

AGRICULTURAL EVANGELISM

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor"



September 2006 • Thailand, Lahu Program Update

Bangladesh • Guatemala • Haiti • India • Moldova • Nepal • Niger • Philippines • Rwanda • Senegal • Thailand • Vietnam

Dear Friends in Christ,

THIS NEWSLETTER FEATURES OUR LAHU program in Thailand. This past February I had the joy of visiting many of the villages where loans have been given. The Lahu people live across northern Thailand and in Myanmar. They are a very poor tribal group, relying on farming in the hills to sustain themselves. Many have left their villages to find work in the lowlands, where they often face discrimination. The Thailand Lahu Christian Churches are an indigenously run association of churches. As part of their development program, we partner with them to provide a loan program to help the Lahu Christians as well as their churches. It is a real joy working with this gifted group of leaders. These volunteers have a real servant heart to help their own people and we recently increased our support of the loan fund. Many more families need a loan, so if you or your church would like to help this program please contact us.

Included in this report are some of the testimonies of the project holders we visited. I was very encouraged by their resourcefulness. Without exception each of these families not only did well, they also faithfully tithed. In addition, each project holder used profits from their projects to invest in various other income generation ventures. The future for these Christian families is certainly brighter. They have taken what God has given them and multiplied it!

Note: We are in the process of redesigning our web site and in the future these video interviews will be one of the resources you will be able to access.

I want to thank all of you for making this program and all of our programs possible. Your prayers and support are making a significant difference in the lives of many families. Best of all, God, and his son Jesus Christ get the glory!

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Joseph Richter
Executive Director



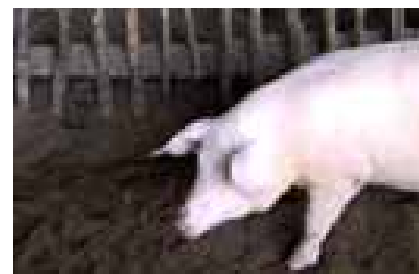
FARMS Lahu loan committee volunteers with Marting Chaisuriya. Great group of very dedicated and qualified men.



Odorless Organic Pig Raising!

I REMEMBER THE EVENING SO WELL. My wife Pat and I were sleeping in our small home tucked into a terraced hillside in the mountains of the Philippines. We were there serving the Igorot tribes as missionaries. Sometime, during the middle of the night a waft of warm air blew through our window just above our bed. The smell was so overwhelming we both woke and shot straight up in bed! "What was that?" Morning revealed our dread. Our landlord had moved several pigs to his new cement pen just down the hill below our bedroom window! Many of you know the odor. Therefore, when I heard of a method of raising pigs organically, without the odor, I was truly interested.

Our Thailand Hmong-Mien committee had received training in a new method of raising pigs organically that produced no odor. They were excited to show me how it was done. To my utter surprise, I could stand right next to a pigpen and not detect any bad odor! The pigs were also very clean and healthy. Men from this committee went to the Thailand Lahu Christian Church training center and taught the method.



Odorless organic pig technique. The bed is three feet of rice hulls.

(Continued on next page)

Therefore, both of our committees are now encouraging this method of pig production to FARMS's loan holders.

The method: The technique was introduced by a Korean aid worker in Thailand. It incorporates high science with low technology. The key ingredients are a homemade fermented organic mixture that is fed to the pigs to aid in digestion and a deep bed of rice hulls in the pigpen seeded with the same solution. This fermentation mixture is very important for the health of the pig and the bed of hulls provides a micro-flora substrate that breaks down the urine and feces very rapidly, thus eliminating any odor.

The pigpen is like any other, but the key difference is the floor. A pit is dug to about a three foot

depth and filled with waste rice hulls left over from the rice milling process. The pigs are raised on this bed. Pigs habitually use only one corner for defecation so this corner is dug out periodically and the composted material is used for fertilizer. Pigs are rooters and enjoy rooting in the rice hulls. Some believe this adds to their contentment. It is a very simple, yet effective practice. After the pigs are grown, the contents of the pit are removed and used as fertilizer and the cycle starts over. Many farmers also sell their compost.

I have visited several organic piggery projects in urban settings and they had no objectionable odor.

—Joe Richter

Interviews with Lahu Project Holders

Interview with Mr. Ai Thong Saengkhen:

Mr. Saengkhen is vice chair of his church. Mr. Marting Chaisuriya, the Chairman of the Thailand Lahu Christian Church Association, interviews him.

Before I was able to get a FARMS loan to raise pigs, I grew rice and cut firewood to sell. Cutting firewood is not legal now. I have found that with a 2,000 baht investment in raising pigs, I can earn a profit of 1,000 baht. I sell boars, adult and small ones. I also earn from my boar service. Each year I get about 16 to 17 piglets from my customers for the service. [Note: 1,000 baht = \$26.70]

My original use of the loan was to build a pigpen, buy some pigs, and some rice hulls that I used in the organic rearing method. (See article) I only needed one loan to get started. **Question from Marting:** “Does your church benefit from your project with FARMS?” Yes, for example last Friday I gave 810 baht to my church out of the sale of piglets.



