidate all national organic certifications under a single authority. Participation in ACFS is voluntary. Certified agricultural standards established by ACFS are based on Thai regulations:

The National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (ACFS) was established on October 9, 2002 under Section 8 F

> of the National Administration Act B.E. 2534. The additional content was under provision of National Administration Act B.E. 2543 (Fourth Edition). This is to designate the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards (ACFS) as a focal organization to control agricultural products, food, and processed agricultural products by certifying and enforcing standards from food producers to consumers, to negotiate with international partners in order to reduce technical barrier to trade (TBT) and to improve and enhance competitiveness of Thai agricultural and food standards (ACFS, 2009).

Thailand's certifying bodies can be classified into two broad groups: those that certify pesticide free produce and those which certify pesticide reduced produce. The Ministry of Agriculture certifies pesticide reduced processes for farmer groups under the "Good Agricultural Practices" (GAP) program, while the Ministry of Public Health certifies farm groups under the "Safety Vegetable" label. Neither ministry has been certified under ACFS. Pesticide free regulations can be divided into two additional categories: practices recognized by governmental authority and practices unofficially recognized but accepted by consumers. Unofficial certifying bodies such as the Northern Organic Standards Association (NOSA), farmers of Santi Asoke[25], and farmers associated with the MCC, regulate farming practices accepted by the community and some international importers as pesticide free, "organic" vegetables. They are not officially recognized by established international organic agencies, ACFS or by any government agencies.[26]

The only Thai certifying body recognized by the Thai government and international agencies is the Organic Agriculture Certification Thailand (ACT). Currently, only ACT is ACFS certified in Thailand. (Chanuan Ratanawarasha et al., 2007: 18; Vitoon Panyakul, 2008). ACT farmers, along with those certified by international certifying bodies such as Soil Association, BCS of Germany, or the Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS), sell almost exclusively outside of Thailand or in high-end supermarket and hypermarket chains. Internationally certified vegetables

[25] Santi Asoke is a Buddhist organization that practice organic agriculture recognized as "non-toxic farming" by IFOAM. (From www.ifoam.org, Thailand Case Studies for Organic Agricultural Development, written by Vitoon Panyakul, 2008)

[26] Some farmers belonging to MCC may also be certified under GAP or "Safety Vegetable."

belong to the global market and respond to international price structures. Production scales are far beyond the capacity of small farmers or small farm groups.

Centralized certification under ACFS is fraught with difficulties. Application for registration under ACFS is redundant for anyone already certified by one of the government ministries. Typically, those certifying under GAP are not seeking qualification for international markets. Likewise, locally certified farmers produce for local markets. National acceptance is not important for local organic markets. Alternately, large scale farms that have been certified under an international certification scheme are already held to strict standards and therefore the ACFS certification is unnecessary. There is also a problem with the number of standards proliferated by ACFS. In fiscal year 2004, ACFS designed 22 standards for food and agricultural commodities. These are divided into 13 agricultural commodity standards, five system standards, and four general standards. Though ACFS standards follow Thailand's GAP, Good Hygienic Practice (GHP) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), they allow for the application of hazardous pesticides and do not qualify for equivalency to any international organic standard. The mission of ACFS is redundant for international organic producers as their products are already certified by an external organization.

Thailand's GAP regulations were established to provide meaning within Thai sovereignty. GAP was the result of a vocal minority of the Thai public wanted assurances that there were standards for food safety. The government responded by developing standards to be practiced within Thailand. Thai food safety and organic policies eschews reliance on foreign standards. International standards are acceptable within the marketplace but do not constitute the law in Thailand. In the north, NOSA established local processes to meet the needs of farmers with small holdings. These new processes, as codified regulations of certified agriculture have been "render technical." They are bound and enclose as new solutions exclusive to Thailand (Li, 2007: 7). These technical solutions created points of passage through which their respective institutions certify entrance into the commodity network (Rose and Miller, 1992: 20). Whereas Thailand's GAP is suitable for large scale producers such as RPF and large, Bangkok based agricultural conglomerates, it offered little to opportunity for the small scale farmer.

There are four different vegetable retail market venues in the city of Chiang Mai. These include hypermarkets, supermarkets, fresh markets, and certified weekly markets. A survey was administered to Thai customers, in Thai language, from June to July of 2008 at the four different marketing venues in the city of Chiang Mai. Hypermarkets were represented by Tesco-Lotus and Carrefour, supermarket by Tops and Rimping, fresh markets by Thanin fresh market (also known as Siriwattana Market), and dedicated certified community markets by ISAC and the MCC. A total of 324 surveys were completed at these seven markets. The survey was given by native Thai speakers who were also fluent in local Northern Thai (*Lanna*) language in order to reach the largest number of constituents, and to gain familiarity and trust of local people. The survey was not given to foreigners. Respondents were asked a wide range of questions to identify their gender, preference of vegetables and eating habits, overall trust of farmers and market sand logos, and questions relating to consumer understanding of certified vegetables. Most of the respondents were female (72%), they being the primary shoppers for their families. Just over a third of the respondents were under 30, the rest being about equally distributed between older age groups. (Table 3.6) Overall, the survey results found strong variation between the preference and attitudes of shoppers of different age groups and at different retailers. There was little difference between the answers of men and women, perhaps because the survey was given to shoppers in general, and not at locations where people were involved in other activities. In other words, both men and women had the same objectives in the location of the surveys; the survey was self-selecting for individuals shopping for their households. The survey did not discriminate in any way for social status. There were no questions to differentiate for education or occupation. I was limited to time and the number of questions I could ask.

A preliminary survey of 18 questions had proven to be too long. I decided that what I was really after was the relationship between the consumer and the marketplace and the propensity toward *Lanna* foods and local vegetables. I was interested in overall issues of trust and of what people in general, classified as a group of consumers, felt about the issues presented to them. In retrospect I should have gone farther, looking at rich and poor, levels of education, and professional level; this will have to wait for a different investigation. Instead, I found out about what *Lanna*

people in general think and feel about these issues. The Thai survey and English translation of the survey instrument can be found in the appendices.

Table 3.6 Ages of respondents

Age	**Percent of surveys**
Over 18 under 30	35.2%
Over 30 to 40	23.1%
Over 40 to 50	20.6%
Over 50	21.2%

The consumer survey demonstrated that Thai consumers exhibit a willingness to accept local certification, based on the numbers of consumers purchasing vegetables at uncertified organic markets. (Figure 4.2) Local certification by reputation and community respect is a practical way for small farmers to produce vegetables for local markets without incurring the high annual costs of certification and avoid the negative affects of collaboration with Bangkok. In the north, reputation is gained through association with locally recognized organizations such as the Institute for Sustainable Agricultural Communities (ISAC) or MCC which support the local values of *Lanna* and community culture, contributing to the promotion of farmer's livelihoods. Certifications provide farmers, assemblers and retailers credibility in establishing certified vegetable markets by providing a framework in which to follow the negotiations and strategies used by the different actors (Marsden, 1997; Raikes et al., 2000; Raynolds, 2004).

