2016-05
Project Research

2015 iCOOP Association of Producer Group Member Survey

2016 (재)아이쿱협동조합연구소 10주년

2015 iCOOP Association of Producer Group

Member Survey

2016. 4.

LEE Hyangsook

translated by LEE Kyungsoo

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Survey Design

iCOOP Korea, one of Korea's consumer co-operatives, has three important pillars: members, producers, and employees. This research is the first step to better understand the status and condition of producers in order to increase their well-being and enhance sustainable ethical production. It is the first extensive survey following iCOOP's ongoing collaboration with eco-friendly and organic producers dating back to the start of iCOOP KOREA (18 years ago) and the establishment of iCOOP Co-operative Institute (10 years ago). Previous to this 2015 survey, iCOOP had conducted consumer Member Consumption Pattern and Attitude Surveys every three years (starting 2006) and annual Employee Satisfaction Surveys (starting 2013).

iCOOP Association of Producer Group (iCOOP APG) was established on December 14 of 2007 with 12 members. It became a corporate position and is currently reconstituting itself as the producers associations. As of December 2014, iCOOP APG has 251 full members, 51 associate members, and 9 item production committees. iCOOP APG converted to a social co-operative in March 2016 to promote cooperation with the consumer co-operative iCOOP KOREA.

This research investigates the conditions and views of iCOOP APG members which drive ethical production, one of the missions of iCOOP KOREA. Based on the complete enumeration survey, it incorporates additional interviews and field research of iCOOP APG members to better reflect their opinions. Furthermore, it seeks to identify the particular characteristics, production conditions, members' views on iCOOP KOREA and iCOOP APG, and eco-friendly agricultural and livestock production to understand and incorporate members' conditions in policy-making.

1. Main Questions

Production status	Production and shipping	main product shipped to iCOOP and its ratio shipping method
	Production income	annual turnover; ratio of production turnover in total income
	Agricultural area	total agricultural area; eco-friendly agricultural area
	Future agricultural successor[1]	existence and relation with successor; timing of transfer; land use plan (in absence of successor)
Basic features	address; age; gender; year they started: farming eco-friendly agriculture, working with iCOOP KOREA, joining iCOOP APG	
Relation with and understanding of iCOOP KOREA	Membership	motivation
	Trading process	advantage, difficulty, overall and process satisfaction; changes in income and stability; reason for decrease in income or production; item in need of price increase
	Production policy	current status, score and reason for (dis)satisfaction of Marketing Agency System; level and reason for (dis)satisfaction of price-decision measure; most influential production policy
	Other interests	interests besides agricultural business; current business(es)
Relation with and understanding of iCOOP Association of Producer Groups	Activities	
	Communication and education	awareness of iCOOP policy and activities; organizations and businesses; necessary education; communication with iCOOP KOREA and consumer members
	Satisfaction and suggestion	overall and activity specific satisfaction; priority issues; needed program production increase
Relation with and	Motivation for eco-friendly agriculture and livestock production	
	Efforts for eco-friendly production	

[1] Given Korean farmers' old age, who will succeed them as farmers becomes very important for future supplies of agricultural products to iCOOP.

understanding of eco-friendly agricultural (livestock) production	Information and knowledge gathering for eco-friendly production	
	Difficulty of eco-friendly production	
	Eco-friendly organic agricultural supplies	compost usage; measures and difficulty of securing compost
	Certification system	evaluation of government certification and iCOOP certification; acquisition of iCOOP certification

2. Methods

Population	280 members of iCOOP Association of Producer Groups as of June 2015*
Sample size	280
Respondents	214 (76.4percent response rate)
Sampling method	Complete enumeration
Survey tool	Structured questionnaire
Survey period	July 1 ~ August 31, 2015

* Of the 2,673 producers (1,845 contracted producers and 828 producers) iCOOP KOREA trades with, 280 of them (roughly 10%) are part of iCOOP APG. Membership in iCOOP APG involves fulfilling certain criteria: marketing at least half of total production via iCOOP KOREA; participating in education programs; passing a qualification exam; and a minimum advance 10,000,000 KRW investment loan.

