

Market Method and Process for Selling Agriculture Products through Online Channels via Groups of High-Selling Farmers

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received Dec 31, 2023

Revised Feb 20, 2024

Accepted Mar 16, 2024

Keywords:

Market Method,
Market Process,
Agriculture Products,
Online Channels,
High-Selling Farmers

Conflict of Interest:

None

Funding:

None

ABSTRACT

This research aims to study marketing strategies and sales channels for agricultural products using the online tracks of farmers with high sales volumes. This research used a qualitative research method with a group of 10 farmers. Data collection for the study was done through questionnaires prepared for informal conversations with online agricultural product suppliers and by recording information from the suppliers. The focus was on the practices of farmers with high sales volumes. Based on the data gathered from interviews and research conducted in September and October 2023, the research results indicate information on the processes of online marketing and distribution of products. All agricultural product suppliers agreed to use online channels and social media for marketing and selling products, which resulted in farmers having more targeted markets and higher sales volumes of agricultural products.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

Promoting agriculture and agricultural industries in Thailand is a critical factor that has significantly impacted the country's economy and society in both the present and the past. The Thai government has formulated and pursued long-term development strategies to foster economic growth and enhance the country's resilience since as early as 2504BE (1961AD). The National Economic and Social Development Plan No. 13 for 2566 - 2570BE (2023 – 2027AD) prioritizes sustainable and holistic development for Thailand's future. The Thai government used the National Economic and Social Development Plan No. 13 over five years to promote sustainable and holistic development in promoting agriculture and agricultural industry. This plan focuses on increasing the value of services and products in terms of quality while ensuring the sustainable distribution of benefits. While Thailand has faced economic and social challenges, including the severe impact of the COVID-19 virus, the country must accelerate the adjustment of its economic structure to foster growth and competitiveness in the production sector. This adjustment involves using technology to elevate the quality of goods and services and investing in research and development to

enhance the industry's potential for adding higher value. Creating innovations to increase value and sustainability and building new initiatives that can connect with global market changes are also crucial components of future development in Thailand (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2022).

The economic and financial conditions are crucial in reflecting the overall economy of Thailand. In 2023, factors affecting the country's economic growth and inflation rate include domestic investment, exports, interest rates, government financial management, and the global economic situation. Domestic investment is a crucial factor influencing economic growth. Increasing investment in various projects and establishing factories, hotels, and tourism projects can yield long-term returns. Investment in public health projects, infrastructure, and technology can help increase the value and resilience of the domestic economy. (Sun, 2023) Exports are vital in generating income for the country. Increasing the quantity of goods and exporting them to foreign countries can significantly boost the country's revenue. Effective economic and financial management by the government and relevant agencies is essential. Implementing comprehensive and efficient monetary and financial policies can help control inflation rates and promote economic stability and growth (Mekyong, 2021).

Finally, the global economic situation affects the Thai economy directly and indirectly. Environmental issues and climate change are additional factors that impact the global economy. Ecological degradation and climate-related events can affect agriculture and industries in many countries. Implementing appropriate and effective economic and financial policies is crucial for economic stability. Supporting investment, exports, and domestic business development may help create peace in the growth of the Thai economy. These economic and financial indicators influence the country's economic dynamics and future stability (Phonmit, 2023).

According to the report from FAO (The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), it is noted that the current global food price situation is becoming increasingly concerning due to rising food prices. The higher food prices have implications for populations in certain areas who now must spend more to access food in an environment where food prices are rising. Global food import prices are also trending upward, reaching 5.1 trillion dollars from the previous 4.9 trillion dollars, a clear signal of the rising food prices impacting people in various regions of the world (The Food and Agriculture Organization, 2023).

