

**MEMBER PERCEPTION OF CASSAVA FARMER GROUP
PERFORMANCE IN SUNGAI BULUH UTARA VILLAGE,
BATANG ANAI DISTRICT, PADANG PARIAMAN REGENCY**

*Persepsi Anggota terhadap Kinerja Kelompok Tani Ubi Kayu di Desa
Sungai Buluh Utara Kecamatan Batang Anai Kabupaten Padang
Pariaman*

Muhammad Iqbal¹⁾; Nyayu Neti Arianti²⁾✉; M. Zulkarnain Yuliarso³⁾
*^{1),2),3)}Department Socio Economic of Agriculture, Faculty of Agriculture,
University of Bengkulu, Bengkulu, Indonesia
Email: nnarianti@unib.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted from January to February 2022 in Buluh Utara Village, Batang Anai District, Padang Pariaman Regency. The aim was to analyze members' perceptions of the performance of cassava farmer group. The number of farmer group members in Sungai Buluh Utara Village is 119 cassava farmers who are from four farmer group, namely the Women Farmer Group (Kelompok Wanita Tani, KWT) of Kampung Apar, Kampung Apar, Maju Sepakat and Harapan Baru. The number of respondents was 54 people obtained by the Slovin formula and taken proportionally from each farmer group. The performance of farmer group assessed by members includes the role or function of farmer group as Learning Classes, Cooperation Forums and Production Units. Farmers' perceptions of the performance of farmer group were measured using a Likert scale and then grouped into three categories namely Not Good, Quite Good and Good. The results showed that most of the members (61.11%) gave the perception that the performance of the cassava farmer group as a Learning Class was in the good category, while for the Cooperation Forum r the majority (74.08) of the members rated it was less good and for the role as a Production Unit is also viewed as unfavorable by as many as 66.67% of members.

Keyword: *cassava, farmer group, members' perception, performance*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilakukan pada bulan Januari hingga Februari 2022 di Desa Buluh Utara Kecamatan Batang Anai Kabupaten Padang Pariaman bertujuan untuk menganalisis persepsi atau penilaian anggota terhadap kinerja kelompok tani ubi kayu. Jumlah anggota kelompok tani di Desa Sungai Buluh Utara adalah 119 petani ubi kayu yang tergabung dari empat kelompok tani, yaitu Kelompok Wanita Tani (KWT) Kampung Apar, Kampung Apar, Maju Sepakat dan Harapan Baru. Jumlah responden sebanyak 54 orang diperoleh dengan rumus Slovin dan diambil secara proporsional dari masing-masing kelompok tani. Kinerja kelompok tani yang dinilai oleh anggota meliputi peran atau fungsi kelompok tani sebagai Kelas Belajar, Wahana Kerjasama dan Unit Produksi. Persepsi petani terhadap kinerja kelompok tani diukur dengan skala likert dan kemudian dikelompokkan menjadi menjadi tiga kategori yaitu Tidak Baik, Kurang Baik dan Baik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar anggota (61,11%) memberikan persepsi bahwa kinerja kelompok tani ubi kayu sebagai Kelas Belajar termasuk kategori baik, sementara untuk Wahana Kerjasama sebagian besar (74,08) anggota menilai kurang baik dan untuk peran sebagai Unit Produksi juga dipandang kurang baik juga oleh sebanyak 66,67% anggota.

Kata kunci: *kelompok tani, kinerja, persepsi anggota, ubi kayu*

INTRODUCTION

Cassava is an important agricultural commodity in Indonesia because it has a role as food, animal feed, and industrial raw material. The important position of cassava ranks sixth after rice, corn, soybeans, peanuts, and green beans. Productivity development over the last five years tends to increase by 3.23%. The development of harvested area over the last five years has tended to decrease more, namely 9.40% per year. The development of harvested area in the last 7 years and the development of production in the last five years have decreased. The prediction of productivity increasing every year cannot boost production higher than the use of cassava in Indonesia every year, so it is predicted that over the next five years (2020-2024) there will be a deficit of 5.43 million tons per year (Pusat Data dan Sistem Informasi Pertanian, 2020).

