

In 2023, the School of Management, in partnership with the Academic Service Center, started a project to improve the way seafood is processed. The goal of this project was to help the communities around Walailak University have better lives. This was part of a larger mission called "Holistic Area-Based Community Development." The project mainly focused on helping coastal fishermen and women's fishing groups in Nakhon Si Thammarat province improve their processed seafood products.

The key idea behind this initiative was to make it easier for these local fishing communities to produce better seafood products. These groups often rely on traditional methods of catching and processing seafood, but sometimes these methods aren't efficient or up to modern food safety standards. By improving how they process their seafood, the project aimed to help them create higher-quality products that could be sold to a larger market. This would not only increase their income but also ensure that the products are safe and healthy for consumers.

For the 2024 fiscal year, the project will continue with the same goal of improving seafood processing, but it will expand its focus. This time, it will work with a broader group of people, including local food producers and farmers. The main objective is to improve the methods used to process seafood and help these local food producers develop better skills and knowledge. The ultimate goal is to ensure that the seafood they produce is of high quality and meets strict food safety standards. This will make their products more appealing to a wider range of customers, both locally and possibly even for export.

A major part of this project involves providing training and access to technology for free. This is important because many small fishing and farming communities may not have the resources to pay for this kind of support. By offering these services at no cost, the project ensures that everyone can participate, regardless of their financial situation. The training covers a wide range of topics, but a key focus is on food safety. The project aims to teach local producers how to meet important food safety standards, such as those required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Halal certification.

Getting FDA and Halal certification is very important for local seafood producers. These certifications prove that their products are safe to eat and meet specific religious guidelines. The FDA certification shows that the food has been handled, prepared, and stored in ways that prevent contamination, ensuring it's safe for consumers. On the other hand, Halal certification is crucial for Muslim consumers, as it confirms that the food was processed according to Islamic dietary laws. By helping local seafood producers meet these standards, the project will make it easier for them to sell their products to both local and international markets.

The project also focuses on improving the hygiene standards of the processing facilities used by these local producers. A key part of this is teaching them how to design and plan their facilities in a way that meets FDA and Halal standards. This process involves learning about the layout of their processing spaces, making sure there are separate areas for different tasks like cleaning, cutting, and packaging seafood. Proper layout and design can help reduce the risk of contamination and make it easier to follow food safety regulations.

In 2023, the project held a series of training sessions to help local seafood producers learn these important skills. Three community-based food entrepreneurs from Nakhon Si Thammarat participated in the program. These entrepreneurs, along with other members of their communities, learned about how to safely produce seafood products that meet the high standards required for FDA and Halal certification. The training was led by Lecturer Hussen Niyomdechcha from the Logistics Management Program at the School of Management, Walailak University. He provided expert guidance on how to improve their seafood production processes and make sure they align with food safety and religious standards.

During the training, the participants took a close look at their current production methods. They worked together to identify areas where they could make improvements and redesign their facility layouts. The goal was to make sure their processing spaces met the necessary standards for FDA and Halal certification. By doing this, the participants are now better prepared to apply for these important certifications. Achieving this will help them build trust with consumers, both locally and internationally, who will feel more confident in buying their products.

In the long run, this project is expected to have a positive impact on the coastal fishing communities in Nakhon Si Thammarat. By improving their production methods and helping them achieve important certifications, the project will open up new opportunities for them to sell their products. This, in turn, will help boost their income, improve their standard of living, and contribute to the overall development of their communities. Additionally, by meeting the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2.5.1, which focuses on improving access to knowledge, skills, and technology for food security, the project is also helping ensure that these communities are better prepared for the future.