The strategies employed in each of these cases are dependent on several variables including the scale of production, the regulations adopted, and the associations made for marketing the vegetables (Eaton et al., 2001). Strategies may be defined as a type of network producing knowledge, subjects, objects, distances, and locations (Law and Hetherington, 2002: 397). These strategies bring actors together into broad networks established by acceptance of different agricultural

production processes through which unique vegetable commodity networks emerge (Forsyth, 2003: 37; Law, 1991). Logos are used to inform the consumer of pesticide regulations practiced by the farmers. Certified farmers allow retailers to satisfy the needs of customers seeking these attributes by supplying vegetables grown with regulatory standards. Retail space becomes symbolic through the values ascribed by the certified vegetables sold by farm groups and assemblers and the meanings associated with them (Arntsen, 2003: 82-83; Lefebvre, 1999: 38-39, 311).

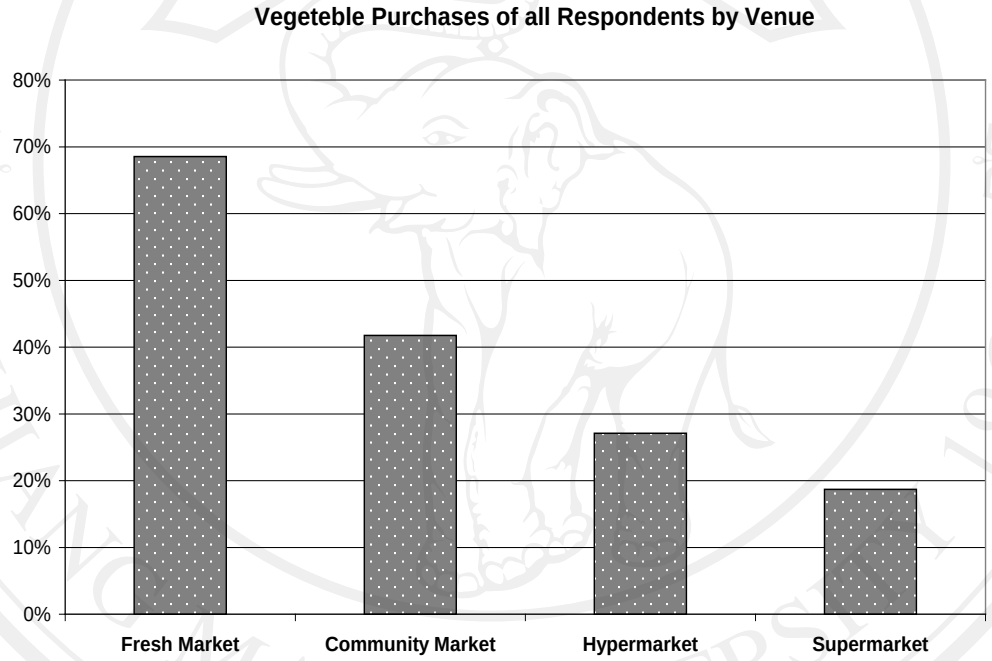

Figure 4.2 Location of vegetable purchases of all respondents by venue in Chiang Mai (n = 324)

Small-scale farmers in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand practice several different organic agricultural production process standards. These standards are generally either based on organic regulations, “Safety Vegetable”, or GAP guidelines. Each one has and official certifying body and codified set of agricultural processes. Some of the standards originate in Thailand, but most have some kind of global reach, originating in other sovereigns and competing for world-wide acceptance in the global food commodity network. Agricultural regulations represent highly complex, social-political discourse constituted by agreements, coalitions, and advocacy from farmers,

retailers, consumers, worker's rights groups and environmental factions. Whereas the intent of organic agriculture is to produce agricultural products without the use of pesticides and agro-chemicals, GAP only limit these inputs. GAP regulations were developed to encourage agricultural processes leading to "economic and social sustainability" with an outcome of producing safe and healthy food.

The four main objectives of Thailand's GAP policy are economic viability, environmental sustainability, social acceptability, and food safety and quality. GAP and organic regulations are fundamentally different approaches to practicing agriculture based on different understandings of environmental sustainability and food safety. They represent alternatives to conventional agriculture yet they are also different social formations based on the larger concept of environmental sustainability and improved social livelihoods (Poisot, 2003). Organic and safe agricultural commodity networks come together by framing principals and assumptions about agriculture and livelihood into political, environmental and social concerns. They seek to enclose the issues of the use of pesticides, agro-chemicals, biodiversity, food quality and quality of life through regulations resulting in standardized farming processes (Forsyth, 2003: 77-78). They become institutions based on certified membership with alternative forms of production when compared to conventional agricultural production. They are both distinctive and timely, developing their methods of production in a time characterized by "risk society." That is, the marketplace has compelled them to produce to fulfill a social need.

Agricultural processes go beyond the wants of the farmer; they are driven by the politics of consumers and the policies of government, seeking abatement of their concerns over health, safety, and environment or social justice (Beck, 1994: 22). Organic production and GAP address different levels of social risks that are cognitively perceived, they are social constructs, themselves formations, distinctions of what is dangerous or safe, moral and ethical judgments of the value of scientific assertions (Beck, 1994:,12; Thrift, 1996: 262; Williams, 1995: 65-130). Regulations require acceptance without which they are nothing more than ideas without an audience, policies for which there is no concern. Local certification, official or not, has its strength in the profound acceptance of a community of believers, often capable

of bearing witness to the process of production itself. Truth is literally found in the eye of the beholder.

Consumers may be characterized as coalitions of buyers with varying degrees of concern about these issues. However this kind of characterization may not be robust. Though there are a few formal consumer coalitions, this research found that consumers are better classified as having trends or propensities, they are not organized, though they may have a common goal. The concept of discourse coalition breaks down at the consumer level where consumer attitudes are more adequately defined as a discursive practice, as ideas and values held together by society through personal acceptance or interpersonal relations, but not as an organization, or campaign, or any kind of organization implying membership or allegiance. This research can say with confidence that the majority of Chiang Mai's consumers, regardless of age, income, or profession, have a preference for shopping for vegetables at fresh markets and the research shows that a large number of consumers, mostly over 50, prefer the community markets. But these are all individual choices which, taken as a whole, give only the appearance of an organized coalition. (Table 3.7)

Table 3.7 Age of consumers at the community market

Under 30	16%
30 to 40	14%
40 to 50	23%
Over 50	46%

The actions of consumers may be explained as compulsions (Law, 1991: 171) which assumes that the message behind certification has power to act on consumers. The act of consumption is a practice based on knowledge, the apprehension and use of a network object of meaning (Foucault, 1972: 182-183), its power assumed by its ability to impress the consumer. The problem is that there are a multitude of reasons why a consumer will act; there is no one strategy to be applied. What is clear is that the message of certification, whether presented as a label, a sign, or designated space, has the power to reach out to consumers and sway their opinions. This research

concludes that consumer groups purchasing certified vegetables are not a direct part of a commodity network, but are an affectation cause by the meanings behind certification.