Key findings

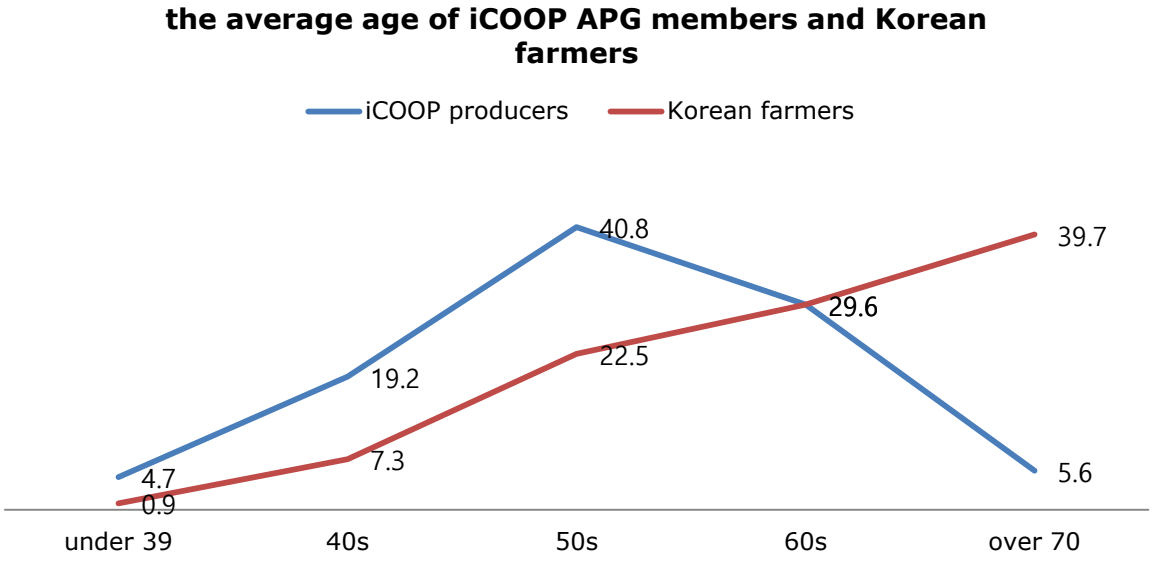
1. Basic features

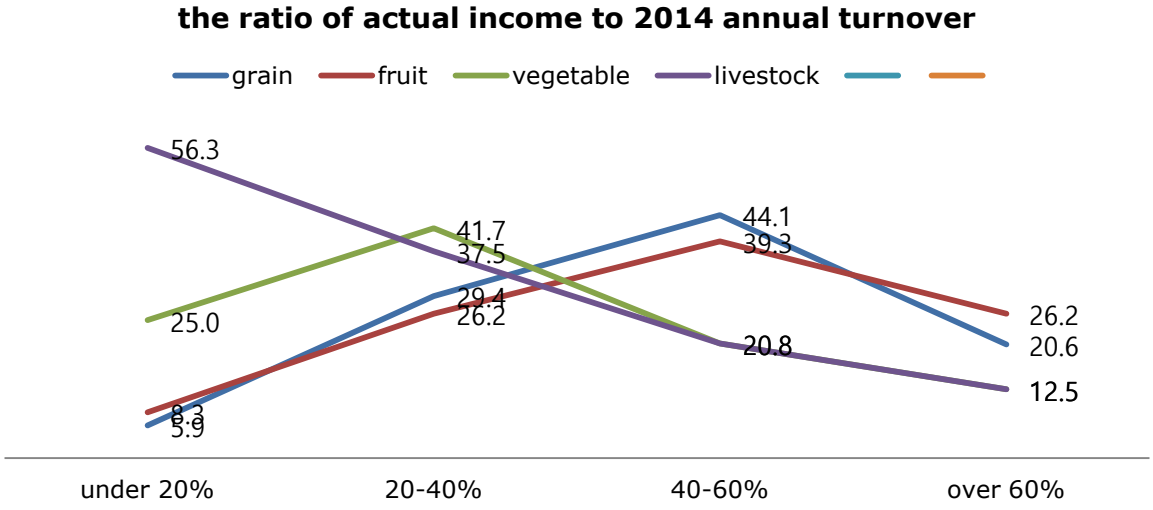
1.1 iCOOP APG members are younger than the average Korean farmer.

- 40.8 percent of respondents were in their 50s (the highest share). 29.6 percent were in their 60s; while 19.2 percent were in their 40s.
- The lowest age was 28 and the highest was 82. (σ=8.88)

1.2.. The average years farming was 25.8 years, and the average years of eco-friendly production was 13.26 years

- Their farming time ranged from 2 to 62 years, with the average at 25.8 years.(σ=11.36)
- Their period of eco-friendly agriculture and livestock production time ranged from 1 to 40 years, with the average at 11.26 (σ=6.82).





3) The average period trading with iCOOP Korea was 8.46 years while average membership period in iCOOP APG was 4.18 years

- The producer with the longest trading period (18 years) started working with iCOOP in 1997 when it was founded. The average trading period is 8.64 years (σ=4.37).
- The producer with longest membership period (8 years) had been a member from 2007, the founding year of iCOOP APG. Average membership period was 4.18 (σ=2.17).

2. Production and marketing

1) Members produced fruits, grains, livestock and vegetables in 2014

- When asked to classify their primary production item in 2014, members responded: fruits (33.1%), grains (27.2%), livestock (19.7%), and vegetables (18.0%).

2) Members marketed fruits, grains, and livestock in 2014

- When identifying which items they primarily marketed in iCOOP in 2014, members responded: fruits (34.0%), grains (26.8%), livestock (21.6%), and vegetables (16.3%).

3) 76.4 percent (159 members) marketed more than 70 percent of their products to iCOOP

4) Shipping method to iCOOP

- 67.6percent of respondents (140 respondents) marketed to iCOOP by "crop clubs[2] or corporations" while 18.8 percent (39 respondents) marketed individually. 13.5percent (28 members) used both methods.

