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Political economy of agritourism initiatives in Thailand

DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2015.07.007

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Abstract
The paper examines agritourism, rural development and related policy initiatives in two case study areas: Rayong and Samut Songkhram provinces in Thailand. The fieldwork combines varied sources, including in-depth interviews. Agritourism development in the case study areas was affected by restructuring in their local economies, involving growing economic difficulties for the agricultural sector, new investment in residential development and tourism, and growth in alternative income sources for the rural population. The government's agritourism initiatives were affected by a changing national political and policy context. These interventions assisted the agricultural sector to survive the economic restructuring, providing supplementary income and local markets for their farm produce and crafts. The interactions between agritourism operators could be important for business survival, but some groups were set up largely to secure government funds and did not provide each other with substantial support. Agritourism could bring economic benefits for wider rural communities, but it could also encourage community conflicts. © 2015 Elsevier Ltd.

Author Keywords
Actor-oriented perspective; Agritourism; Political economy; Rural development

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