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THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE EXISTENCE OF AGRICULTURAL FARMER GROUPS (A Study in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district, Bengkulu City)

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research are 1) To find out the group dynamics in farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district, Bengkulu City, 2) To find out the agricultural extension in farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Urban-Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district, Bengkulu City 3) To find out the existence of farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict, Bengkulu City 4) To analyse the factors that affect the existence of farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict. This research was conducted purposively in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district, Bengkulu City, involving 60 farmer group members as respondents. Data analysis used the descriptive qualitative analysis method, Likert scale, and Partial Least Square (PLS). The analysis results show that the dynamics of farmer groups significantly impact the existence of farmer groups. In contrast, the role of extension workers has no significant impact on the existence of farmer groups. The research findings highlight the interplay between internal group dynamics and external support in fostering farmer groups' success and continued existence. This research recommended that farmers' groups focus on internal and external government support mechanisms; the policy is needed to strengthen farmer groups, leading to improved livelihoods for individual farmers and a more robust agricultural sector.

INTRODUCTION

Farmer-based institutions (FBIs) are characterised by a shared value system and comparable social, economic, and environmental contexts (Effendy, 2020). This homogeneity fosters a sense of community and facilitates collective action. This farmer institution comprises many farmers formally connected by their shared farming interests and commonalities. Due to their shared interests and commonalities, farmers have an informal bond acreage (Iryana, 2018). Members of the FBIs should benefit from its existence in several ways. By government policy, the FBIs must facilitate its members' access to technology, credit, information, and other resources data, credit, technology, and other perks from a government directive (Nuryanti & Swastika, 2016).

According to Mulieng (2018), the definition of a farmer group is a group of farmers filled with adult farmers (male/female) and inexperienced farmers (young) who are informally incorporated into one grouping area based on harmony and sharing needs and are within the scope of influence and leadership of farmer contacts. The existence of farmer groups is one of the potentials that play an important role in shaping changes in the behaviour of its members and cooperation between members. Gading Cempaka Sub-district in Bengkulu City has active farmer groups, one of which is in Cempaka Permai Village.

A high activity level is observed among farmer groups within the Gading Cempaka Sub-district, Bengkulu City. This is exemplified by the case of Cempaka Permai Village, which boasts four registered and active Farmer-Based Institutions (FBIs) established in 2016. These FBIs comprise 60 members, with membership distributed, as seen in Table 1. Farmers groups in Cempaka Permai Village are engaged in processed products, namely banana chips, cassava chips, Peanut-stuffed eggs, peanuts (celery flavoured peanuts), curly beans, tat cakes, Kalamansi orange syrup, peanut crackers (peyek), other traditional cakes, and utilisation of home yards, namely planting chillies, water spinach (kangkung), and others. The following are the farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, their registration numbers, and the number of members:

Table 1. Farmer group in Cempaka Permai Village

No	Farmer group	Registration No	Total number of members
1	Pelatuk	198/KT-GC/BKPPP/2016	15 Persons
2	Rangkong	199/KT-GC/BKPPP/2016	9 Persons
3	Enggang	200/KT-GC/BKPPP/2016	14 Persons
4	KWT Rangkong	201/KT-GC/BKPPP/2016	21 Persons

Source: Secondary data, 2023

Group existence can be seen in the context of its social environment. A group must carry out various activities by its nature and purpose to produce

achievements generally recognised by society to show its existence (Ica & Hamid, 2011). The existence or existence of farmer groups is attached to the ability of group members to meet their needs.

Group dynamics are two or more individuals involved in interacting with others; the capabilities of group members influence each other, and group conditions often change over time (Zulkarnain, 2013). The role of extension workers is another factor that can influence farmer group protection. Extension workers can help farmer groups progress by providing agricultural inspiration and assistance.

The driving factor for the progress of farmer groups is the presence of field instructors who provide motivation and advice in farming. The role of instructors is beneficial in creating cooperation in groups and meeting the additional information needs of group members to maintain the group. There are four farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village that are still active. Therefore, there are a lot of obstacles and problems found in these farmer groups, such as capital problems, disputes between members, business development, and others.