5) Annual turnover and income

- About half of the total, 48.6 percent (101 respondents) had an annual turnover of less than 100 million KRW; 35. 6 percent (74 respondents), in the range of 100 to 300 million KRW; and 15.9 percent (33 respondents), more than 300 million KRW.
- When deducting production costs from annual turnover, 31. 9 percent (66 respondents), the highest share, responded that the real income consisted 20~40% of the annual turnover. 27.5 percent (57 respondents) said "40~60%"; and 24.6 percent (51 respondents) said real income was less than 20percent of the annual turnover.
- When taking the average of each group to calculate average income,[3] the ratio of real income to annual turnover was 37.34 percent. When applying this to the approximate average turnover of 1,667,790,000 KRW, the average real income is 62,650,000 KRW.

6) Agricultural and eco-friendly agricultural area in 2014

- Average agricultural area of members was 42,097㎡ (σ=54.3㎡). Of that area, they

[2] Crop club, *Jakmokban* in Korean, is a cooperative unit organized by Korean Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives consisting of more than 5 farmers in joint crop production and shipping to increase rural income.

[3] (10×51+30×66+50×57+70×29+90×4)/207 (except non-respondent)=37.34%

owned 24,534㎡ (σ=28,735.7㎡).

- The share of ownership in agricultural area was 52.2percent.
- The organic agricultural area was 3,253,552㎡ and the total 8,082,733㎡. Thus, the ratio of area allotted for organic farming relative to total farming was 40.25 percent.
- 59.9 percent of organic agricultural area was owned by the producer. Thus, 40percent of organic agriculture was conducted in leased land.

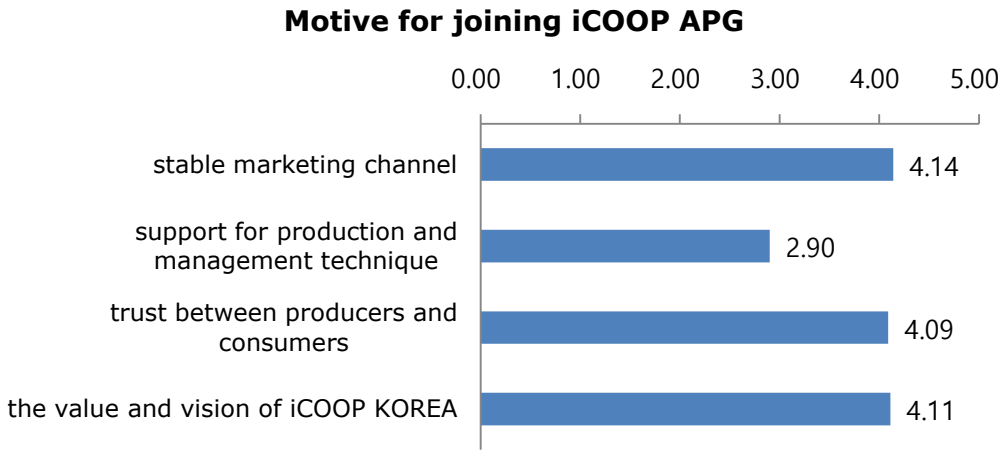
7) Agricultural successor

- 68.3 percent (138 respondents) said that they didn't have an agricultural successor while 27.7 percent (56 respondents) said that they did. 4.0 percent (8 respondents) had not considered transition out of agriculture yet.
- When questioned about how their agricultural areas would be used without a successor, 57.7 percent (75 respondents) had "no plan yet"; 19.2 percent (25 respondents) wanted to "transfer to their children"; and remaining 6.9 percent (9 respondents) wanted to "entrust it to a group or corporation for joint management."
- As few had agricultural successors, a more concrete plan for future agricultural land use has to be considered.

3. Current relations and attitude toward iCOOP KOREA

1) Reason for joining iCOOP APG

- Reflecting the highest average scores, respondents joined iCOOP: to "secure stable shipping channel" 4.14 (σ=0.78); because of "the value and vision of iCOOP" (4.11, σ=0.84); and because of "the trust between producers and consumers" (4.09, σ=0.78).
- The reason for joining which received the average lowest score [at 2.9 (σ=1.07)] was "to access production technique and management".
- Implementing support for production techniques and management can motivate more producers to join iCOOP APG.



2) The advantage of trading with iCOOP

- 36.7 percent (69 respondents) saw the advantage of trading with iCOOP in that "I can produce stably with the contract production system" and 35.1 percent (66 respondents) responded that "I don't have to worry about other shipping channels."
- Stable production and shipping channels are an important advantage indicating the need to strengthen them in the future.

3) The difficulty in trading with iCOOP

- 26.2 percent (48 respondents) replied "price decision" to be most difficult and 24.0 percnet (44 respondents) said "production quantity management." 15.8 percent (29 respondents) thought it difficult to be "present in education programs and meetings."
- Regarding the "price decision", respondents showed greatest dissatisfaction in the price decision measure as evidenced in the average satisfaction score of 3.23 (σ=0.77) out of 5.
- In the production quantity management, fresh production sectors such as fruits and vegetables indicated a need to more accurately predict the quantity demanded.
- To address the price decision difficulty issue, we recommend: listening to the diverse opinions of iCOOP APG members and providing greater education of its production policy. These could be implemented in various levels such as through iCOOP APG item committee workshops and face-to-face communication with production management personnel.