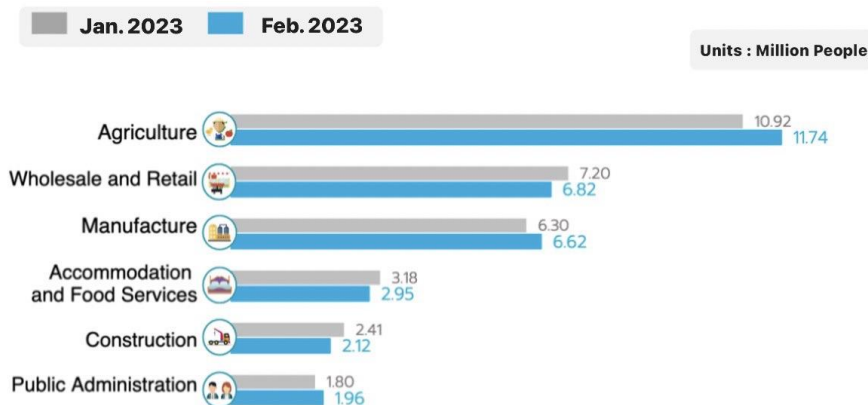


Figure 1. Graph comparing the number of employed individuals with economic activities

In the case of Thailand, in February 2023, the number of employed individuals increased compared to January 2023. Most of this increase came from the agricultural sector, highlighting the continued significance of the farming economy in Thailand. (National Statistical Office Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, 2023)

However, despite the increase in the Thai population engaged in agriculture due to rising food prices or agricultural production, Thailand still faces economic challenges related to farming because many farmers in Thailand have low incomes, income disparities, and household debt issues, significantly affecting the quality of life in the agricultural sector. Most agricultural debts in Thailand are held by rice farmers, with each household carrying an average debt of around 200,000 baht, and more than 55% of this debt is related to agricultural investments. Farmers often borrow money for upfront investments in agriculture without being able to predict the exact outcome because various factors are involved in agricultural production. (Chaiyanon, 2021)

Household debt is one of the critical risk factors for Thailand's economy in the future if it is not addressed appropriately, and the agricultural sector is one of the groups at high risk of this problem:

1) **Limitations in accessing funding sources:** Most farmers have modest incomes and cannot accumulate significant savings, so they often need to borrow money from external funding sources to increase production or manage their agricultural activities. Accessing funds with conditions and high interest rates may lead to household debt issues with repayment and increased expenses in the future, forcing farmers to accept household debt as a necessary reality. (Thongkamkaew et al., 2023).

2) **Selling agricultural produce at low prices:** Some farmers may have to sell their produce at lower costs due to uncertain market conditions or overproduction during specific periods, which may lead them to borrow money to cover production expenses, and selling their produce at these lower prices affects their income and increases the risk of falling into household debt. (Setthasakko, 2023).

3) **The risk of weather changes and environmental conditions** Can affect farmers' agricultural production. Natural disasters such as flooding, drought, and others can lead to reduced yields, which may require farmers to borrow money to purchase equipment or materials to mitigate these conditions. Repaying household debt may become an additional burden as a result. (Il Islam, 2021).

4) **Acceptance of technology by farmers:** Their access to and use of new agricultural technologies can help increase productivity and reduce costs. However, some farmers may need to become more familiar with or utilize these technologies. Awareness and education to help farmers understand and use agricultural technologies are essential to reducing expenses and increasing income. (Chaveesuk, 2020).

5) **Labor Shortage:** Labor shortages in key food production regions may force farmers to pay higher labor costs and can decrease the quality of their produce. Additionally, dealing with the challenge of selling produce at inappropriate prices may require farmers to borrow additional money to cover expenses (Weerasombat, 2022).

Therefore, addressing household debt issues within the agricultural community is crucial for enhancing the stability of the farming sector and promoting the growth of the farm economy in Thailand in the future. Providing farmers with access to suitable sources of funding and increasing education and training on agricultural technology will help mitigate household debt problems among farmers (Sirinyamas, 2023).

Some critical information about Thailand in 2022AD (2565BE) includes the average time Thai people spend on the internet, categorized by generation. Gen Y, aged 22 to 41, spent the most time on the internet in a single day, averaging approximately 8 hours and 55 minutes. Gen Z, those under 22 years old, averaged 8 hours and 24 minutes of internet use daily (Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, 2022).

Another exciting piece of data is related to the "Live Commerce" activity, which is highly popular among internet users in Thailand. Gen Y is the group that engages in Live Commerce the most, with 64.65% participating in this activity and the highest percentage of online shoppers at 88.36%. Following Gen Y are Gen X at 84.55% and Gen Z at 81.53%, while Baby Boomers rank lowest at 74.04%. The most popular platforms for searching and purchasing products among Thais are Shopee and Lazada at 75.99%, followed by Facebook at 61.51%. Platforms like websites and Twitter are in descending order (Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, 2022). According to the data, the primary reasons for online shopping among Thai internet users are product variety, easy product and price comparison, and the convenience and value of online marketplaces. Users can conveniently select products according to their needs without traveling to different physical stores or markets for price comparisons, and many promotions are available. With this data, it is evident that internet usage and online shopping have become significant parts of Thai lifestyles in the year 2022, with online marketplaces being highly popular and efficient choices for consumers (Tuyapala, 2022).