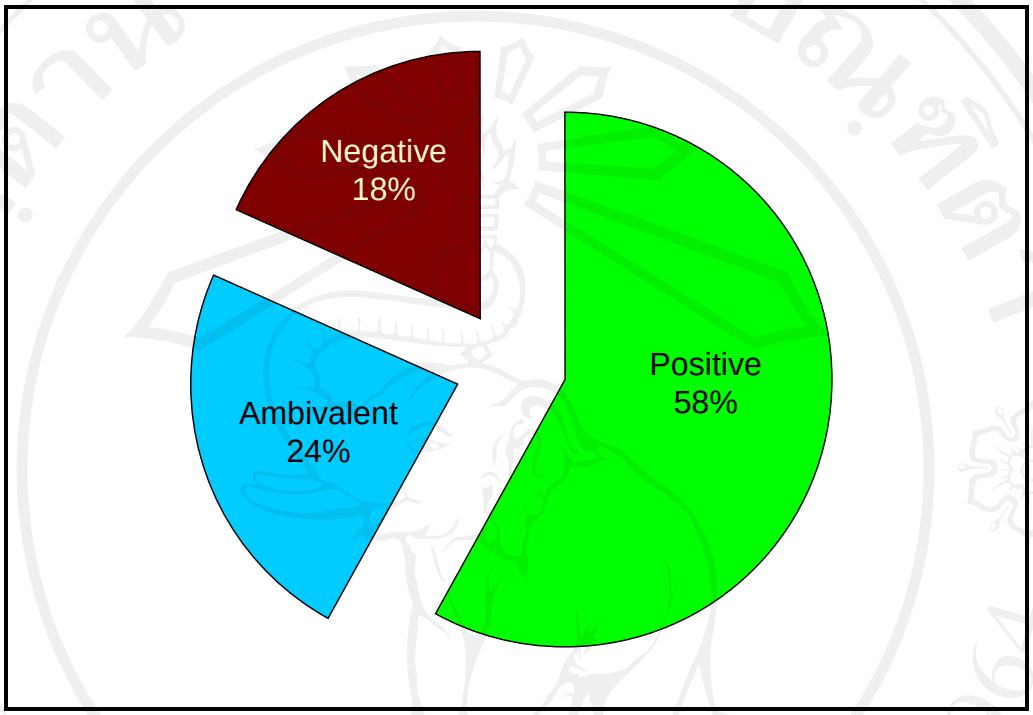

Figure 4.3 Overall consumer trust in the logos

This analysis found that all certifications are generally accepted by consumers. As the pie chart in Figure 4.3 shows, only about 20% of Thai consumers do not trust certifying labels. However, the chart also shows that a similar number of consumers are not sure what the certifications represent. This suggests that up to 40% of the potential market for certified vegetable is lost to mistrust and misunderstanding. On the other hand, the survey found that over 60% of all consumers are aware of the problem of over application of pesticides by farmers. There are many reports of the use of too much pesticide, illegal and dangerous pesticide use and the application of chemicals such as formalin to maintain a fresh appearance for harvested vegetables. Certification provides concerned consumers knowledge of process and oversight. Studies show that most farmers want to use high amounts of pesticide because the physical appearance of these crops leads to higher farm gate prices (Jungbluth, 1997). Consequently, pesticide use increases every year due to the wants of consumers for perfect vegetables. (Figure 4.4) I have learned through my preliminary interviews

with assemblers and farmers that “Safety Vegetable” standards, while not being completely pesticide free, are understood as the only practical way to compete in the Thai vegetable market. Organic production techniques can not produce vegetables without blemishes.

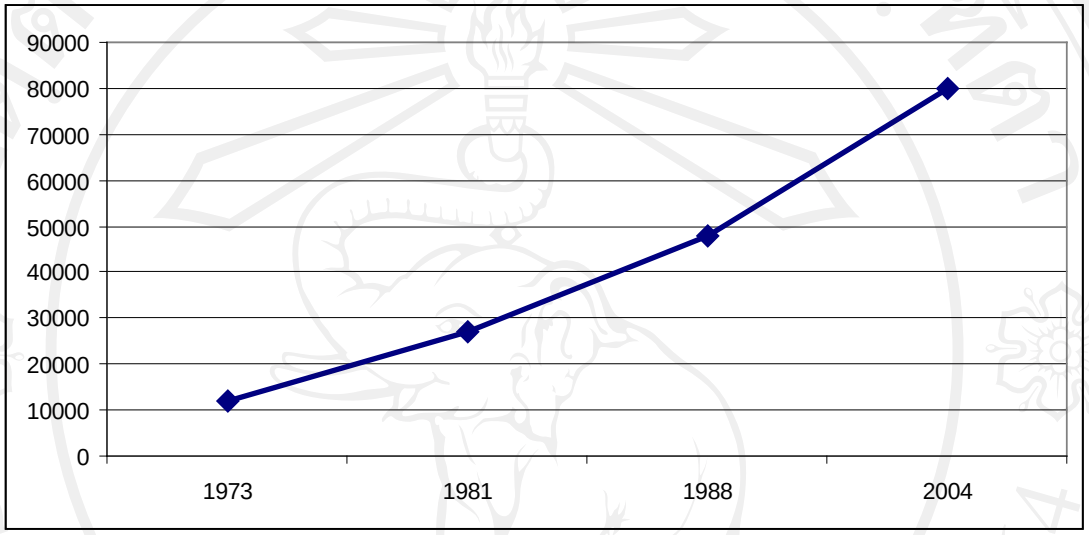

Figure 4.4 Pesticide use in Thailand (Metric Tons)

Source: (Aphiphan Pookpakdi, 2000; GreenPeace, 2008)

The problem in Chiang Mai is bringing farmers and consumers together around a standard of production practices that can meet the needs of the farmers and the wants of the consumers. The largest producer of certified vegetables in Chiang Mai is RPF, its farmers being GAP certified by the MOAC. Only highland farmers in designated areas may produce for RPF follow GAP standards. RFP acts as an assembler and resells through a complex commodity network to supermarkets, hypermarkets, small markets, and its own private market places, as well as at various small stalls outside of schools and hospitals. RPF is limited in vegetable variety to highland crops only, fulfilling only a portion of local consumer demand for certified vegetable. RPF does not produce certified organic vegetables, thereby excluding itself from those consumers. Private sector GAP and “Safety Vegetable” certified farmers in Chiang Mai are few in numbers and their commodity networks are precarious at best. Certified farmers sell their produce either directly or through

assemblers at *amphoe* sponsored demonstration markets, local hospitals, small-scale contracts and retail market tables.

4.2 Objects of power

Certification provides consumers with assurance about particular production processes so they may make informed purchasing decisions. The power of certification is in its ability, as a network object, to communicate meaning and ideology. In Chiang Mai, groups of vegetable farmers have found new livelihoods by producing to different standards for these consumer coalitions. Certified farmers communicate with consumers through the certification of their agricultural practices. Certifications are loaded with meanings and values. They specify whether a vegetable is pesticide free or safe enough to eat, they speak of biodiversity, of environmental concerns, of social responsibility, community practices, and regional values. Some regulations are made known to consumers through various logos representing the regulations being practiced, such as GAP or IFOAM (Vandergeest, 2006; Vitoon Panyakul, 1998:22) while others are represented in the community marketplace by direct experience, through dialog between producers, certifiers, field trainers, and consumers. All of these certifications are used to distinguish products grown under specific processes from those grown otherwise; to make known the issues, politics, and responsibilities represented by the products and make a claim to the purchases of consumers with like ideals.