4) Satisfaction rate of trading with iCOOP

- The largest share, 60.9 percent (126 respondents), showed satisfaction ("very

satisfied" and "satisfied") while 8.7 percent (18 respondents) showed dissatisfaction.

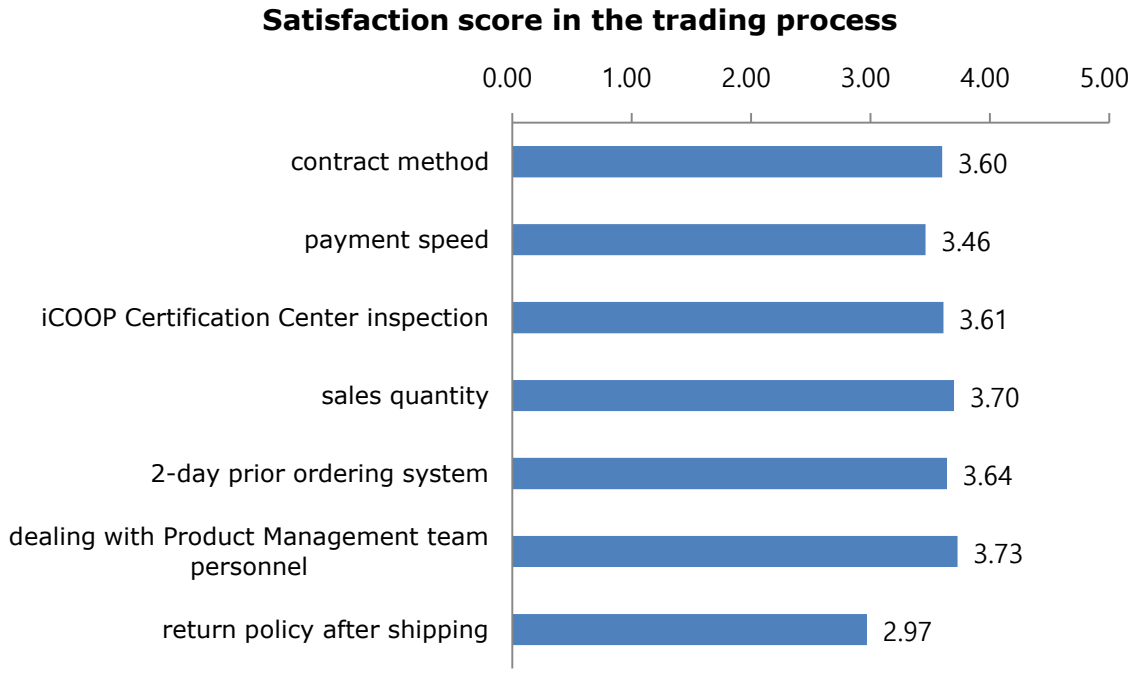
- Respondents showed a little higher than moderate score, of 3.63 (σ=0.84)
- iCOOP respondents with less than 5 trading years showed a relatively higher rate of dissatisfaction. Respondents with longer than 15 trading years showed a higher rate of satisfaction.
- The higher satisfaction scores among respondents with longer trading years can be attributed to the two chief advantages of trading with iCOOP: stable production and shipping. Such advantages might be hard to experience in the short-term.

5) Satisfaction rate in the trading process

- Respondents showed the highest satisfaction score in the "communication with production management personnel" (3.74, σ=0.91). Respondents were also satisfied in the "2-day prior order system" (3.6, σ=0.88), "iCOOP certification center inspection" (3.61, σ=0.78) and "contract production system" (3.60, σ=0.75).
- The lowest average satisfaction score was 2.97 (σ=98) in the "return after shipping". The return could be attributed to either overly-strict - examination process or the actual poor quality of production. More concrete examination criteria that satisfies both producers and consumers needs to be established to improve overall quality.

6) Changes in income level and stability after trading with iCOOP

- 76.6 percent (157 respondents) replied that "more stable income" was possible after trading with iCOOP while 19.5 percent (40 respondents) said that there was no



considerable change. 3.9 percent (8 respondents) indicated "more unstable income" than before.

- Regarding the income change, 58.7 percent (121 respondents) experienced an increase while 34.5 percent (71 respondents) felt no considerable difference. 6.8 percent (14 respondents) replied that income decreased.

7) Income change in 2014

- Regarding the income in 2014 compared to previous years, 43.5 percent (83 respondents) replied no considerable change, comprising the largest portion of the total. 30.9 percent (59 respondents) had a decrease while 35. 8 percent (49 respondents) had an increase in the income in 2014.
- 50 percent (29respondents) indicated a decrease in income replied that this was due to a "decrease in production quantity"; 22.4 percent indicated an "increase in managing expenses"; 17.2 percent indicated an "inadequate low price" Furthermore, at 50 percent, "damage from disease and harmful insects" was identified as the main reason for a "decrease in production quantity.