According to Hermanto (2015), Indonesia is the second largest producer of cassava after Thailand. It is just that Indonesian cassava is consumed more domestically. In the future, Indonesia has the opportunity to develop cassava production, including processed products and their derivatives, so that it becomes one of the local foods that can be used as a cassava-based agricultural industry. Indonesia's cassava production in 2018 was 19,341,233 tons with a productivity of 243.91 tons/hectare.

West Sumatra Province is one of the cassava producing provinces in Indonesia. In 2020 the cassava harvested area in West Sumatra was 3,626.30 hectares with a production of 154,728.76 tons (Badan Pusat Statistik Sumatera

Barat, 2020). Padang Pariaman is one of the cassava production centers in the province of West Sumatra which is used as a basic ingredient for making *Sanjai* and *Balado* chips. In 2020 cassava production in Padang Pariaman Regency is 7,506.79 tons with an average production of 27.30 tons/hectare.

The strategy to increase farmers' income and improve farmers' welfare is to form a farmer organization, namely farmer group in each village to encourage cooperation between farmers and farmers with extension workers. Maulana (2019) stated that the government's efforts to establish farmer independence include forming farmer group in rural areas. This effort is carried out by the government together with the farmers themselves.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia (1997) in Mustanir et al. (2019) farmer group are a group of farmers who grow because of familiarity and harmony and have the same interest in the utilization of agricultural resources to increase the productivity of joint ventures. Salim et al. (2021) added that farmer group are essentially a vehicle in the teaching and learning process, a collaboration forum, and production unit for its members. Noviani et al. (2021) also stated that through farmer group, farmers can meet the production inputs, technical production and product marketing. Therefore farmer group need to be fostered, evaluated and empowered their roles optimally

The performance of farmer group provides an overview of cooperation between farmers as members to solve problems encountered in farming. Thus the results of the work to be realized can be achieved (Irawati & Yantu, 2015). Currently, it is recognized that farmer organizations (farmer group) in Indonesia are still not as expected. Therefore, social institutions among farmers such as farmer groups are one of the factors that are prioritized efforts to increase farming productivity (Firdaus & Suharyon, 2019). In addition, according to Fahmariza et al. (2021), besides as a priority for improving farming performance, farmer group is also one of the efforts to improve the farmer households life quality.

Strong farmer institutions will produce the desired output such as an increase in farm production. For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate whether the role or function of farmer group is running well. Faqih (2015) also said that the ongoing role of farmer group is one of the implications of members' assessment farmer group performance. For this reason, the perception of members is needed to know whether the farmer group has carried out this role or function.

Assessment of the performance of an institution including farmer group should be carried out consistently to become the basis for future improvements. Syamsinar et al. (2018) stated that a person's judgment or perception of his group is also related to the decision-making process in the group. According to Kusumadinata et al. (2020) farmers' perceptions emerge through a long process of cognition. This process is influenced by the interests and relative advantages

that will be obtained by farmers. Therefore, according to Tallam (2018), understanding group performance is an important issue among researchers and development actors who work with farmer group. The performance of farmer group can be assessed from the perspective of farmers as members who are involved in it.

Based on the background, the main objective of this study was to explore members' perceptions of the performance of cassava farmer group in Sungai Buluh Utara Village, Batang Anai District, Padang Pariaman Regency. This study aims to comprehensively analyze and understand the perspectives of these members, highlighting various aspects related to group performance which includes its role as a Learning Class, a Cooperation Forum, and a Production Unit.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in Sungai Buluh Utara Village, Batang Anai District, Padang Pariaman Regency from January to February 2022. The research respondents were members of a cassava farmer group in Sungai Buluh Utara Village. The total population of farmer group members in Sungai Buluh Utara Village is 119 farmers from four farmer group. The number of respondents is 54 people obtained by the Slovin formula. Respondents were taken proportionally and randomly from the four farmer groups in Table 1.