Therefore, selling agricultural products and access to markets prevent farmers from selling their produce at reasonable prices. Thus, addressing these issues is crucial for enhancing farmers' stability and driving Thailand's agricultural economy. Studying market trends and distribution strategies of farming products through online channels is essential because market trends and distribution strategies of farming products through online media can change rapidly. By appropriately presenting agricultural products online, having effective marketing, and establishing a sustainable online market presence, farmers can increase opportunities to sell their agricultural products to target customers and efficiently boost their sales.

1.2 Objectives of the Research Project

- 1) To study online marketing strategies for farmers with high sales volume.
- 2) To study distribution methods (sales channels) for agricultural products using the online tracks of farmers with high sales volume.

2. Literature Review

Online product distribution is selling products or services over the Internet using websites or other platforms that allow businesses or vendors to connect with customers and conduct buying and selling transactions online. Online product distribution is characterized by a business model that does not require a physical storefront or in-person customer interactions. It utilizes the Internet as a communication channel to conduct sales and distribution activities. The process of online product distribution can include creating online stores, designing and managing online payment systems, handling inventory, managing product deliveries, online marketing to increase awareness and sales, and providing continuous customer support through online channels such as email or live chat. Online product distribution is a rapidly growing and popular business model in the digital and internet-driven era. (Rose, 2014)

Developing digital skills for online product distribution is essential in an era where technology and the internet play a crucial role in business. Online product distribution has become increasingly prevalent, so developing digital skills is imperative and should not be overlooked. (Yuangsoi, 2023) Online product distribution is a process that requires continuous adaptation to meet customer needs and technological changes. Working efficiently in the digital world is crucial for achieving success in online businesses today and in the future. (Nguyen Hoang Tien, 2020)

The distribution of agricultural products is critical in delivering agrarian produce to consumers or various markets. Online selling of farm products is an advanced and efficient way to connect farmers and consumers directly without intermediaries in the traditional distribution process. Online agricultural product distribution involves selling agricultural products through online channels like websites, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and even e-commerce platforms like Shopee and Lazada. Online agricultural product distribution offers several advantages, including direct access to consumers without intermediaries, ensuring fair pricing for farmers, the ability to sell products 24/7, and reducing transportation and distribution costs. Selling agricultural products online is a method that has the potential to increase income and connect farmers and consumers on a broader scale. It has seen significant growth, especially in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Given these trends, online agricultural product distribution will continue to be essential and viable, expanding its reach further. (Kochasopon & Wannarattanaphan, 2021)

Online marketing, or digital marketing, is a marketing strategy that utilizes online channels and digital technology to generate customer interest in an organization's products or services. Additionally, it aims to increase sales and build brand confidence through various methods employed in the online world. (Khiriwong, 2019) This is a part of digital marketing strategies that are popular nowadays, such as.

- 1) Marketing through social media is a crucial marketing strategy in today's era because social media is a widely used online tool and an efficient channel for connecting with the target audience of businesses. Digital marketing through social media requires users to choose suitable platforms for their business or organization. Moreover, in the current era, convenience and speed are highly valued. Therefore, online marketing through social media is applied to various professions, particularly online marketing on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Google, or Instagram. Creating engaging content, planning, scheduling posts, using hashtags, generating interest through article content, and promotions are all aspects of marketing through social media. Additionally, it is essential to consider the characteristics of the target audience and the marketing objectives. This type of marketing allows for rapid and global access to interested customer groups (Sukjai, 2023).
- 2) Online advertising is a process designed to create awareness of products and promote products or services through the internet and various online media channels. It is a part of digital marketing strategies. Online advertising serves several objectives: increasing product sales, building awareness and popularity for products or services, and boosting website or online app visits (Omorogbe, 2023). Additionally, online advertising can be customized to align with the target audience and business objectives. Examples of online advertising include advertising through Google Ads, Facebook Ads, Instagram Ads, YouTube Ads, and other online advertising platforms. (Panda et al., 2022).
- 3) E-commerce marketing uses online platforms and tools to promote and sell products or services through online transactions. It focuses on generating interest and engagement from the target audience in the online world to foster growth and increase sales for organizations or businesses through various techniques and methods, including creating and maintaining e-commerce websites to support product sales across multiple industries (Munoz et al., 2023). Customizing websites to increase traffic through SEO and advertising on social media and other platforms to attract people to view and purchase the products or services offered to interested parties. E-commerce marketing is a crucial approach in today's