8) Participation in iCOOP agency system 88.6percent

- 88.6 percent (179 respondents) participated in the iCOOP agency system.[4] 2.5 percent (5 respondents) were not aware of the system.
- 52.3 percent (92 respondents) showed satisfaction as is seen in the satisfaction rate for the agency system while 13.6 percent (24 respondents) replied "dissatisfied."The average satisfaction rate was 3.41 (σ=0.99).
- Future evaluation and feedback is needed. If marketing performance was poor, additional research on the reasons could be implemented through evaluation and communication.

[4] iCOOP marketing agency system is one of shipment contracting method in which two different prices are determined. The two price system was closely interwined with the Price Stabilization Fund which set up to provide producers stable income by giving additional support in poor crop. The first is the "primary price that covers farmers" production cost. Based on the initial contracted amount, iCOOP provides this amount in cash to farmers regardless of how much of what is produced is sold. This price is usually 10 to 20 percent higher than the government's "standard production price." The second is the "target price," which serves as the basic price for planning and implementing product marketing. This is the price paid to the producer when each of his/her goods is sold. This dual price system offers three advantages; first, the primary price guarantees a producer's production costs. Second, since the quantity is determined in advance, this usually results in contracted quantities 130-200% that of conventional contracting. Third, producers are guaranteed the target price through a price stability fund. This fund is created when the sales price (influenced by the market price) is greater than the target price. It is used to guarantee the target price to producers when the sales price is lower.

9) Satisfaction on the iCOOP price decision measure

- 34. 5 percent (70 respondents) showed satisfaction while 13.8 percent (28 respondents) showed dissatisfaction. The satisfaction score was rather low with average 3.23 (σ=0.77)
- Measures to improvement understanding of iCOOP's production policy and a new system that incorporates various opinions could be implemented.
- Respondents dissatisfied with price decision measure showed higher dissatisfaction to trade as well. Thus, increased satisfaction in price decision measure might lead to an increase in trade satisfaction. The increased satisfaction could enhance overall satisfaction and trust in iCOOP.

10) "Contracting production" influences income most strongly

- 37.0 percent (74 respondents) pinpointed "contracted production" as the most important factor in determining their income level; 34.0 percent (68 respondents) regarded price decision measure and 18.0 percent (36 respondents) thought agency system as the most important factors.

11) Interests in other businesses

- Overall interests in other businesses outside agriculture were moderate or low.
- Respondents showed interests in agricultural processing (3.45, σ=1.16), direct transaction market (3.39, σ=1.06), agriculture experience site[5] (3.24, σ=1.11), and guesthouse (2.56, σ=1.12).
- 75.5 percent (148 respondents) were not involved in other businesses besides agriculture.
- 24.5 percent (48 respondents) were engaged in other businesses with a total of 78 businesses (average 1.6). The businesses included agricultural processing, experiencing site, direct transaction market, and guesthouse in order of highest.

4. Current status and attitude toward iCOOP Association of Producers Group

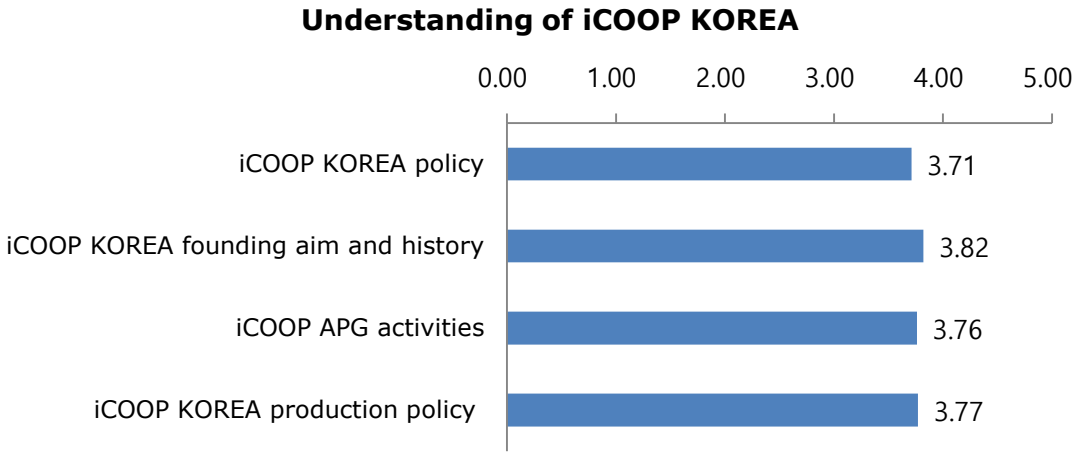
1) Communication with iCOOP KOREA

- The following are respondents' agreement score (5 being the highest) to various statements (starting with the highest): 4.2 (σ=0.68), "I participate in iCOOP APG workshops and education"; 4.0 (σ=0.73), "I read iCOOP APG newsletters"; 3.52

[5] The agriculture experience site refers to providing programs for people in urban areas to come and experience rural life and farming.