Tabel 1. Number of Farmer Group Members in Sungai Buluh Utara Village, Batang Anai District, Padang Pariaman Regenc

No.	Farmer Group		Population (People)	Respondent (People)
1	KWT	Kampung	27	12
	Apar			
2	Kampung Apar		41	19
3	Maju Sepakat		21	9
4	Harapan Baru		30	14
Total			119	54

Source : Desa Sungai Buluh Utara Profile, 2022.

Analysis of Member Perceptions of Farmer Group Performance

The performance of farmer group assessed included three roles of farmer group namely as a Learning Class, a Cooperation Forum, and a Production Unit. Member perceptions are measured using a Likert scale. For each answer choice given a score, the respondent must describe and support the statement. Then the indicators of each of these roles are used as a benchmark for compiling terminal statements that are measured by an answer scale, namely: 5 (Strongly Agree), 4

(Agree), 3 (Neutral), 2 (Disagree), and 1 (Strongly Disagree). Furthermore, the research results were analyzed descriptively.

Then the performance of farmer group was classified into three perception categories, namely Good, Less Good, and Not Good. The performance interval registration is determined by the following formula:

$$\text{Class Interval} = \frac{\text{Total Value Range}}{\text{Number of Category}}$$

Where :

Total Value Range : Maximum Total Value – Minimum Total Value
 Maximum Total Value : Number of statements x Highest score
 Minimum Total Value : Number of statements x Lowest score
 Number of Category : The desired number of categories (three categories)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

The characteristics of the respondents include the internal and external attributes of the respondents. On the one hand, intrinsic qualities such as age, gender, educational level, and experience and occupation describe an overall understanding of the individuality of respondents. Meanwhile for external conditions, such as socio-economic conditions, cultural influences, and environmental context, will add to the depth of the respondent's characterization. Characteristics determine the perspective of respondents, and have relevance to research results. The characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

The percentage of female farmer respondents was 22.22 percent. They are members of the Kampung Apar Female's Farmer Group (*Kelompok Wanita Tani, KWT*), which consists of women farmers. The remainder were male farmer respondents who represented members of the farmer groups namely Kampung Apar, Maju Sepakat and Harapan Baru.

Age is a unit of time that measures how long an object or creature has been in the world while it was still alive. Age for living things is divided into toddlers, teenagers, adults/productive and elderly/non-productive. Cassava farmers in Sungai Buluh Utara Village are included in the productive farmer with an average of 55.90 years. The Badan Pusat Statistik (2023) categorizes age group into: 1) productive age, namely between 15 and 64 years, and 2) non-productive age population, namely less than 15 years and more than 64 years. Most of the members (68.51%) are aged 44 to 62 years. According to Guntoro et al. (2014)

and Irham et al. (2020), productive age farmers have greater curiosity and higher interest in adopting a technology. Farmers whose productive age are also very enthusiastic about innovation.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

No	Characteristics	Amount (People)	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender		
	Male	12	22.22
	Female	42	77.78
2.	Age (Year)		
	25-43	6	11.11
	44-62	37	68.51
	63-80	11	20.38
3.	Formal Education (Year)		
	6-11	38	70.37
	12-16	16	29.63
4.	Farming Experience (Year)		
	1-5	4	7.41
	6-10	31	57.41
	11-15	19	35.18
5.	Number of Family Dependents (Person)		
	0-3	12	22.22
	4-7	42	77.78
6.	Land Area (Hectare)		
	0,3	11	20.37
	0,4	20	37.03
	0,5	23	42.60

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2022

The low level of education occurs due to past low economic conditions that do not support higher education (9 years average). Prasada & Masyhuri (2020) said that farmer education is the last level of formal education taken by farmers. Formal education indirectly influences farmers in absorbing information and modern agricultural technology. This is related to how the development of farmer activities in order to obtain a better level of farming education, so that if the farmer's formal education is high then the development of farming will be better and easily affect the level of income of farmers. Rokhani et al. (2021) also said that education of farmers have a positive effect on participation affect the participation of farmer group.