The market for certified vegetables has captured the interest and imagination of the Thai government, retailers, and consumers. One reason for this interest is that health and safety conscious Thai customers are willing to pay at least a 50% premium over uncertified prices offered at commercial retail markets. The most common certified vegetable regulations in Chiang Mai are: *Pak Plod Pai Jak San Pis*, hereafter referred to by its popular name "Safety Vegetable," GAP represented by the "Q" logo, NOSA, MCC, "Food Safety," and different international certifications. (Appendix A) The "Safety Vegetable" classification is the oldest pesticide regulatory standard in Thailand (Ellis et al., 2006; Vitoon Panyakul, 2001). It is not a pesticide free standard. "Safety Vegetable" was initiated by the Thai government in 1992. The goals of this program were to improve public safety and reduce the need for imported chemical

fertilizers and pesticides (Ellis et al., 2006). This certification is overseen by the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) and recorded at MOAC Agricultural Extensions offices. The "Safety Vegetable" standard is highly regulated and monitored. Farmers may use pesticides in regulated qualities and only when the possibility of crop loss or failure is imminent. Farmers are also limited to the application of different pesticides by toxicity and dissipation. The goal of the program is to ensure that a limited, minimum level of pesticide residue reaches the consumer.

"Safety Vegetable" certification is being phased out by government agencies and being replaced by GAP. However, there are serious doubts about whether or not Thailand's GAP standard can be considered equivalent to international GAP regulatory standards for pesticide reduction and farmer and worker safety (Ellis et al., 2006: 36; Vitoon Panyakul, 2001: 27). Regardless of international compliance, my research found that the Thai public accepts GAP certification as an identifying marker of vegetables grown with limited or no pesticides. GAP certification is marketed under the "Q logo" and is readily available throughout Thailand. (Figure 1.7) Like "Safety Vegetable", GAP regulations allow for the use of pesticides using less vigorous control standards. GAP certification differs from "Safety Vegetable" certification in that it can be accomplished in three months compared to one year for the former. Currently, many farm groups already certified as "Safety Vegetable" growers are becoming GAP certified farmers. The process is streamlined into a single inspection to determine that the "Safety Vegetable" regulations are still being observed. GAP certification is being encouraged by the national government which allocated 8 billion baht (approximately US$230 million) in 2008 to the MOAC for the promotion of organic farming in Thailand. MOAC has enticed many new farm groups to certify under GAP with both monetary and in-kind remuneration, and has invested heavily in a national marketing campaign which promotes GAP products.

The vegetable commodity network, which may be seen as a series of value adding nodes and processes, may be operationalize into the power relationships developed around certification strategies. Certification schemes become a consumer commodity, socially constructed through the meanings ascribed by both society and state. The commoditization of certification gives farmers opportunities to use production strategies to gain access to different markets. Some vegetables marketed

under a specific regulatory regime become repackaged and labeled under multiple certifications, using different logos suggesting various concepts of social responsibility, pesticide reduction techniques, as well as references to qualities such as freshness, health and safety. Retailers, "acting at a distance," shape the market and influence farm techniques by marketing certified produce. Likewise, farmers associate themselves into farm groups to become certified under a set of regulations to meet the needs of retailers and consumers. Networks are framed by regulations accepted by consumers, retailers, and farmers. They are ordered by the scale of the farm groups, the policies of the retailers, and the needs of the farmers. In Northern Thailand, the ordering of these networks is not established by governmental policies or global markets, but by tacit arrangements of actors with individual needs (Schon and Rein, 1996:88). This observation is made in reference to the unique standing of local vegetables in the diet of Chiang Mai consumers, an important factor contributing to the certified vegetable network which will be discussed in more detail later. Certification holds the network in shape though a "set of relations" between certified farmers and health conscious consumers (Latour, 2005: 303-311). However, both assemblers and retailers manipulate the meanings behind the certifications by marketing their representative logos and extract value from networks (Whatmore and Thorne, 1997: 290).

Royal Project Foundation, (RPF), is the largest producer of GAP and "Safety Vegetable" in Thailand. RPF uses the "Doi Kham" logo to identify certified vegetables sold directly though retailers. The enormous size of the RPF network relative to all other producers, as well as the notoriety given by royal patronage, gives the Doi Kham label an unprecedented advantage over all other certified products. Doi Kham vegetables are sold in nearly every vegetable market venue. Only recently has RPF relinquished some of its command of the market by the promotion of GAP, the same certifying label used by RFP, throughout Thailand.

The techniques to grow vegetables using "Safety Vegetable" regulations were developed by the RPF which operates 28 agricultural extension stations throughout the mountainous regions of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, Lamphun, Phayao and Nan provinces. RPF provides a marketing opportunity for approximately 274 villages throughout Northern Thailand. Since 2006, RPF has been

training their farmers to follow GAP regulations. As of 2007, about one-half of the RPF's farmers were certified GAP. Doi Kham may be sold using the Doi Kham logo, representing “Safety Vegetable”, or additionally labeled with “Q” logo and, on some products, with legacy labeling such as “Organic Thailand,” (Figure 1.7) a certification no longer being offered in Thailand (WHO, 2004). “Organic Thailand” was established in 2002 by the Organic Crop Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture. This certification has been discontinued and is reportedly no longer effectively monitored for quality (Vitoon Panyakul, 1998).

In Northern Thailand, the Northern Organic Standards Association (NOSA) certifies all of the products marketed through Institute of Sustainable Agricultural Cooperatives (ISAC) and its affiliates. NOSA certifies about two hundred Northern Thai farmers under strict, pesticide free guidelines. NOSA regulations were established in 2001 by a coalition of community leaders, farmers, consumer advocates, and NGOs seeking to codify agricultural practices suitable for Northern Thai farmers. NOSA regulations set safety standards to protect consumer health, and social standards which meet the objectives of supportive international NGOs such as OXFAM. NOSA’s organic standard is an example local regulation and acceptance. It is also an example of hybridity, as seen by the influence of OXFAM by placing issues of social justice and local welfare into NOSA’s regulation NOSA, and its primary farm group, ISAC, have de-prioritized ACFS certification until these matters can be resolved. NOSA determined that compliance with the regimented standards of ACFS led it away from its primary goal as a local agency servicing the needs of the community.