(σ=0.95), "I often communicate with iCOOP KOREA personnel"; 3.43 (σ=0.97), "I often communicate with iCOOP APG members".

- Respondents agreement to "I often visit iCOOP KOREA website" was lowest at 2.73 (σ=1.12).



2) Understanding of iCOOP KOREA

- Respondents' understanding was highest in the "iCOOP founding aim and history (3.82, σ=0.69) followed by "iCOOP production policy" (3.77, σ=0.73), "activities of iCOOP APG" (3.76, σ=0.76), and "iCOOP policy" (3.71, σ=0.71)
- The awareness and understanding of iCOOP KOREA is relatively high as is seen in an average rate higher than 3.

3) Understanding of iCOOP KOREA organizations and businesses

- Respondents' awareness was highest as regards the Gurye Natural Dream Park (4.13, σ=0.71) followed by iCOOP Ramen Co.,ltd. (3.77, σ=0.88), iCOOP Agricultural Production Co.ltd. (3.55, σ=0.99), Mutual Aid Society for Enhancing Korean Agriculture (3.54, σ=0.88) and Coop Store Co.,ltd (3.13, σ=1.07).
- Respondents' awareness was lowest regard to the Korean Social Economy Seed Foundation with the rate of 2.99 (σ=1.05).

4) Education needed for iCOOP APG members

- Allowed to choose two responses, respondents thought education about the iCOOP production policy (22.5%), production technology (22.0%), the vision of iCOOP (13.7%), and education on co-operatives to better understand consumer co-operative (10.8%) was needed.

5) Communication with iCOOP consumer members in 2014

- 81.3 percent (165 respondents) had communicated with iCOOP consumer members.
- Although the level of communication is encouraging, more focus can be paid to iCOOP APG members without any contact with consumer members.

6) Satisfaction on iCOOP APG activities in 2015

- 46.3 percent (93 respondents) rated "moderate" and 42.3 percent (85 respondents) replied "satisfied" on iCOOP APG's 2015 activities.
- The average satisfaction is moderate with the rate of 3.47 (σ=0.71)

7) Satisfaction on each activity of iCOOP APG in 2015

- Respondents showed satisfaction in the "education and workshop" (3.58, σ=0.69), "item committee activity (3.54, σ=0.78), "activities for enhancing productivity" (3.40, σ=0.80), and "communication with iCOOP KOREA consumer members" (3.36, σ=0.81).

8) Short-term (within 2~3 years) priority task of iCOOP APG

- 44.2 percent (87 respondents) replied priority should be given to "activities for enhancing productivity" while 32.5 percent (64 respondents) prioritized "strengthening item committee" and 13.2 percent (26 respondents) put weight in the "nurturing agricultural heirs."
- Although respondents though agricultural successor issue to be important, the efforts for nurturing such heirs is low with the rate of 2.87 (σ=1.13). Since nurturing can't be completed rapidly, it could be seen as a long-term priority task.

9) Priority task of iCOOP APG for increasing productivity

- Respondents wanted iCOOP APG to make effort in the "agricultural technology consulting and education" (34.6%) followed by "eco-friendly supply joint purchase" (26.5%) and "agricultural labor supply" (15.7%) to increase productivity

5. Current status and attitudes toward eco-friendly agriculture

1) Motivation for eco-friendly production "for a safer product"

- 57.2 percent (103 respondents) replied the motivation to "produce safer agriculture

product and livestock". 16.7 percent (30 respondents) replied to "increase income" and 9.4 percent (17 respondents) to "avoid pesticide addition."

2) Efforts for eco-friendly production

- Respondents made efforts to "improve fertility" (4.27, σ=0.76), "develop production technology" (3.99, σ=0.74), "develop eco-friendly supplies" (3.44, σ=0.98), and "seed management including seed-gathering and breeding (3.30, σ=1.09).
- The efforts put in "nurturing agricultural successor" rated the lowest with 2.87 (σ=1.13).

3) Knowledge and information gathering on eco-friendly production

- A total 459 answers were collected regarding the source of knowledge and information about eco-friendly production from 198 respondents. Respondents accessed information from 2.3 sources on average.
- Respondents got information from "iCOOP KOREA and iCOOP APG education" (27.8%, "local government and agricultural technology center education" (27.8%), and "peer eco-friendly farmers" (19.9%).
- The survey indicated the influence of iCOOP KOREA and iCOOP APG education in respondents' eco-friendly farming.

4) Eco-friendly agricultural supply: compost

- 87.8 percent (159 respondents) used compost while 12.2 percent (22 respondents) didn't. Whether compost was used or not did not apply to the rest of the 8 respondents who were involved in other production activities (e.g. livestock). Among those using compost, 50.3 percent (75 respondents) bought compost while 49.7 percent (74 respondents) produced it themselves.
- Respondents who made compost by themselves have difficulty in "buying raw materials" (24.6%), "lack or have insufficient workplace" (18.5%), and "lack labor and expenses" (10.8%).