According to Habib (2015) the progress of farming is influenced by education. Education is closely related to the ability of farmers to study and absorb any useful information and technology to advance the agricultural sector. The results of Nurulfahmi and Maria's research (2020) also showed that farmers

with higher levels of education tend to have better participation in the farmer card program. The thinking of highly educated farmers is better and more advanced than farmers with lower one.

The average of farming for cassava farmers experience is 9.81 years. Farming success is not only supported by formal education, but also supported by various elements, especially farming experience. The more often these farmers cultivate crops, it will help in obtaining lessons on how to increase agricultural production. The trick is to compare the results obtained from the previous planting season, so that it can assist farmers in making decisions for the next season period.

Ilyas (2012) said that farming experience is one of the determining factors for the success of a farming business. The longer the farming experience, the more lessons can be learned, to minimize failures that can hinder a farming business. Usually, the longer a farmer does farming, the more it minimizes failure in farming. Farmer group are a place to empower farmers. Mutmainah and Sumardjo (2014) state that age and education level as personal factors of farmers are positively related to the process of empowering farmers. The higher the age and education level of the farmer, the stronger the empowerment process will be. While the experience of farming shows a negative relationship. The more experience the farmer has, the less agricultural extension officers provide assistance.

The average number of family dependents is four people. The number of family dependents affects the household needs of farmers. Household income spent on family dependents is to pay for school and daily living expenses. Sungai Buluh Utara Village has a different number of dependents. The number of family dependents can be seen from the number of family members who live with the farmer's family. On the other hand, the more family members who devote their time to work, the more household income will increase and contribute to the household. The existence of productive age family members can reduce labor costs in farming.

The area of agricultural land is one of the main resources in agricultural business. Land area is suitable land for cassava farming. The wider the farming area, the higher the production. The average land area of cassava farmers in Sungai Buluh Utara Village is 0.42 Ha. The status of land tenure is 100% as cultivator owners. Land tenure status is self-owned which is obtained by buying or from inheritance. Farmers who own land carry out farming management independently. Farm production results will also be fully obtained by farmers.

The cassava farmer group in Sungai Buluh Utara Village is a forum for agricultural extension activities. Agricultural extension is a very important activity and is a form of teaching/training/enthusiasm that extension workers can provide to farmers. Extension activities in farmer group are usually held one to two times a month. Farmer group activities are generally filled with

discussions about the problems faced by farmers as well as solutions to solve these problems. Farmers' groups are non-profit-oriented organizations as a platform for the government to provide subsidies to farmers and conduct counseling (Hanggana et al., 2022).

The reasons for the farmers to join farmer group are as a place to learn from each other about agriculture, strengthen friendship, a place to exchange information, help each other and cooperate and can develop a high sense of solidarity with fellow members of farmer group. So that it is expected to increase the productivity of farming which leads to increased income. According to Putra et al. (2023) the better the role of farmer group, the higher the innovation applied by farmers in their farming. High innovation affects the increase in farming results.

Places for extension activities are usually at the village hall, the residence of the farmer group leaders, and sporadically even at the local coffee shop. However, this conventional approach does not have a definite time frame in which farmers can engage with extension agents. The novelty in this context lies in the existence of unlimited interactions, namely farmers have the freedom to gather with extension workers comfortably, not limited by space and time. This flexibility makes it easier for farmers to approach extension workers, facilitating dialogue, questions and the exchange of ideas. This will encourage agricultural insight to flow freely and easily.

Thus, as stated by Riani et al. (2021), farmer groups serve as an important organizational structure facilitating collaboration and collective cooperation among their members. The strength of farmer group lies in their ability to bring individuals who have the same interests and goals related to agriculture. By working collectively, these groups not only discuss daily agricultural activities but also address challenges and problems that arise in agriculture. Farmer group members can pool their knowledge, resources and efforts to improve skills.