Based on observed activity within FBIs in Cempaka Permai Village, several key areas of inquiry were identified. These areas include existence, group dynamics, and the role of extension workers, making this farmer group survive until now. For these reasons, the objectives of this research are 1) To find out the group dynamics in farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Urban-Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district, Bengkulu City, 2) To find out the agricultural extension in farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Urban-Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district, Bengkulu City 3) To find out the existence of farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict, Bengkulu City, 4) To analyse the factors that affect the existence of farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict.

RESEARCH METHODS

Collecting Data

In this study, the types of data used are primary and secondary. Primary data, also called original data or new data, is information obtained or collected by those conducting research or by those who need it (Supardi, 2016). Secondary data supports the demands of primary data, such as books. Secondary data is collected indirectly and provided to data collectors. This study collected data through observation, direct interviews with participants, and documentation.

Data Analysis

To address objectives 1, 2, and 3, a descriptive analysis was employed utilizing a Likert scale questionnaire. The Likert scale assesses the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of individuals or groups towards social issues (Sugiyono, 2011). Within the Likert scale, the variables of interest – group dynamics, extension service utilization, and group existence – were operationalized as variable indicators through carefully crafted questionnaire items.

This approach allowed for the collection of interval data, enabling the calculation of mean responses based on the scores assigned to each respondent's answer. The Likert scale, a widely employed psychometric tool, utilizes a five-point response format ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). To assess the percentage of existence score for each item, the following formula is applied:

Percentage of Existence Score = (Obtained Score / Maximum Score) x 100%

This formula calculates the proportion of the obtained score relative to the maximum possible score, effectively capturing the extent to which respondents endorse the existence of the phenomenon under investigation. The assessment of existence, group dynamics, and the role of extension workers in farmer groups was conducted using a categorical system based on percentage scores derived from the Likert scale responses. The categorisation scheme employed is as follows: **Very Low (**0 – 20%), **Low (**21% – 40%), **Moderate (**41% – 60%), **High (**61% – 80%), **Very High (**81% – 100%). This categorisation scheme provides a structured and standardised approach to interpreting the percentage scores obtained from the Likert scale, allowing for a meaningful assessment of the level of existence, group dynamics, and the role of extension workers in the context of farmer groups.

To delve deeper and analyse the factors influencing the existence of farmer groups (Objective 4), Partial Least Squares (PLS) path modelling was employed. This selection was motivated by PLS's ability to conduct more comprehensive data analysis compared to other techniques. PLS, a variant of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), is component-based and centres on analysing variations within the data (Ghozali, 2015). A key advantage of PLS over covariance-based SEM lies in its reduced assumptions. Notably, PLS analysis is not contingent upon normal data distribution or large sample size, making it a powerful tool for research contexts where these assumptions might be challenged (Ghozali, 2015).

The steps needed in Partial Least Square (PLS) analysis are: 1. Designing a structural model (Inner Model), 2. Evaluating measurement (Outer Model), 3. Testing the structural model (Inner Model). The next stage in PLS-SEM testing

is to conduct statistical tests to assess the hypothesis test in PLS-SEM to be reviewed following the p-value; if the p-value is smaller than 0.5, then the hypothesis will be accepted, and if the p-value is greater than 0.5, then the hypothesis will be rejected (Hair, 2017). Testing this hypothesis has a real positive impact on group dynamics and no real negative impact on existence with the following hypothesis formulation:
H0 = There is no significant relationship between group dynamics, extension service utilisation, and the existence of farmer groups.
Ha = Group dynamics and extension service utilisation have a positive influence on the existence of farmer groups.
with the testing criteria as follows:

P value > α: H0 rejected, Ha accepted.
P value ≤ α: H0 accepted, Ha rejeced.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of respondents