world due to the growth of online purchasing and changes in consumer behavior involving the use of the Internet for shopping and general service delivery. (Purnomo et al., 2023)

Hence, the choice of digital marketing strategy depends on the nature of the business or organization and the target audience for product distribution. Typically, enterprises select methods that align with their specific needs and budgets to achieve the best results in online marketing. It also applies to the agricultural sector, where e-commerce marketing can be utilized to boost the sale of farm products.

2.1 Examples of online sales and e-commerce by farmers



Figure 2. Sala Indo Achi Lakh Shop

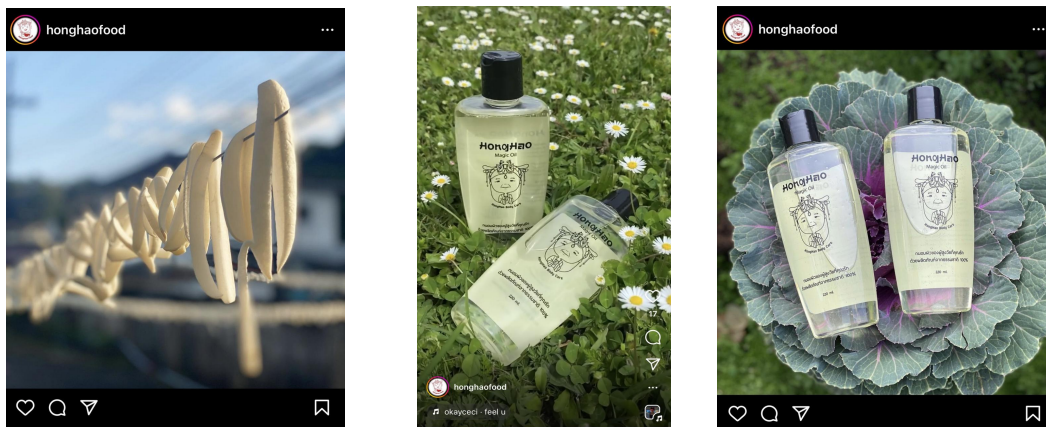


Figure 3. Honghaofood Shop



Figure 4. Raikhangbaan Shop



Figure 5. Nonbung Fram



Figure 6. Zom Umavadee Shop



Figure 7. Pichon Food Company



Figure 8. Organicwa Thailand Shop



Figure 9. Products BY Proteam Shop



Figure 10. Daddy's Farm



Figure 11. Anong Brown

3. Method

The research was conducted using a qualitative methodology, which did not have the objective of analyzing statistically collected data from a sample group. The study utilized techniques and tools for collecting qualitative data through interviews and content analysis, with the primary respondents being farmers who sell agricultural products online and have high sales volumes. The research involved interviewing 10 participants (Morse, 1994), data synthesis, and a literature review related to the study.

In this study, the primary data providers consisted of 10 individuals who are farmers with high sales volumes in the agricultural sector and engage in online marketing. The research is qualitative, aiming to present data that reflects the processes, distribution channels, or perspectives of farmers who are online sellers with high sales volumes. The data collected for the research included (1) the distribution methods of agricultural products using online channels and (2) the online marketing strategies employed by farmers.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Data from interviews through questioning:

- 1) Do you agree or disagree after reviewing the literature on online marketing strategies such as social media, online advertising, and e-commerce marketing? Why?
- 2) Do you agree or disagree with the literature review on agricultural product distribution (sales channel) using online channels such as Facebook, Shopee, Lazada, and Line Shopping? Why?

The interviewees are farmers who engage in online marketing and have high online product sales, totaling ten individuals.