In the midst of these developments, a prominent view emerged from cassava farmers who chose not to participate in existing farmer groups. The rationale is the limit on the number of membership in farmer groups. This encourages other farmers to form new farmer groups with a predetermined number of members. This situation shows the cohesion of farmer groups with the effective utilization of resources in cassava cultivation activities.

Images serve as a valuable visual tool for communicating research findings. Figure 1. illustrates members' perceptions of the important role played by cassava farmer groups in Sungai Buluh Utara Village.

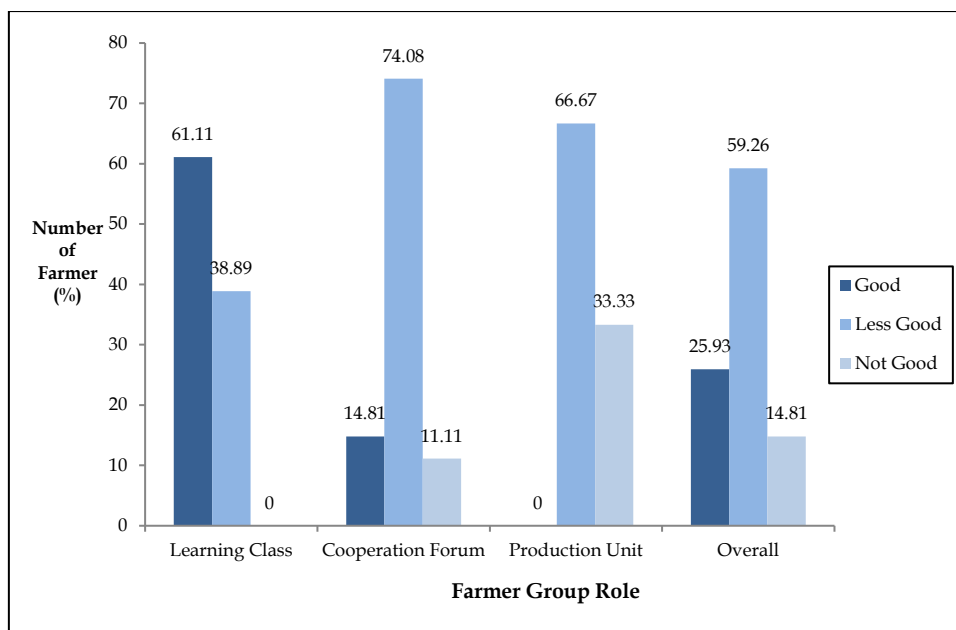


Figure 1.
Member Perception of the Cassava Farmer Group Roles

Farmers' assessment includes three roles or functions of farmer group, namely as a Learning Class, a Cooperation Forum and a Production Unit. The results showed that the majority of farmers (61.11%) stated that the function of farmer group as a Learning Class was good. Meanwhile, its function as a Cooperation Forum and Production Unit is still considered less good by most members of farmer group. So that the overall performance of the farmer group was still considered less good which was stated by 59.26% of farmers, 25.93% said it was good and the rest (14.81%) rated it not good.

The role of farmer group as Learning Class was assessed by farmer group members as good (61.11%). On average, group members agreed to the statements regarding indicators of farmer group as Learning Class, namely regarding the consistency of meeting routines, suitability of fields mastered by resource persons, suitability of extension materials to needs, opportunities for members to share knowledge and experiences, opportunities to exchange thoughts (discussion) and motivating by the chairman to members so that members feel comfortable. However, for the indicator statement that farmer groups hold training to improve skills and independence, members generally answered neutrally.

Meanwhile, regarding the role as a Cooperation Forum, the majority of members assess that farmer group is still less good (74.08%). On average, members agree with the indicator statements regarding the division of tasks in farmer group activities, the existence of regular financial contributions by

members, and the creation of an atmosphere of openness in opinions. Farmer group members, on average, answered Neutral for the statements: there is making rules within the farmer group, cooperation with other farmer group, setting rules for members, and mutual assistance activities between members when they need help. Members did not agree that farmer group should be a forum for cooperation in cassava cultivation activities, because farmers do their own cultivation, and if they need additional labor from outside the family, they provide wages.