5) Difficulty in eco-friendly production

- Respondents replied the difficulty in eco-friendly agricultural and livestock production was "labor shortage" (4.0, σ=0.86), followed by "labor expenses" (3.94, σ=0.85), "disease and insect management" (3.84, σ=0.95), "supply expenses" (3.78, σ=0.91), and "securing eco-friendly supplies" (3.01, σ=0.97)
- They also replied the rate of difficulty as follows: production quantity (3.29, σ=0.91), seed management (3.27, σ=1.16), repeated cultivation damage control (3.23, σ=0.96),

fertility management (3.04, σ=0.94), and securing eco-friendly supplies (3.01, σ=0.97).

- The difficulty in accessing marketing channels was the lowest at 2.37 (σ=0.93). It could be attributed to the existence of stable marketing channel through iCOOP KOREA.

6) Attitude toward government-run eco-friendly agriculture certification system

- Respondents thought government-run eco-friendly agriculture certification system as a "necessary system for sustainable agriculture (3.77, σ=0.82), "the most reliable certification system" (3.57, σ=0.88), and "certification system with thorough after care" (3.36, σ=1.06).
- They rated the "system reflecting agricultural practice" lowest with 2.92 (σ=0.89)
- The average rate of system is 3, indicating moderate evaluation by respondents. Respondents thought relatively highly of its necessity but put a low opinion on its practicality.

7) Current status and attitude toward iCOOP certification system

- 41.2 percent (82 respondents) had acquired iCOOP KOREA's the iCOOP certification provided by iCOOP KOREA. 49.7 percent (99 respondents) didn't acquire it, while 9.0 percent (18 respondents) didn't know about the system.
- Respondents thought iCOOP certification system to be "certification system with thorough after care" (4.18, σ=0.62), "reliable certification system" (4.13, σ=0.66), "necessary system for sustainable agriculture" (4.06, σ-0.70), and the "certification system reflecting agricultural practice" (3.86, σ=0.71).
- They rated the system to be "helpful in increasing income after certification" the lowest at 3.51 (σ=0.73).
- The average rate of iCOOP certification was higher in every survey item than the government-run eco-friendly product certification system.

6. Others

- When compiling suggestions and opinions on iCOOP KOREA and iCOOP APG, a total of 80 respondents gave 107 suggestions and opinions.
- Suggestions pointed to opinions on various aspects of price, trading, communication, education, product-related, concern for producers, support for production, income, consumption, policy, personnel, eco-friendly agricultural production.
- Out of 16 suggestions, those on grievance and improvements in the trading process were the most numerous.

Summary and Implications

The complete enumeration survey was conducted from July until August 2015. It targeted 280 producers with iCOOP APG full membership and received responses from 218 members (response rate 76.4%).

The average iCOOP APG member is 55.83 years-old, younger than the average Korean farmer and has been engaged in agriculture for 25.8 years and in eco-friendly agriculture for 13.26 years. The ratio of production and marketing is highest in fruit, grains, livestock and vegetables in order of highest. Joint marketing outweighs individual marketing.

Most members joined iCOOP APG after considering its stable marketing channel, the value of iCOOP, and the trust between producers and consumers. Through their participation, they experience the advantage of being a member in a stable marketing channel and production. While they faced difficulty in price decision, this could be mitigated by strengthening communication and enhancing understanding on the marketing agency policy. Respondents generally understood iCOOP KOREA's activities and policies while some areas needed greater publicity. They wanted iCOOP APG to be more active in supporting increase in productivity, especially consultation and education in agricultural technology.

The following are suggestions for enhancing iCOOP APG's sustainable production, ethical production, and consumption:

First, more diverse communication within iCOOP is needed. Under the production policy of the marketing agency system, Organizations are in charge of processes such as price and quantity decision; certification center inspection; after marketing inspection; delivery-store and customer delivery. Since organizations have different anticipation and understanding of others' activities, various channels could be established to encourage active communication. Though the survey revealed grievance with the price decision and agency system, the dissatisfaction on the lack of communication appears to be the larger fundamental problem. Experimental measures (such as communication within the iCOOP APG item committee, feedback and explanation during or after the implementation process, and communication for enhancing understanding of iCOOP production policy) could be considered. This would not only involve presentations but also forums where different actors could exchange views and build common ground.

Second, nurturing successors and agricultural land use plan should be established with a long-term view. Although the average age of producers is younger and the ratio of existing successors is higher than that of average Korean farmers, the ratio is still low (27.7%) and the effort to nurture heirs and efforts to plan for agricultural land is low. In addition to iCOOP

APG's education plan for heirs, various measures could be implemented including linking students to members without heirs to encourage them to be eco-friendly farmers and consign land management to corporations or faming groups. It could help secure and utilize eco-friendly land in the future.

Third, more consideration for securing income is needed. iCOOP producer members regard the "stable production and marketing channel" to be most advantageous. While developing this advantage, other measures for securing accessible income by increasing productivity, improving expense management, and profit redistribution by investing in processing businesses could be established. Joint development and purchase of eco-friendly supplies and feed could be considered after careful examination of the business feasibility in promoting expense management.