MCC establishes a safe commodity network for highland and lowland farmers. Though MCC is not an official certifying body, it is an integrated pest management (IPM) research institute and its farmers are all trained in the use of IPM techniques. IPM development in Thailand, as well as MMC, was spearheaded by the Danish International Development Assistance (Danida) of the Denmark and defined as “a sustainable approach to managing pests and crops by combining cultural, biological, genetic, mechanical and chemical methods in a way that minimizes economic, health, and environmental risks” (Danida, 2006). Danida sponsored

training for MOAC, RPF, and MCC. Map of Regional Assistance by Danida for IPM in Thailand

Many MCC farmers are GAP certified through local initiatives of *amphoe* departments of agricultural extension. MCC's reputation provides it with the ability to certify the quality of vegetables sold by farmers in its group. Similarly, ISAC provides training in agricultural processes under NOSA organic production standards for Northern Thai farmers in organic production techniques with an emphasis on sustaining biodiversity (Boonrahong Chomchuan, 2008). ISAC has developed an elaborate commodity network of retail sales locations throughout Chiang Mai providing its member farmers retail locations seven days a week. (Appendix C)

There are many other certifications and labels used to increase consumer confidence about certain vegetables. Among the formal certifications is the Safety Food program established in 1999 by MOPH. This certification was established for the marketing of food products, including vegetables, at retail locations. This certification does not indicate whether vegetables have been grown with or without pesticides or grown under any regulated agricultural practices. The certification states that some vegetables were sampled from the market and were found to contain no more than permissible levels of pesticide residue. The Safety Food certification is used by many vegetable retailers to enhance the perceived quality of certified and uncertified vegetables. This certification is displayed on a large placard above the vegetables for the consumer to see. (Figure 4.5) Consumers are led to believe that all of the vegetables beneath the placard are "safe and clean," though my observations were that almost all vegetables sold at markets using this placard were uncertified, unless they carried a government label.

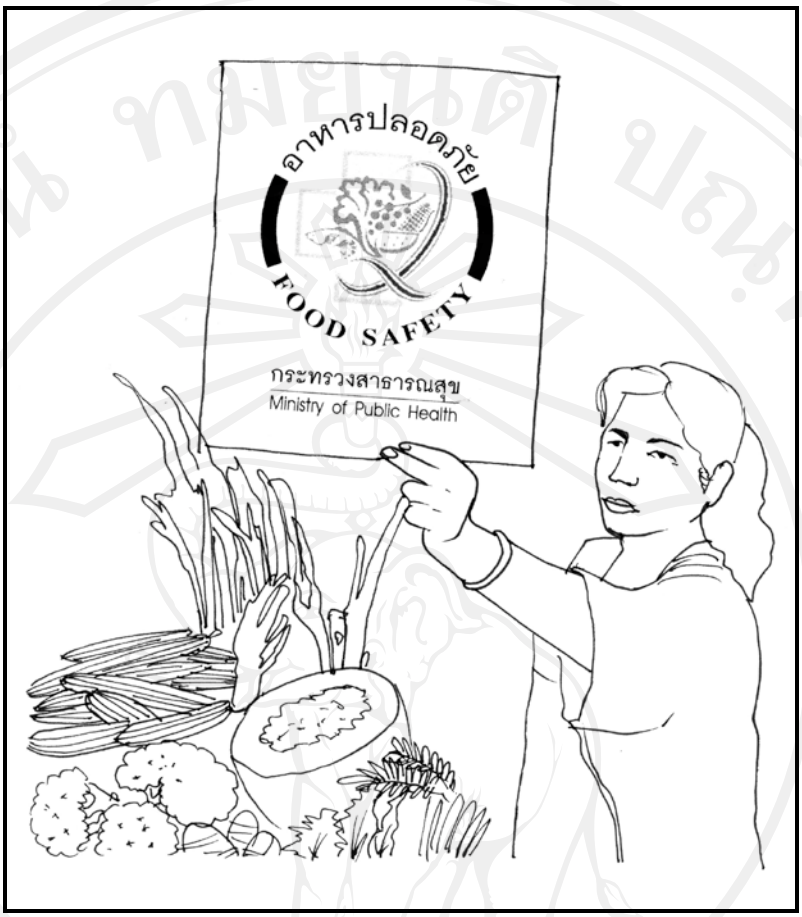

Figure 4.5 Food Safety placard

By far the vast majority of vegetables sold in Chiang Mai are uncertified. Within Thailand, it is estimated that .07% of all farm land is cultivated under certified regulations (ITC, 2008). Health and safety can not compete with price.Most of the non-certified vegetables in Chiang Mai are distributed at a central wholesale market known as Muang Mai[27]. Uncertified vegetables are bought by retailers and sold at fresh markets, supermarkets, hypermarkets, restaurants and other retail outlets. Estimating the total uncertified vegetable consumption in Chiang Mai is outside the boundaries of my research. However, it is not unreasonable to say that the quantity of certified to uncertified vegetables sold is proportionate to the amount of land under

[27] Muang Mai wholesale market is a time established central wholesale market place for fruit and vegetables grown around the city of Chiang Mai. Farmers and assemblers bring produce that will be sold in throughout the city of Chiang Mai and to markets throughout Thailand.

cultivation[28]. While the percentage may seem low, it is actually very reasonable when compared to the consumption of organic products in the west. Consumption data for organic foods in Western nations, in terms of relative market, is limited. A United Nations report stated that, in 1997, the consumption of organic foods in western nations ranged from .4 to 2.5% of total food sales. Though these numbers were projected to increase by 10 to 40% (United Nations, 2000:7), with the actual annual percentage increase reported as 20% in the United States (Winter and Sarah, 2006), the ratio of consumption of organic to conventional foods remains very small.

This analysis has shown that actors of certified vegetable networks are held together and shaped by specific system of agricultural regulations. The informal regulatory processes of ISAC and MCC create local certification by reputation and acceptance. To date NOSA, the certifying body overseeing ISAC farmers has not been accepted as a formal certifying body by the Thai government.

Farmers and consumers establish markets based on participation and trust through a recognized, third party system of inspection. Certification, as a validation of process and a symbol of trust, constitutes the market network. Certification through "Safety Vegetable" and GAP link farmers to consumers through third party assemblers such as RPF and small scale farm leaders. These certified vegetable networks are also constituted by the actors overseeing the certification. In all of these cases the nodes are established around consumer acceptance of the qualifications of certification and the actors monitoring the regulations. It is not the certification, per se, that constitutes the market, but the coalition of actors organized around a set of regulatory standards and the certification resulting from the use of those standards that links and establishes the markets. Participation in ISAC links farmers to the ISAC community market, farmers participating in MCC are linked to the MCC community market and Carrefour, highland farmers participating in RPF are linked to broad network of markets of multiple scales throughout Thailand. Participation in a specific regulatory regime effectively locks a farmer into a commodity network.

[28] For example, information obtained from the MOAC extension offices around the city of Chiang Mai showed that only 47 out of 8400 registered farmers are certified in San Sai and only 10 out of 11,290 farmers are certified in San Kamphaeng.