Table 2. Characteristic of respondents

No	Item	Category	Total Respondents	Percentage
1	Age	Productive (15-65 years)	58	97%
		Non-productive (>65 years)	2	3%
2	Education	Elementary School	5	8%
		Junior High School	4	7%
		Senior High School	26	43%
		Higher Graduate	25	42%
3	Family member	Small (2-4 persons)	38	63%
		Big (5-6 persons)	22	37%
4	In group Experience	0-6 years	32	53%
		7- 13 years	28	47%

Source: Primary data, 2023

1. Age

A person's activity and ideas are influenced by age because it can help them to get information and increase their capacity (Putri, 2016). 58 % of Farmer group members in this study are in productive age, which tends to be in better physical condition, have a greater urge to try new things and have a more original thought process. At a productive age, productivity in carrying

out farming activities is very high because, at this age, the energy is still strong, and the material provided by the extension agent is easily remembered. The performance of the farmer group is better than that of the non-productive age group.

2. Education

The education level of farmers group members in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict: 43% passed Senior High School, and 42% passed higher education who can absorb the things the extension agent conveys. This means that they can perform their role well in the group and always provide suggestions to the group to improve and solve problems that exist in the group (Hermawan et al., 2018; Aghis et al., 2020).

3. Total family members

Most farmers group members (63% of the respondents) have a small family size because the group members only live with their husbands, and their children already have families and are no longer in the same house. The larger the number of family members, the greater the expenditure; therefore, it can increase the motivation of members to participate in group activities to develop a business that will increase income (Rivani, 2020).

4. In-group Experience

Members of farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict, are new members and do not have much group farmer experience (53% have 0-6 years of experience). This limited experience base suggests a potential knowledge gap and a need for leadership development within these groups. Research Putri (2016) supports this notion that those who join farmer groups longer have better knowledge because they have been participating in group counselling activities for longer and can manage groups because they already know the ins and outs of the group. This accumulated knowledge translates to improved group management skills as experienced members develop a deeper understanding of the group's dynamics and operational procedures. Consequently, farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village likely prioritise individuals with longer membership tenure for leadership positions to leverage their experience in managing the group

The Existence of Farmer Groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district

In general, the existence of farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district, can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Assessment of Farmer Group Members on the Existence of Farmer Groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district

No	Existence level	∑ Persons	Percentage (%)	average score
1	Very Low (0-20%)	0	0%	
2	Low (21% – 40%)	0	0%	
3	Medium (41% – 60%)	0	0%	87%
4	High (61% – 80%)	7	12%	
5	Very High (81%–100%)	53	88%	
	Total	**60**	**100%**	

Source: Primary data, 2023

The analysis revealed a high level of farmer group existence in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district. Eighty-eight percent (n = 53) of the identified 60 individuals were found to be actively participating members, translating to an average score of 87%. This score falls within the "very high" category for farmer group existence, aligning with previous research findings. For instance, Ica (2011) identified a similar score range for the farmer group existence variable, suggesting that the group activity level observed in Cempaka Permai is consistent with established benchmarks for successful groups.

Analysis of farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict, revealed a high level of existence. This is evidenced by members' strong sense of ownership towards the group's continued presence. This commitment translates into collective efforts by members to ensure the group's sustainability within the local agricultural landscape. Research supports these observations. Reviandy et al. (2021) highlight the positive role of established farmer group institutions in facilitating coordination and problem-solving among members. Additionally, Putri and Hidayat (2011) suggest that a high level of group existence often stems from factors such as ongoing activities, achievements at both local and national levels, and the ability to cultivate success within the group itself. These findings align with the observations in Cempaka Permai, suggesting a potential correlation between strong group existence, member engagement, and positive outcomes.

Farmer Group Dynamics in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district

In general, the dynamics of the Cempaka Permai Village farmer group in the Gading Cempaka Sub-district can be seen in the table below.