Fourth, producer-based education should be developed. iCOOP APG members actively participated in education and mostly got information and knowledge from iCOOP channels. They wanted iCOOP APG to provide education about iCOOP KOREA production policy and production technology and to support productivity through agricultural technology consulting and education. It is necessary to design and develop education program based on members' needs and wants.

Fifth, the iCOOP certification system should be strengthened. The government-run eco-friendly agricultural certification was valued lower than the iCOOP system and revealed several problems culminating in a decrease in eco-friendly certified farms. Although producers' evaluation of the system is high, as regards necessity, trust, after care, and practicability, still, only half (41.2%) of them acquired the iCOOP certification. Thus, enhancing producers' awareness and encouraging to acquire iCOOP certification is necessary.

Sixth, communication between consumer and producer members should be expanded. Not only were there some producers who had no contact with consumers, but many respondents in the open questionnaire expressed a desire to connect with and better understand consumers. They also wanted to better understand their role and position in iCOOP as producers and understand them better. Existing production site exchange programs could be multiplied and additional consideration for diversifying communication measures should be made.

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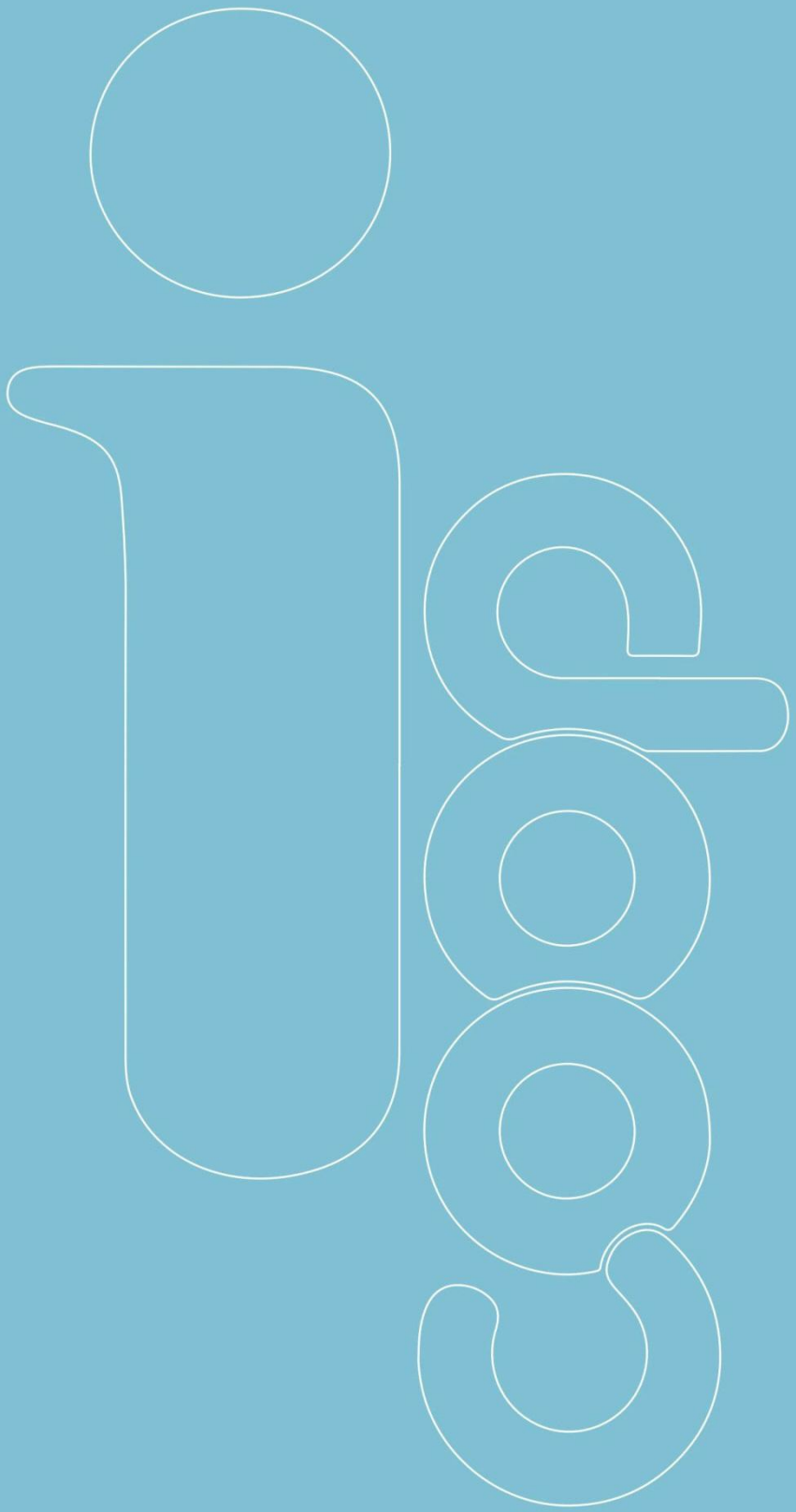

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