GAP and organic standards translate consumer desires into regulated, agricultural production processes. Translation is a "mechanism" that brings the social needs and agricultural processes into a cognitive understanding by consumers. Regulations are a discourse of socially acceptability and common understanding (Harvey, 2001: 199; Callon in Thrift, 1996: 23). When viewed from an actor-network approach, translation acts as a process by which actors carry power into practice and thereby, through repetitive interactions (such as agricultural processes), produce and stabilize networks (Thrift, 1996: 24-25). Farmers, assemblers, retailers, and consumers form coalitions around consensual translations of agricultural regulations, establishes network linkages and nodes. Successful translation establishes commodity networks between producers and consumers. In the case of IFOAM affiliates, translation enables the different discursive practices of member organizations to compete in the global marker of organic foods (IFOAM, 2009).

Many problems emerge from translation. Regulatory agencies and their certifying bodies exist in networks of unequal power relations between certifying bodies, likewise, there is the problem of market domination of powerful transnational corporation into the national economic sphere. There is also a problem concerning sovereignty rights to establish a national discourse over organic and GAP agricultural practice based on local acceptance and experience. Conflicting translations leads to domination of one set of standards over another. Large retailers have the ability, through scale of marketing, to decide which standards will be accepted. Political action groups, lobbyists and activist have the ability to draw public attention to specific concerns and sway consumer demand for specific regulatory characteristics. The processes detailed in organic regulations become institutionalized facts based on the presumptions of the dominant actors (Forsyth, 2003: 88-91).

4.3 Objects of discourse

Thailand presents a unique social environment from which to observe the spatial interactions of the translation of agricultural regulations. Networks advocating neoliberal agenda come in contact with Thai national institutions and local networks based on community culture. The complex culture of Thailand can be described as a continuity of co-constituting elements of Buddhism and community, of patronage and

krengchai (the desire of community serenity), the combination of which eschews absolutism, frowns upon accumulation, and evades Western dialectic analysis (Akin Rabibhadana, 1975; Hanks, 1975; Hart, 1989; Jumbala Prudhisan, 1987; Snit Smarkarn, 1998; Turton, 1989). This is observed in the certified commodity networks in Chiang Mai. The fact that so many levels of official and unofficial, small and large scale, organic and GAP regulated farming activities exist in the vegetable marketplace attest to the complexity and negotiability of Thai society. An analysis of certified agriculture must consider the multiplicity of perceptions and claims to authority interacting on issues of knowledge and space. Such is the dilemma of certified agriculture. Each coalition makes a claim of safety, sustainability, and consumer acceptance. The establishment of marketplace, of an ordered commodity network based on accepted rules demonstrates acceptance of "privileged knowledge" (Harvey, 2001: 163).

Thai space is negotiable enough to allow different coalitions to make a living and practice unimpeded. These coalitions are not sponsored by the state which holds a powerful "status quo" over power and associations in the countryside (Turton, 1989: 88). These are local, interrelated formations of Thai society reject absolutism and open spaces of practice. They do not follow western dialectic thought and make western style analysis impractical for understanding Thai practice. The Thai ability to reframe issues ceates a multiplicity of strategies throughout alternative agricultural networks. Thailand's GAP represents a minimum standard of safety. A farm group is free to practice greater self-restriction. Their individual practice will become known and the reputation of the farm group will increase the value added by certification. In the case of MCC and ISAC, reputation alone has created new standards of certification. Through the perseverance of these organizations complete commodity network have been established and therefore, de facto, an accepted regulation and standard. ISAC and MCC are nominated as third party certifiers with the equivalence within their markets.

The ideals of a "sufficiency economy" have been promoted by King Bhumibol Adulyadej as a practice of self-sufficiency and self-reliance, espousing a policy of following "the middle path" of moderation. This was expressed by former Thai Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda as follows:

Sufficiency Economy has as its thrust “the middle path as the overriding principle for appropriate conduct by the populace at all levels.” The middle path, when practiced at the level of the individuals, families and communities, as well as collectively in the choice of a balanced national development strategy, will provide a firm foundation for all in standing up to the trials and challenges of today’s world. It means moderation in all human endeavors, reining in expectations to within the bounds of self-support and self-reliance, having enough to live on. It lessens human proneness to the extremes and excesses, both in our insatiable appetite for wealth and wasteful consumption, which marked the period leading up to the crisis (Prem Tinsulanonda, 2001).

Sufficiency economy is based on Buddhist precepts of moderation. Sufficiency economy is a proposition offered to Thai people to counter the negative effects of globalization and neoliberal economics. It is a Royal Thai policy to help the people of Thailand to avoid debt caused by overspending while at the same time maintaining local cultures and traditions. At the local level, sufficiency economy directs farmers to grow enough to eat and live, using excess production to obtain what they can not make (Priyanut Piboolsravut, 2004a: 28). Nationally, the same policy suggests that this "middle path" is the key to "modernize in line with the forces of globalization" (Suthawan and Piboolsravut, 2004: 7) and direct productivity toward "higher levels of economic growth and development" by "pursuing more advanced levels of economic development” (Priyanut Piboolsravut, 2004b: 1). While the latter goal may not, in practice, be practical, given the domination of global markets by neoliberal objectives, local sufficiency appears to be attainable. The local farmer should produce to meet family needs, with surplus made available for local markets.

Sufficiency economy is, in essence, a Buddhist ideal promoting people to change themselves without the government enforcing rules to change society. The concept asks entrepreneurs to do business without unnecessary exploitation and waste. Though seemingly idealistic, the concept of sufficiency economy has a place within Thai society as a royal request for people to be responsible for themselves. Both MCC and ISAC leaders support the goals of sufficiency economy, with the later striving to promote the ideals of self-sufficiency and community culture within a landscape of modernization and commoditization. Certified vegetable production in

Chiang Mai demonstrates the link between certification with changes in the livelihood strategies of vegetable farmers. Certification functions as a point of passage for farmers to enter into non-conventional, organic and pesticide reduced markets. Certified farming practice contributes to a farmer's ability to live a life congruent to what has been termed community culture. The lifestyle of community culture has elements of sustainable livelihood, sufficiency economy, and traditional *Lanna* values. It forms the foundation of Northern Thai communities. It is weakened when conventional farming practices, combined with developmental agendas of the state and the subsequent capitalization of the agrarian landscape create stress within the village, including the poisoning of paddy water leading to the killing off local foods such as fish, frogs and crabs, the out migration of younger people searching for 'modern" lives in the city, and the loss of farm land due to real estate speculation.

The director of ISAC described community culture as all of the daily practices within the Thai village. It is life in a community of people where life cycle events such as marriages, births, deaths and merit events such as money trees for the temple, Buddhist days and other holidays are celebrated as community events. Community culture, along with health and well being, are the most important considerations stated by farmers during interviews concerning why they adopt certified vegetable growing practices. ISAC embraces its role in promoting organic farming as a community event. Organic farming can not be accomplished by the individual alone, and ISAC requires participation by groups of farmers helping each other. Furthermore, organic farming must be a village activity. Everyone in the village must understand the danger of contamination and spread of pesticides and chemicals. ISAC uses a community approach and calls for community action to support its member farmers.

Marketplace data explains the apparent discrepancies between the numerous reports of Thailand's expanding "organic" market and the actual availability of certified produce available for consumers. Too much credit is given to the size and growth of the organic vegetable markets in Thailand. There is very little organic produce available in the markets as defined by international standards. All government certified vegetables within Thailand allow for the use of pesticides. Certified farmers may use chemicals with certain restrictions, amounts, and periods of

application. Internationally certified organic vegetables are grown almost exclusively for export only.