Table 4. Dynamics Assessment of Farmer Group Member in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict

No	Group Dynamic	∑ Persons	Percentage (%)	Score Average
1	Very Low (0-20%)	0	0%	
2	Low (21% – 40%)	0	0%	
3	Medium (41% – 60%)	0	0%	82%
4	High (61% – 80%)	27	45%	
5	Very High (81%–100%)	33	55%	
	Total	**60**	**100%**	

Source: Primary data, 2023

The results show that the dynamics of farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict, are in a very high category of 55%, with a total of 33 persons and an average of 82%. This is because the indicators of group dynamics owned by farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka District, are excellent. This outcome is consistent with the work done by Heliawaty et al. (2021). The welcoming environment that the Lekke farmer group fosters makes new members glad to participate. One advantage of belonging to a group is that it provides a platform for farmers to collaborate and stay in touch with one another. The Lekke Farmer Group was founded on the initiative of its members, so the togetherness and kinship that have grown among them strengthen the sense of belonging to the group. Each member desires to see the group's activities and goals carried out and the goals they develop jointly.

According to research by Yoppi et al. (2016), high-standard farmer group dynamics can increase value within the group, create a more advanced group, and foster cooperation between them. This finding is consistent with Aziz's (2018) research on group dynamics, which found that group goals, group dynamics, performance, and a supportive environment influence strong group dynamics. A dynamic group with clear group goals, a clear division of tasks, tasks that the group can perform effectively, and a supportive group environment can be formed.

The Role of Agricultural Extension Workers in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district

the role of extension workers in farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict, can be seen in the table below.

Table 5. The Role of Extension Officers in the Farmer Groups Members' Assessment of in Cempaka Permai Village, Sub-district Gading Cempaka Sub-district.

No	The role of extension workers	∑ Persons	Percentage (%)	Average Score
1	Very Low (0-20%)	0	0%	
2	Low (21% – 40%)	0	0%	
3	Medium (41% – 60%)	0	0%	85%
4	High (61% – 80%)	22	37%	
5	Very High (81%–100%)	38	63%	
	Total	60	100%	

Source: Primary data, 2023

Based on the research results in Table 4, the role of extension workers is very high, namely 63%, with a total of 38 people and an average of 85%. This is because the role of extension workers is essential for farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict. The role of agricultural extension workers in farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Subdistrict, was found to be very high. This outcome is consistent with Bakari, et al (2021). In order to help farmers become more capable, agricultural extension agents play a crucial role. Farmers can enhance their capacity to effectively manage their capital, workers, and profitable marketing processes by utilising extension workers as advisors, motivators, mediators, and communicators and using technology that meets their needs.

This is in line with research conducted by Nuraeni (2018) in research on the role of extension workers, who stated that the function of agricultural extension workers in the formation of an organisation of wet-rice farmers in Bonto Bunga village and agricultural extension workers have an important role in agricultural development because, as agents of change, extension workers are the spearheads who are directly in contact with farmers (Faisal, 2020).

Factors Affecting the Existence of Farmer Groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka SubdistrictAnalisis Outer Model

Designing a Structural Model (Inner Model)

1. Validity Test

Outer loading is one of the ideas used in the PLS (Partial Least Squares) path analysis method. Indicators must have a loading factor value greater than or equal to 0.7, which indicates that the indicator can adequately explain the construct, according to Hair, et all (2017). After eliminating markers with values lower than 0.7, the final outer loading is obtained as follows:

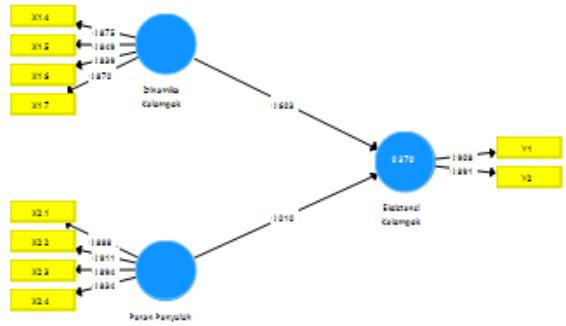

Figure 1. Innitial Model

The next step is to compare the AVE value with the correlation between constructs. A good AVE value is required to have a value greater than 0.5. The average value or AVE (Average Variance Extracted) in this study is contained in the table as follows:

Table 6. AVE Value

Construct	AVE	Description
X1	0,737	Valid
X2	0,778	Valid
Y	0,808	Valid

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Table 6 illustrates that the AVE value is more than 0.5, so the constructs in this research model can be said to have good discriminant validity. This aligns with what Yamin & Kurniawan (2011) explains: the recommended result is that the AVE root value must be higher than the correlation between constructs.