Table 1. Marketing strategies using online channels such as social media, online advertising, and e-commerce marketing

The shop name and the products	Marketing strategies using online channels		Reason
	Agree	Disagree	
1. Sala Indo Achi Lakh Shop. Product: Salak Mangosteen	/		Agreed, because selling agricultural products online has low costs, allows merchants to reach customers, and provides easy access to customers.
2. Hongaofood Shop. Product: Pickled roots, Natural extracts include sesame oil, avocado oil, grape seed oil, ginger oil, and sunflower oil.	/		Agreed, because, with good planning, the advantages include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-effectiveness. • Reaching a wider audience. • Targeting a specific market group. • The ability to design communication and product promotion strategies independently.
3. Rai Khang Baan Shop. Product: Guava Hong Bao Si, Key Lime, Siam Ruby Pomelo.	/		Because in this era, there are more distribution channels available. In the past, there was only the physical store as a source of income. Nowadays, social media plays a more significant role, allowing businesses to have an online presence, which leads to additional income streams.
4. Nonbung Fram. Product: Mangosteen and Durian.	/		Because it's like an option for store pages that are difficult to access, and it's like promoting products online by yourself.
5. Zom Umavadee Shop. Product: Moonflower.	/		Because some people may not use Line or Facebook, they can see the store through other marketing channels more often or find it easily.
6. Pichon Food Company Product: Selling handmade toxin-free sausages, salad dressing, and pesticide-free vegetables from locally sourced and international ingredients at Chef Table.	/		Because it rapidly disseminates information and reaches users very effectively, online marketing has no conflicts.
7. Organicwa Thailand Shop Product: Grape and Pomegranate.	/		Because online marketing quickly reaches customers of all age groups universally.
8. Products BY Proteam Shop Product: Organic Fertilizer and Pomelo.	/		Because we will get more customers coming to us and getting to know our brand, which will increase product sales, some expenses may be involved, as online marketing can be relatively costly. Most farmers are not well-versed in this area, so they must hire someone to do the marketing.
9. Daddy's Farm Product: Santol and Avocado.	/		Because it's easy to access, convenient, and doesn't require additional expenses. It allows younger family members to help with it.
10. Anong Brown Shop Product: Palm seed, Fried Chili, and Coconut.	/		Because social media, online advertising, or e-commerce make it convenient to reach customers nationwide without the need for investment.

From Table 1, the study of marketing strategies using online channels by high-selling farmers, based on the literature review, includes social media, online advertising, and e-commerce. Do you agree, and why? From interviews with the target group of 10 people (1 person per store), it was found that all ten people agreed, making it 100%. They provided the following reasons:

- 1) Marketing agricultural products through online channels has low costs, easy access to customers at all times, and is straightforward. This opinion was consistent among five people, or 50%.
- 2) They can design communication and promote products themselves. Two people, or 20%, shared this opinion.

They can operate an online store without needing a physical storefront, which increases their income. Three people, or 30%, supported this viewpoint. If farmers cannot manage this themselves, there might be expenses for hiring someone. However, they can assist without incurring additional costs if they have children, grandchildren, or tech-savvy family members.

Table 2. Distribution Guidelines (Sales Channels) for Agricultural Products Using Online Platforms

The shop name and the products	Distribution Guidelines		Channels	Reason
	Agree	Disagree		
1. Sala Indo Achi Lakh Shop. Product: Salak Mangosteen	/		Facebook	The shop agrees because most of them will use Facebook for selling due to its low cost, or they might not have to invest at all since Facebook is free, and they would only incur shipping costs for customers.
2. Hongaofood Shop. Product: Pickled roots, Natural extracts include sesame oil, avocado oil, grape seed oil, ginger oil, and sunflower oil.	/		Facebook, Instagram, TikTok	Because it's another channel that makes it easier for buyers to consider purchases than before. Moreover, if there are product reviews and good after-sales service, it can penetrate the market more effectively. However, online formats target younger, working-age individuals who use these channels. If the target group is elderly or consists of people who work as farmers, physically going to the shop to see and buy products or having a salesperson recommend products may be more suitable for their needs.
3. Rai Khang Baan Shop. Product: Guava Hong Bao Si, Key Lime, Siam Ruby Pomelo.	/		Facebook, Instagram, Line Shopping	
4. Nonbung Fram. Product: Mangosteen and Durian.	/		Facebook	The shop has sales channels through Facebook and Instagram, where the main customer base comes from these two channels. These platforms make it easy to promote agricultural products to interested customers and expand the customer base. Additionally, because delivering fresh food products requires high customer trust, these online channels help increase the customer base. However, there are limitations due to the nature of new products obtained from the heart, and production may only sometimes meet the demands of customers who place orders.
5. Zom Umavadee Shop. Product: Moonflower.	/		Facebook	Because it helps increase sales channels for farmers.
6. Pichon Food Company Product: Selling handmade toxin-free sausages, salad dressing,	/		Facebook	Because it's another channel that can help farmers increase their income, replacing the need to sell in regular markets or traditional marketplaces without going through middlemen or supermarkets. Selling products online is possible, but transportation must