Marting Chaisuriya with Mr. Saengkhen and corn milling machines

This project has really helped our family. In fact, out of my profits from pig raising I was able to buy this corn-processing machine. [He shows us the machine] It removes the dried corn from the cob and this attachment can grind the corn for feed. I use this for myself and for a business. The machine was a used one and cost me 13,000 baht, but a new one would cost about 70,000 baht! **Question from Marting:** “Do you have anything else you want to share?” Yes! If you raise pigs, you don't need to take loans from the moneylenders. I am now free to do my business without that burden. For example, I use the organic method of raising pigs. The rice hulls from the pens are composted and used on my fruit trees. I used to have about 300 orange trees, but a landslide destroyed over 200 of them, and some of my fields. Thanks to the pig project, I am still doing fine. I also sell oranges. He said he was happy to hear that we are expanding the program so more of his fellow believers will be able to have a project loan.



◀ *Mr. Saengkhen with his wife in their home*

Interview with Mr. Thweesak Nananikhom, district superintendent of six Lahu Christian Churches.

My project with the FARMS loan was to do pig farming using the odorless organic method I was trained for at the Thai Lahu Christian Church training center. My project has gone very well. In



Marting Chaisuriya with Mr. Nananikhom beside his organic piggery

fact, from the project profits we were able to buy these tools for handicraft production. [Shows us his power tools] Our life is much better now that we have had this project. I now have time to help with the handicrafts too, which my wife and son produce, and I also have more time to help with the children's programs at our church.

We have four children, and three are full time students. Our daughter is studying in a private university and it takes a lot of money to support her. Our younger ones are in high school. **Question: "Has this project helped your church in any way?"** Yes, through my increased tithes. Although, nearly all our members do tithe, with the exception of one family. This is the Lahu practice. We are a self-sustained church. I also serve as the district supervisor of six other churches. (Marting adds, "With no pay, he is a volunteer.")



Mrs. Nananikhom with hand woven purses

He adds: The people of this area say my pigs have the best taste. I believe this is because of the odorless organic method. [We conducted this interview next to his piggens and there was no odor!] **Marting asks, "Do you have any final comments?"** Yes. Thank you and I thank God, for it is only because of the love of God that we can do this.

Interview with Mr. Cha Ui Cha Thaw.

My project has been piggery. I was able to do this pig project in the village, because I use the odorless organic method. The neighbors do not complain. From the project profits, I was able to buy new land outside the village. [We traveled out to his new land.] I bought this land for 20,000 baht. This would not have been possible without the project I had.

I was born in Burma and moved to Thailand 17 years ago to find freedom and a better life. Therefore, I owned no land in Thailand. Before I worked as a laborer for a commercial farm and I earned about \$2.00 a day. When I got my loan, I was able to make enough to quit my job. The first time I raised pigs I earned 30,000 baht and used 20,000 to buy this land and the other 10,000 was for my living. The second time I raised pigs I earned 50,000 baht and I used some of that to buy a used truck. Our family uses the truck to gather wild banana plants from the mountains for sale as pig food. We use the stalks for our pigs too. He also purchased an air compressor and fixes tires for others as a sideline.

I am developing this land, (2 acres) to raise more pigs and to have a tea plantation. The government has provided me with 5,000 tea seedlings. I also have spring water to irrigate the property. **Marting asks, "What type of tea is it?"** It is Oolong tea. The tea sells for 3,000 baht (\$80) for a dried kilo! (about two pounds) I plan to plant about half my new land in tea.



Mr. Cha Thaw with some of his 5,000 tea plant seedlings



Mr. Cha Thaw with his wife and grandson



Mr. Cha Thaw's grandson with air compressor bought with FARMS project profits



Joe Richter, Executive Director, with Mr. Cha Thaw at his spring reservoir



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Meet the Board

Dr. Will Salo

Vice President of the Board of Trustees

Dr. Salo has served as Vice President and President of the Board of Trustees for FARMS. We value him for his insight and for his friendship.



Biography

I was raised on a farm on the Iron Range in northern Minnesota, the fifth child in a family of fifteen (ten boys, five girls). After high school, I worked my way through college culminating my edu-

cational career with a PhD in biochemistry from the University of Minnesota. After a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the National Institutes of Health, I was hired by the newly formed School of Medicine at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. I retired in 1997 and have since worked at the Medical School part-time as a research consultant. My wife, Annette, and I have three children and six grandchildren.

When I first heard about FARMS, I realized that the work it does epitomizes how Christians can answer the cry of the poor in a way that may make these people productive members of their communities, providing for their families and supporting their churches.



Congratulations! Reseth Richter was married to Jonathan Oberg on June 3, 2006. Reseth is Joe and Pat Richter's daughter. The newlyweds live in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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