There are officially several thousand certified farmers throughout the province of Chiang Mai, including rice farmers, orchard producers, and highland farmers associated with RPF. With new government funding, several hundred new farmers are being certified in *Amphoe* Saraphi just outside of Chiang Mai. However, field investigations conducted in 2007 revealed that many of these farmers were only in a planning stage of production. Some had never been farmers before while others did not have land to farm. Currently, there may be as few as 600 small-scale vegetable farmers living in the Chiang Mai area actually selling vegetables in Chiang Mai. These farmers are unique in that they have achieved their goals of self-sufficiency through certified farming. During field interviews these farmers have claimed to live a healthier lifestyle, free of the use of poisonous chemicals, and have greater involvement with other people in their villages through their organized farming groups. This is not to suggest that only certified farming groups contribute to "community culture," but that their agricultural practices based on self-sufficiency, biodiversity, and environmental concern contribute to the overall health and organization of the community. However, it is doubtful that the certified commodity networks would exist without external monetary support from NGOs, Thai government grants, or the persistence of local entrepreneurs interested in certified farming practice. What is seen then is not simply a local community practice, but a coalition of many actors responsible for maintain the network. Community culture is a translation of multiple networks of power meeting in the agrarian landscape of Chiang Mai (Forsyth, 2003: 87; Latour, 1999: 179). The social constructs of community culture are being displaced and reconceptualized by its participants into new forms of local practice. The benefactors of these communities have come together around similar goals; the resulting compromises being the displacements of old practices into new lifestyles. The same process of translation may occur to their non-certified neighbors whose livelihoods depend on conventional markets. However, these enterprises do not support issues of biodiversity, environmental protection or self-sufficiency. Their goals are for the realization of profit and accumulation. The

resulting translations do not promote community culture because they limit so many aspects of daily life.

Local resistance, some actual and some perceived, is associated with the forms of dominance radiating outward from Bangkok. The structure of Thai bureaucracy is generally expressed as one of hierarchy and order, subjugating all other authorities within its sovereignty (Chusak Wittayapak, 2008: 114; Thongchai Winichakul, 1994: 147). The Northern Thai farmer whose roots extend back into the ancient kingdom of *Lanna* and historic competitor of the rule of Bangkok suffers under these ancient precedents. But the actions of community culture are not a resistance to Thai state authority, but as stated earlier, instead, they are a way to articulate specific needs and practices unfamiliar to Bangkok authority. These policies are negotiated through assemblages of compromises and relationships of unequal power negotiated into a stability based on patron-client relations and as described in the previous chapter, *krengchai*, the ability to know ones place in the community and desire not to create unnecessary conflict that will disturb the peace. Complicating policies and practices around organic agriculture is that most of the regulations can be seen as a borrowed discourse, apprehended through strategies and translated into a network of practices based on Thai representation of spatial practice. Regulations can not be considered as universal truths, they are compilations of facts based on foreign agricultural process, these being assertions of global power. Local and national organic policies are reconciling and adapting trajectories of strategies producing commodity network of many scales (Certeau et al., 1998: 17, 34-35).

There is discussion in the literature about regulations being a form of discursive technology. Regulations are conceptual, in actor-network theory they are considered “objects”, immaterial, discursive objects of power (Foucault, 1972: 41). Government technologies are the procedures, regulations, certifications, and statistical data implemented by the bureaucracy to control and monitor various programs. These technologies frame the world-view of the government as it interacts with its citizen-clients (Rose and Miller, 1992: 3-5).

Government technologies are considered to be polemic conditions, situations in which the citizenry, in these case farmers, are either inside or outside of the regulatory regimes. However, the situations become more complicated when farmers

align themselves with NGOs, which in many cases situations become more flexible, less binary and more open to negotiation. NGOs have certain non-negotiable policy requirements, such as participation in biodiversity regulations and support of fair trade. Farmers not formally engaged with government technologies are outside the direct influence of the state and the large-scale, "neoliberal" markets supporting state certifications (Li, 2007: 109,126,158). In fact, this is only partially true in Northern Thailand with regard to vegetable certification. The "governmentality" of the Thai bureaucracy defies notions of binary principals. The Thai bureaucracy can be described more in terms of Agrawal's assessment of bureaucratic control in India. There he found "flexible regulation," where compliance was negotiated to allow "spaces of tolerable illegality" (Agrawal 2005: 92-93). A similar finding was noted by (Lowe and Ward, 1997) in the field inspector enforcement in England. This is not to suggest that Thai farmers and regulators do not follow the law, only to demonstrate that spaces of negotiation can be created and opened to allow compliance under many circumstances.

However, the Thai bureaucracy goes even further than negotiating guidelines by formulating regulation to meet the ability of the farmer to accept and the government to enforce. Thai government safe vegetable production regulations are neither organic, in international terms, nor stringent. The new GAP regulations introduced to replace the former "Safety Vegetable" regulations are much more lenient in terms of time to be certified and pesticides to be used. Instead of attempting to duplicate the government technology for organic agriculture of the West, the Thai government engineered a set of regulations to improve the safety of vegetables in Thailand while addressing the unique environmental conditions for growing vegetables in Thailand. Regulations were drafted to allow the farmer to grow a wide range of vegetables for the newly emerging middle class of urban consumers using limited and regulated levels of pesticide. The Thai government accepted the global view that public health can be improved through vegetable safety, but rather than to submit to a set of implausible international regulations, the government reassessed them in terms of practicality and practice. Global space was rendered into Siamese spatiality and the power assumed by Thai authority (Massey, 2005: 85,107).

The Northern Thai village can be seen as "An arena of struggle between national and local identity for control over resources and over concepts of development, where "the village exists as discourse" (Hirsch, 2002: 63, 265). The relationship between the *amphoe* offices and the villagers is a power relationship in which domination comes from "external conditions and alliances, their roles in 'linking' the mass of villagers with the state and market structures, and above all their ability to accumulate (or be at the first stage of accumulation of) 'village surpluses' through control of committees and patronage" (Turton 1984: 30). The neoliberal agenda brings the social contradictions of capitalist culture into the space of community culture severing livelihood into separate realms of economic and community life, dissolving the "sociality of work." The economic and community life has been referred to as a "taskscape" where all events of daily life merge into a "process of social life" (Ingold, 2000: 194,314,327). The taskscape can be seen as a form of social space, a landscape of daily practice, and could be included in my research as a conceptualization of network linkages. However, I think it is enough to recognize this concept as an element inherent in social linkages and networks. Actor-network theory suggests that daily practice, social processes, social discourse and regulation are all intermingled and co-constituting.