2. Reliability Test

The following is the composite reliability value obtained in this study, which can be seen in the following table:

Table 7. Reliability Test

Construct	***Cronbach'S Alpha***	***Composite Reliability***	**Description**
X1	0,881	0.918	Reliable
X2	0,905	0.933	Reliable
Y	0,763	0.894	Reliable

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Composite reliability is considered superior for determining a construct's internal consistency. Data with a composite reliability of >0,7

indicate high dependability (Ananda et al., 2015). Table 6 shows that all constructs on composite reliability already have good reliability because they have reached a value > 0,7.

3. Collinearity Statistic: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

The collinearity statistical test will consider no restrictions or multicollinearity problems if the inner VIF value is less than 5 (Algifari & Rahardja, 2020). The table below states the results of the collinearity statistics (VIF) test:

Table 8. Collinearity Statistic: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Variable Relationship	Nilai *Inner* VIF
Group Dynamic (X1) → Group Existence (Y)	1,504
The role of extension workers (X2) → Group Existence (Y)	1,504

Source: Primary Data, 2023

The table shows that the relationship between group dynamics and group existence is 1.524, and the relationship between the role of extension workers and group existence is 1.524. From the data obtained, the results of the statistical collinearity test stated that there were no obstacles or multicollinearity problems because all variable relationships had an inner VIF value <5.

Inner Model Analysis

The inner model (structural model) is tested after the realised outer model has been tested. The inner model can be refined using the r-square and Goodness of Fit. Since the R2 value is 0.370, the impact of the model on this study is low. An analysis of variance (R2) or determination test is used to measure the extent of the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

The next step was to check the Goodness of Fit (GoF) value, which was determined manually using the Tenenhaus (2004) formula. The calculation results show that the GoF value is 0.535. That way, after obtaining a GoF value of 0.548 in this study, the GoF value is at a large GoF, so it can be concluded that the model used in this study is feasible because it meets the criteria for model feasibility.

1. Significant Test

Significant tests are carried out using the bootstrapping test, which aims to prove whether or not exogenous variables are significant to endogenous variables. The path coefficient value explains the level of significance in hypothesis testing. The output results of this study contained in the path coefficient can be seen in the following table:

Table 9. Output Result

Variable	*Original Sample*	*Sample Mean*	*Standard Deviation*	P *Values*	Description
X1→Y	0.603	0.615	0.097	**0,000	Significant
X2→Y	0.010	0.003	0.116	0.930	Not Significant

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Note:

**: The p-value is significant at α 0.01

* : The p-value has a significant effect on α 0.05

So, the parametric equation from the analysis results that have been obtained in this study is as follows:

Y = 0,603 X1 + 0,010 X2 + e

Note:

Y : Group existence

X1 : Group dynamic

X2 : The role of extension workers

β1– β2 : Factor regression coefficient X 1 - X 2

β1X1 : Effect of Group Dynamics

β2X2 : Effect of Role of Extension Workers

e : error

The equation above explains that β1X1, the regression coefficient of group dynamics on the existence of farmer groups of 0.629, states that group dynamics have a positive effect on the existence of farmer groups, so the higher the group dynamics, the more likely the group exists, and β2X2, the regression coefficient of the role of extension workers on the existence of farmer groups of 0.005 states that the role of extension workers has a significant effect on the existence of farmer groups.