and pesticide-free vegetables from locally sourced and international ingredients at Chef Table.			be well managed to ensure good quality. Sometimes, the quality of the fruits may not be suitable when delivered if ordered online, so proper control is necessary.
7. Organicwa Thailand Shop Product: Grape and Pomegranate.	/	Facebook	Customers can purchase by themselves because it provides a clear picture of the products and complete details.
8. Products BY Proteam Shop Product: Organic Fertilizer and Pomelo.	/	Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram	Because using Facebook, Shopee, Lazada, and Line Shopping is user-friendly and offers learning opportunities, this makes it suitable for starting to sell products independently, as you can find information on platforms like YouTube.
9. Daddy's Farm Product: Santol and Avocado.	/	Facebook	Because shops can sell products from anywhere, whether in a district or a faraway province.
10. Anong Brown Shop Product: Palm seed, Fried Chili, and Coconut.	/	Facebook	Because there's no need to invest, it should be suitable for everyone of all genders and ages, and it can reach everyone today.

From Table 2, the study on the distribution channels for agricultural products using online platforms by high-selling farmers shows that:

- 1) The distribution channel using Facebook exclusively has seven stores, accounting for 70%. The reason is the low cost and the ability to increase the number of customers and actual sales.
- 2) The distribution channel using Facebook and other platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Line Shopping, and YouTube has three stores, accounting for 30%. The reason is that farmers can expand their sales channels to various groups using different online media.

4.2 Discussion

Objective 1: To study the marketing strategies using online channels by high-selling farmers. From the data in Table 1, it is evident that all ten farmers agree with online marketing. They find online marketing convenient, easily accessible, cost-effective, and capable of reaching customers of all age groups at all times. Online marketing allows accessible communication with customers or potential buyers. In today's era, where social media plays an increasingly significant role, marketing has become more accessible for the farming community. Online marketing has a substantial influence on Thai farmers. Another crucial aspect is understanding the characteristics of the target audience and the marketing objectives. This understanding is essential for effectively utilizing social media to succeed in online marketing, aligning with the idea of Thomanee Sukjai (2023).

Objective 2: To study the distribution strategies (online sales channels) of agricultural products by high-selling farmers. It was found that all ten farmers agreed with the use of online sales channels for agricultural products. The factors influencing their choice of online sales channels are convenience, easy accessibility, and the ability to reach a broad audience, which makes it easier for customers to consider and make purchases. Moreover, positive product reviews and good post-sales services can significantly increase sales. Selling agricultural products online is a process that requires continuous adaptation to keep up with technological changes and meet customer demands. Selling agricultural products online is essential in today's world and the future, aligning with the idea of Nguyen Hoang Tien (2020).

5. Conclusion

Online marketing and sales should be strongly supported for Thai farmers. Farmers play a crucial role in producing food and agricultural products that are in demand in Thailand and globally. Supporting marketing and online sales benefits farmers and positively affects the country and consumers. Supporting marketing and online sales benefits farmers, the government, and consumers. The use of technology and online platforms in marketing helps farmers access a broader market and reach diverse and efficient customer segments. It also reduces the influence of price negotiation power held by local markets and intermediaries, allowing farmers to increase their income and improve their quality of life.

Furthermore, supporting online marketing and sales fosters online communities of farmers who can exchange knowledge and experiences. Enhancing agricultural information and techniques is economically beneficial for social development. Therefore, supporting online marketing and sales in agriculture should be a significant part of farm policy and development in Thailand, both now and in the future.

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