Northern NGOs, the chief promulgators of community culture in Chiang Mai, uphold strict vegetable regulations. Rather that to relax the regulations for pesticide use, NGOs such as ISAC evaluated farming practice in terms of sustainability and biodiversity. The goal of the Northern NGOs is not to develop a set of regulatory standards based on market orientation. Instead, the NGOs have focused on developing a system of vegetable production allowing for practices such as IPM and non-destructive organic techniques to allow sustainable production within the environmental conditions of the farmers. Whereas the government has an official regulatory technology, Northern NGOs work with unofficial counter-technologies equally accepted by the public. Similarly, Bangkok based NGOs promote international organic regulations. Their farmers are mainstreamed into the global organic market. Unlike the Chiang Mai farmers, the farm groups belonging to Bangkok NGOs must be able to produce in large scale and plant crops for international markets. Market orientation diminishes notions of community culture

and village life. The space of Thailand's certified vegetable markets can be seen then as objects of power, practice and sentiment. In the north, certification is dominated by those seeking community culture and rejecting neoliberal objectives. In Bangkok, certification is promoted to encourage further integration into the global economy. Yet the bureaucracy promotes something in-between, a certification unacceptable to international markets and yet easily consumed by multi-national retailers within Thailand.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explained how agricultural certification can be explained as a symbolic representation of the discursive objects comprising the regulatory standards used in specific agricultural production processes. Once symbolized, the certification becomes a network object, possessing power through its representation of meanings, truths, and practices. Its power holds the commodity network together by embracing the discourse coactions and discursive practices comprising the agricultural commodity network.

My research has identified different messages behind each kind of certification available in Chiang Mai. Certification, expressed as a logo for consumers, speaks not only of a regulatory process and growing standards, but also of the actor responsible for its oversight and the ideology of the actor network. "Safety Vegetable", the oldest of the certifications, has a long history of development alongside the modern Thai society. Consumers have had many years to decide on the validity of this certification and most accept it. "Safety Vegetable" is connected with both MOAC and MOPH. It is established in small farmer groups at the community level. It is a modern Thai government technology with long standing significance. "Safety Vegetable" has become a rare and trusted commodity. GAP, on the other hand, is a new technological device filled with uncertainty. It has the distinction of being carried on all RPF "Doi Kham" vegetables and therefore has broad consumer recognition. This logo is known primarily by supermarket and hypermarket shoppers, it is rarely seen in fresh or community markets. Its presence in these markets associates it with those venues and further identifies it as a high priced commodity. The message of Doi Kham as an actor helping to lift highland farmers out of poverty

and eradicating opium production adds even more perceived product value along with consumer concern for healthy and safe vegetables. The Doi Kham label is associated with modernization, supermarkets, and contemporary culture.

Other certified vegetables are offered in the supermarkets for the edification of urban elites and foreign expatriates. Salads flown in from the United States with USDA organic labels, as well as vegetables shipped in from Australia, or grown near Bangkok under international regulations, sell for many multiples of the retail price of other certified vegetables. These vegetables are only found in supermarkets and are presented as something special, a taste of the global world and identification with power far beyond the fresh market. Whether or not these vegetables represent vanguards of a neoliberal agenda or are simply affectations for the wealthy consumer can not be determined at this time. That these products exist at all in Chiang Mai markets is evidence of the reach of the international certified vegetable market and the persistence of neoliberal economics.

Local certifications supported by NOSA and MCC embody the meanings, traditions, and customs of *Lanna* culture. They are supported by the communities and culture they help to advance. ISAC is open about its promotion of community culture and its dedication to Northern Thai farmers and cultural values. NOSA, thought ISAC, formulates cultural belonging into its certification; the farmer is not only approved in the growing process but also in their responsibility to community and *Lanna* heritage. To buy from ISAC is to engage directly with the farmer and participate in an urban representation of village life. The same story holds true for MCC, only this story brings with it the reputation of Northern Thailand's most prestigious university and identification with past governments, personages, and power regimes of *Lanna*'s past.

This chapter began by stating that certified and regulated agricultural commodity networks could be explained in terms of discourse coalitions. However, this concept can only partially explain the complexity of market interactions, especially at the consumer level. The concept of discourse coalitions draws from the application of Foucaultian archaeology and Latour's actor-network theory. It is an attempt to bring these streams of thought together in actor-network analysis. However, describing the practices of actors in terms of coalition maybe too confining

for a general approach. I think that certifying bodies, farmer groups, or retailers at organic, community markets can be accurately described as coalitions. They are formal organizations of people acting together to achieve common goals. Other groupings, such as retailers at the fresh markets or consumers shopping at particular venues can not be described as coalitions. These groupings are a form of discursive practice, meeting in a "space of multiple dimensions" (Foucault 1972:155). These actors are engaged in a practice sharing a common ideal or goal, but not as an organization, but as a generalized social concern influencing people indirectly. The power of the message behind certifications reaches out into the whole of society, being perceived as relevant to many individuals who grasp the message and transform it into personal action.

Different certification methods and the actors overseeing them represent the competing discourses of neoliberal and local values. This was already discussed in terms of actors promoting the different certifications. The government seems torn between advancing international regulatory standards on the one hand and using its own Thai based certification technology on the other. Bangkok based NGO Greenenet promotes ACT certified, organic agriculture for export and for placement in supermarkets in Bangkok, limiting its outreach to farm groups complying to the scales of neoliberal markets. Larger firms, such as Swift Farms and River Kwai develop farm regions far outside the urban sphere for export production. These products rarely enter into Thai marketplaces and when they do their occurrence is limited to supermarket chains. It appears that strategies destined for neo-liberal markets are effective only when the market is fully established and the farmers are completely controlled. This is exemplified by the baby corn farmers in Mae Tha, in Lampang province near Chiang Mai and the asparagus farmers near Sakeao, on the Cambodian border. In both of these examples local farmers accept to grow under international organic regulations and strict inspection. They are unique in that the governing contracts assure stable prices and reliable income. In comparison, GAP and "Safety Vegetable" standards allow farmers to enjoy flexible regulation allowing them the ability to adapt to changing and uncertain markets while maintaining their livelihood. On the other hand, ISAC farmers must grow under strict regulation. To

compensate for its strict requirements, ISAC has a system of price supports and aggressively markets the products of their farm group.

Preference for global, national or local standards is in the hands of the consumer who state their preferences through purchases. The following chapter will demonstrate that the preferences of Chiang Mai consumers are for local foods and vegetables. This does not refer to locally grown, but to a large variety of foods used in making *Lanna* cuisine. These crops are readily available at community and fresh markets which are also the most frequented markets by Northern Thai consumers. Northern Thai acceptance of local certifications thwarts the hegemony of national and international standards. The fact that most consumers in Chiang Mai do not purchase vegetables from supermarkets or hypermarkets tells something about the failure of these neoliberal enterprises to provide desirable vegetables within their supply chains. Though the certifications clearly distinguish participating in local, national and global forms of agricultural regulation, these differentiations do not seem to influence the consumer. In effect, a label is a label, which is another point to be expanded on in the next chapter. Local certification does not create community culture; it only facilitates the establishment of venues such as community markets and allows small farmers to participate in a commodity network. The contest between neo-liberal values and local culture can not be explained in its entirety by the examination of the certified vegetable markets. However, such an examination will bring out the importance of consumer desires and practices in maintain local practices.