The role of the farmer group as a Production Unit was stated less good by the majority of members (66.67%). This can be seen from members' responses to indicator statements about the role of farmer groups as Production Unit. On average, members stated that they did not agree if farmer group said to: facilitates members to apply the latest technology, helps increase household food crop production, has product processing activities, provides capital for business development and has productive economic activity units. The other two statements were answered neutrally by members on average. The two statements are that farmer group provides equipment/facilities for cultivation activities and farmer group makes it easy for members to obtain production facilities. There were no statements answered Agree or Strongly Agree by farmer group members.

Farmer Group as a Learning Class

As stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture number 82 of 2013, farmer groups function as dynamic forums designed to encourage a continuous teaching and learning process for their members. Farmer groups as educational forums aim to increase knowledge, hone skills in doing farming. Thus farmer groups as Learning Classes became an important means of increasing the productivity of farming as a whole. Increased productivity is a way to increase income for members as well as improve the welfare of farming households.

The performance of farmer group in the function as a Learning Class stated that the majority of farmers (61.11%) were in the good category. Farmers assess that farmer group have functioned well as a forum for increasing knowledge and skills. Massimi et al. (2021) also confirmed that agricultural extension is an informal education system and a continuous process based on the needs and problems of farmers. Agricultural extension activities are carried out by agricultural extension officers in collaboration with related institutions. The results to be achieved are increased knowledge and skills, also changes in attitudes and behavior, not only for farmers but also for their families.

Every meeting of the cassava farmer group in Sungai Buluh Village was carried out and attended by members and administrators of the farmer group. The group leader and administrators always remind members that farmer group

act as a learning class, namely a place to solve problems encountered in farming and can obtain assistance for farming needs so that members can be motivated. Management and members always consult and exchange ideas to find the best solution to the problems they face. Group meetings function as a space, both socially and collectively material as well as cognitive - for farmers meet each other. Meetings are not just a place for introductions, but for discussions. interactions between members of farmer group are shown by the intensity of good communication between members and administrators. So members can learn from each other together so that the group functions as a learning class (Hanan (2015); Thomas et al. (2020)).

Based on the opinion of Desyanty (2018), farmer group as non-formal educational institutions carry out several activities to improve the abilities of their members, namely holding regular member meetings, accompanying members and working with partners. Farmers realize that their participation in farmer group provides benefits, including being able to solve problems together when problems cannot be solved alone.

Gani and Robandi (2022) stated, in farmer group, the learning process that is commonly applied is by sharing problems with fellow farmers (sharing problems). On the other hand, farmers also share experiences with fellow farmers regarding problem solving or solutions (sharing solutions). Therefore the presence of extension workers is very helpful for farmer group in the learning process of farmers. Extension agents will design learning methods so that the transfer of knowledge and skills is easy between farmers.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings presented by Hidayat et al. (2021) which showed a performance level of 86% in the function of farmer groups as a Learning Class, is included in the "good" category. This observation is in line with the results of the current study, where farmer group have effectively fulfilled their role as Learning Class. Members view the implementation of this learning-oriented approach as having improved the performance of farmer group. The results of this research are in line with the positive impact of applying the Learning Class model in the context of farmer group. This potential role as a Learning Class has contributed positively to achieve the effectiveness of farmer group.

Listiana et al. (2021) also stated the existence of farmer group makes it easier for extension agents to introduce various innovations and new agricultural technologies in order to maximize farming performance. However, it is different from the research findings of Effendy and Apriani (2018) where the Learning Class is the weak indicator for increasing members' views on the function of farmer group. Therefore, the function of farmer group as a Learning Class must be considered in delivering counseling material. Thus, special attention is needed on the function of farmer group as Learning Class, especially when delivering material by extension agents. Extension agents must understand the

dynamics and specific needs of members in order to apply the approach effectively to members. The findings from these different studies indicate that identifying the needs of farmers is a challenge for the Learning Class program in farmer group.