2. Hypothesis Test

1. Group dynamics have a significant effect on group existence

The effect of group dynamics on existence is a partial test of the effect of group dynamics on existence. This test is conducted to determine the role of the group dynamics variable as a connecting variable. Based on the output table shows that group dynamics and group existence have a positive effect with a calculated p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, while the original sample value is 0.603. Therefore, group dynamics significantly and positively affect group existence.

Group dynamics can improve group existence when farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka District, are very dynamic in

running the group. The group can be said to be dynamic because in carrying out activities to achieve group goals, it runs effectively and efficiently.

The results are consistent with Eluama's (2021). A sense of comfort, friendship, interaction with other groups, inventiveness, creativity, and respect for the management of other farmers who voluntarily join the group and members are factors that support the existence of farmer groups that contribute to the dynamics of the Abdi Laboratus farmer group. Wahyuni et al. (2017) studied group dynamics, specifically clarity of purpose, group functions, and a conducive atmosphere within the group, which influence farmers' ability to cultivate and market organic rice more than communication networks. compared to communication networks, with group dynamics (about goal clarity, group function, and supportive environment).

2. The role of extension workers does not have a significant effect on the existence of groups

The test of the effect of the role of extension workers on existence is a partial test of the effect of the role of extension workers on existence. This test is conducted to determine the role of the extension agent variable as a connecting variable. Based on the output table shows that the role of extension workers and group existence have a positive effect. With the original sample value of (0.010), the p-value is 0.930, greater than 0.05. This proves that the role of extension workers does not significantly affect group existence. This proves that the role of extension workers has no significant effect on group existence.

This shows that the role of extension workers carrying out their duties has no significant effect on the group's existence. some indications make the role of agricultural extension officers have no effect, namely the delivery of material provided by agricultural extension officers, sometimes not by what is needed in-group members, for activities or competition activities. So on, extension officers do not play a direct role in farmer group activities outside even though they supervise farmer groups doing it independently without involving extension officers, and even though agricultural extension officers have carried out their role well, group members have not maximised what has been conveyed by extension officers in carrying out their business activities.

This result does not follow the research of Defika and Effendi (2021). This study found a one-way relationship between farmer groups' institutional performance and the involvement of field agricultural extension workers in Bandar Lampung. The institutional performance of farmer groups in adopting RMU use increases with the role of extension workers, and this result is consistent with the findings of Gustika et al. (2020), which showed that the role of extension workers did not significantly influence the performance of forest farmer groups. However, the performance of forest farmer groups is still below standard. This is due to the lack of understanding of forest farmer group

members on managing forest farmer group activities and the lack of enthusiasm and awareness of forest farmer group members to carry out forest farmer group activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the results of the research conducted, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The dynamics of farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka Sub-district, are in the very dynamic category.
2. The role of agricultural extension workers in farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka District, is a very high category.
3. The existence of farmer groups in Cempaka Permai Village, Gading Cempaka District, is in the very high category.
4. The dynamics of farmer groups affect their existence, while the role of agricultural extension workers has no significant effect on it.

Policy Implication

The research findings highlight the interplay between internal group dynamics and external support in fostering farmer groups' success and continued existence. Policy interventions should emphasise two key areas: (1) Leadership Development and Member Engagement. Policies should promote programs that equip farmer group leaders with the skills to manage their groups effectively. This includes training on communicating the group's vision and mission, facilitating open communication and collaboration, and delegating tasks to empower members. A more engaged and informed membership fosters a stronger sense of purpose and shared responsibility, ultimately enhancing group dynamics. (2) Optimizing Extension Services: Current extension service delivery might require re-evaluation. Policies should encourage a collaborative approach where extension officers work with groups to tailor services to their specific needs and existing dynamics. Training officers to adopt a facilitative role, partnering with strong groups for knowledge sharing, and conducting needs assessments can ensure targeted service delivery that addresses each group's unique challenges and growth areas. Focusing on internal and external support mechanisms, these policy implications aim to strengthen farmer groups, leading to improved livelihoods for individual farmers and a more robust agricultural sector.

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