Farmer Group as a Cooperation Forum

The essence of cooperation or collaboration in farmer group is stated in the Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture no. 82 of 2013. This regulation directs the role of farmer groups in building synergy between members and between farmer group and other parties outside. Through this cooperation forum, farmer group can improve the capabilities and the capacity of members to solve problems together. This collaborative principle also allows farmer group to establish relationships with local authorities, institutions and markets, as well as establish partnerships with parties that support the capabilities and strengths of farmer group.

Most farmers (74.08%) have a less good perception of the role of farmer group as a vehicle for cooperation and only 14.81% think it is good. The independence of farmers in terms of providing business capital means that members of farmer group do not cooperate with each other when they need help. Another reason is the lack of confidence in members in expressing opinions which is partly due to low education, so that members are less open to each other. Farmer group do not cooperate with funding or capital providers, because the funds owned by the group come from contributions from group members. This fee is paid by members every month. The role of farmer groups as a vehicle for cooperation is not good because the members do not help one another. Another reason is the members are not open to each other about the problems they face. Whereas according to Bakhtiar et al. (2020) farmer groups are non-formal organizations that grow and develop with democratic principles (from, by and for members). However, the functions, duties, authorities and responsibilities of each member are determined jointly to achieve the goals of the farmer group.

Elsiana et al. (2018), Pratama et al. (2016) and Banowati et al. (2020) argued that cooperation between group members will be established if there is mutual trust. Good cooperation within the group will make farmers think more forward and be able to solve the problems they face. Farmers already know and trust each other, this is because most group farmers live in the same environment and village, this of course makes it easier for farmers to work together. The cooperation carried out by these farmers is also based on the same conditions, namely to be able to increase the yields of oil palm they have which can later increase the income of the farmers themselves. Cooperation or collaboration between farmers facilitated by farmer group is needed to overcome various problems faced by individual farmers that are difficult to solve. Farmers are still weak in determining production prices because it is difficult to access market

information. Farmer groups become strong if they establish cooperation or partnerships with the private sector/outside business in an established manner and there is mutual dependence.

Farmer Group as a Production Unit

Rahmadanih et al. (2018) increasing farming production can be done by maximizing the role of farmer group. The role in question is the role of farmer group as a Production Unit. The role of farmer group as Production Unit, based on Minister of Agriculture Regulation no. 82 of 2013, The collaborative efforts of individual farmer group members must be embraced as a holistic business entity. Collective production units within farmer groups have the potential to expand economies of scale, offering advantages in various dimensions, both quantity, quality and continuity. Farmer groups as a business entity allow for the aggregation of production efforts. This consolidation makes it possible to purchase resources in bulk, driving efficiency. In addition, consolidated production can increase the bargaining power of farmers.

Assessment of the performance of farmer groups in their role as Production Units resulted in the majority of cassava farmers surveyed (66.67%) giving unfavorable ratings. Some others have a bad perception. None of the cassava farmers gave a positive (good) evaluation. Farmer group as a Production Unit have not fully worked well and helped cassava farmers, because farmer group have only facilitated the provision of production inputs from the Department of Agriculture, which are limited in number. Farmer group have not been able to develop their own fulfillment of production facilities for the benefit of their members. Farmer group still lack a role in terms of providing equipment or facilities to help carry out activities, ease of obtaining production facilities (seeds, fertilizer, etc.), application of the latest technology for group members, agricultural product processing activities, increase production of household food crops, financial capital assistance to develop businesses and as a unit of productive economic activity.

These findings underscore the need for further evaluation and review to correct deficiencies and increase the effectiveness of the role of farmer groups as Production Units. Even though the results of research by Saudale and Muis (2020), show that being a member of a farmer group can make it easier for farmers to obtain assistance from the government. Assistance from the government can be obtained if farmers become members of farmer group.

Cassava farmers in Sungai Buluh Utara Village are generally not aware of farmer group activity programs. This happens because the farmers rarely attend meetings, as well as the lack of communication between administrators and members. Farmer group are also less active in creating cooperation with other parties in terms of product marketing. After the harvesting activities are completed, most members of the farmer group sell their produce directly to

village collectors. The new farmer group runs a partnership with a supplier of seeds and agricultural equipment. However, not all group members get it due to a lack of information from the management to group members. Thus the role as a Production Unit is not optimally felt by the members. The cassava farmer group in Sungai Buluh Utara Village as a Production Unit should be able to assist farmers in running their farming business. However, farmer's work takes the mind and energy. According to Mwaura (2014) good management of farmer group forms a positive perception of the role of farmer group. Negative perceptions will reduce the enthusiasm and interest of farmers to join the group.

Nugroho et al. (2017) also stated that as a Production Unit, farmer group provide a function to help farmers carry out farming assessments to determine the scale of farming, capital needed, farming facilities, technology, marketing results, calculating risks in the production process to avoid losses. The group has an administrative record of farming. Good group administration records will help estimate farming for the next growing season, and production targets can be calculated precisely.

Rwelamira (2015) argued farmers face various challenges. In addition to serving consumer demand, modern farmers also emphasize the need for efficiency, consistency and reliability of farming. So farmers not only produce a commodity with the desired quantity, but also pay attention to quality and continuity. This requires optimizing the allocation of resources, process effectiveness, and the application of technologies that save costs but increase overall productivity.

Farmer groups generally do not have capital, skills and business assets, so they need empowerment, including managing the organization and collecting business assets and venture capital. Farmer group as a Production Unit is a business entity can be developed to achieve business economies of scale, by maintaining quantity, quality and continuity. Through this role, farmer group provides facilities to process the primary product into a product that has added value. Farmer group can also be marketing units which helps farmers market their products (Asa et al., 2021 & Tan & Mailena, 2021). Government intervention can serve as a catalyst for the development of farmer group by providing resources, expertise, and policy support that enhance their capabilities and contribute to the overall advancement of the agricultural sector.

The results of this study are in contrast to Farmia's statement (2021), where administrators and members of farmer groups collaboratively develop strategies, carry out initiatives, and collectively make decisions to encourage the growth of the agricultural business. The active participation of farmers is directed to increase the level of income.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The performance of farmer group includes their functions and roles as a Learning Class, a Cooperation Forum and a Production Unit. Most of the members (61.11%) gave the perception that the performance of the cassava farmer group as a Learning Class was good, while for the role as a Cooperation Forum the majority (74.08) of the members rated it as less good and their role as a Production Unit was also seen as less good too by 66.67% members. This means that most cassava farmers in Sungai Buluh Utara Village feel that farmer group is more useful as a Learning Class than as a Cooperation Forum or as a Production Unit. The performance of the three farmer group roles as a whole is assessed as less good by the majority of members of the cassava farmer group (59.26%), 25.93% stated good and the rest considered not good.

Suggestion

The performance of the cassava farmer group in Sungai Buluh Utara Village needs to be further improved, especially in its role as a Cooperation Forum and as a Production Unit. For the role as a Cooperation Forum, what is enhanced in farmer groups are the division of work tasks in activities, making cooperation rules with other farmer groups, helping each other cultivate cassava plants and openness in expressing opinions. Meanwhile, to increase its role as Production Units, farmer group is have to become a forum for farmers to gain access to production facilities (seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides), new farming technologies or innovations, capital, product processing and as a business group. Managers need to motivate all members to take an active part in farmer group activities, increase cohesiveness in order to create cooperation and distribute quality production facilities. So that group members can easily obtain them. Farmer group administrators and extention agents must be more active in establishing communication with members. In addition, government support is urgently needed to support these efforts.

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