

Ginger Farmer Empowerment by Agromakmur through PT. Jamu Air Mancur CSR Program

By

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Abstract

This research was conducted on ginger farmers living in Karangpandan District, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java, the district where Agromakmur is located, from October to November 2021. This qualitative research collected primary and secondary data by the sampling technique of Snowball sampling. The data were collected through interviews with local farmers. The findings indicate the farmers were aged 20 years old to 60s. Their educational background ranges from elementary school to university. The planting areas start from 200 m² to 4000 m². The farmers are willing to implement CSR programs. However, their productivity and the selling price remain low as most of the harvest is sold to wholesalers.

Keywords: Agromakmur, CSR, Empowerment, Ginger Farmers

Introduction

The production of biopharmaceutical plants that dominate Central Java province is ginger, followed by turmeric, cardamom, galangal, curcuma, aromatic ginger, and black curcuma. The largest production of ginger is in Karanganyar Regency, with 3.47 million kg. Around 240 people from four farmer groups have already grown ginger in 248.9 ha, producing 4,242.7 tons, and its average productivity is 17.04 tons/ha¹.

However, they experienced a decrease in the planting area, from 1 ha to 0.2 ha. This occurs because the ginger selling price of IDR6,000/kg and Rp 3,000/kg during the main harvest. In addition to frequent attacks of plant rotting disease, there has been no formal agreement (MoU) between farmers and the herbal medicine company, so the traders often set the price. Also, there is no marketing division in farmer groups.

Agromakmur is an institution engaged in developing innovation and training organic agricultural engineering. It also produces organic fertilizer that helps increase the quality of ginger production. The role of the farmers with this kind of cooperation with PT. Jamu Air Mancur is to increase the bargaining position in which they have always been in a less profitable position by well implementing the CSR program. CSR is an approach contributing to sustainable development. It also delivers social, economic, and environmental benefits².

Herbalism as traditional medicine has a big opportunity since the market is wide open globally. If the government and the private sector empower the farmers by giving them access

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to sell their products directly to the herbal medicine companies, raw materials will no longer be a problem. Nevertheless, such empowerment has not been carried out through the program. All those existing problems need to be reviewed by ginger farmers around Agromakmur Karanganyar.

Literature Review

Implementing CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) practices in Indonesia still needs improvement. This is evident as there are differences in understanding of the CSR concept. Various CSR implementations still cover the scope, form of activities, and models. Also, diversity in groups of CSR beneficiaries becomes the CSR performer's target³.

Agromakmur is an institution engaged in developing innovation, training of organic agricultural engineering, and biofuel engineering. To date, Agromakmur has opened training for lecturers and teachers, employees approaching retirement age, high school/vocational high school students, internship delegates from companies and State-owned, appointed representatives by the directorate of the debriefing section of the National Armed Forces, as a training place for retirees and those who are undergoing a period of free duty for the ability of self-employed life.

Etymologically, “empowerment” derives from the word "empower" which means giving (someone) the authority or power to do something. This description implies that empowerment is a process of becoming empowered. It is to obtain or give strength, power, and ability from those who have power to those who are less or not empowered.

Empowerment refers to the personal and social process of liberation abilities, competencies, creativity, and freedom of action⁴. It suggested that empowerment deals with helping disadvantaged groups and individuals to effectively strive with other interests to allow them to learn, understand how to ‘work the system, and use it when lobbying in political action using the media⁵.

Empowerment fundamentally helps gain the power, strength, and ability to decide and act, including making personal and social obstacles less complex⁶. Those who have reached their collective goals are empowered through their freedom. To a greater degree, they believe it necessary to get more empowered by their efforts, knowledge, skills, and other resources to achieve their goals without depending on external relationships.

According to Ambar, community empowerment gives direction to individuals and communities to enhance their independence to think, act, and control what they do⁷.
Community

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independence is evident in the community's ability to think, decide, and do what is deemed appropriate to solve problems by using their ability. Empowerment refers to developing, becoming independent, self-supporting, and strengthening the lower class's bargaining position against oppressive forces in all fields and sectors of life⁸.

According to Ife and Tesoriero, empowerment must be related to power individually and in groups⁹. Primarily, empowerment emphasized the process of transferring power, strength, or ability to the community so that they become more empowered. Secondly, it punctuates stimulating, encouraging, or motivating one's ability to determine their life choices through a dialogue¹⁰.

Foy suggested that people empowerment is the effort to empower their voices to be heard as their contribution to the planning and decisions that affect the community¹¹. It is the effort to foster greater power and authority over the poor¹². Empowerment is related to power given to powerless people by those who have it¹³. There are two dimensions of power : distributive and generative¹⁴. The distributive dimension deals with the ability of a person or group to impose their will on others. The generative dimension underlines the actions enabling the social unit to enhance the ability to change their future carried out by their own choice.

Research Methodology

This research was carried out from October to November 2021 in Karanganyar Regency, purposively selected as it has the largest ginger production in Central Java, while Karangpandan district is where Agromakmur Institution is located. This research applied a qualitative approach supported by quantitative data with a case study research strategy. The qualitative approach was used because it provides an in-depth understanding of social reality in society, which is related to ginger farmers in Karangpandan District around Agromakmur.

According to Denzin and Lincoln, a qualitative approach emphasizes processes and meanings not rigorously tested or measured in testing variables related to quantity, intensity, or frequency¹⁵. The research focused on ginger farmers in Karangpandan sub-district around Agromakmur. We used secondary data from the Central Statistics Agency and primary data from farmers and stakeholders. Information is gathered from farmers living nearby who have been growing ginger for so long and dealing with its problems.

The sampling was performed by the snowball sampling technique, which is a sampling technique based on data source collection. The research recruited future subjects from their acquaintances. Thus the sample group grows like a rolling snowball. As the sample builds up,

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adequate data were gathered to be useful for research. Also, data were collected by interviews, observations, and document study, while data analysis occurred qualitatively during the process.

According to Miles and Huberman, qualitative data analysis is carried out interactively and continuously to the point where it is fully comprehended¹⁶. The major phases of data analysis are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.

Results and Discussion

The local farmers we interviewed were 30 men and two women. In ginger farming, most of the farmers are men, while the women help with light work, such as fertilizing and weeding. The heavy work is usually done by men, such as making mounds and harvesting. The farmers are aged 20 to 60 years old. This means that it can be done by the youth, or even the elderly, coming from different levels of education. Some of them are relatively new in this subject, but some others have been farmers for almost twenty years, implying that ginger farming has been around in Karangpandan for quite a long time. The size of the planting area should not be a big problem since the cultivating can be done from the smallest of 200 m² up to 4,000 m².

The farmers are willing to develop the CSR program of PT. Jamu Air Mancur. They are regularly assisted on-site either by Agromakmur or the company itself related to ginger cultivation standard operating procedures. This allows farmers to have a better chance to increase their income, ultimately getting a higher quality standard of living.

A good partnership established between ginger farmers and the company empowers the farmers since facilities and infrastructure are available in the district. Agricultural centers should not experience difficulties as long as there is assistance and it is relatively easier to access production facilities. Our interviews revealed that crop produced by a planting area of 1000 m² is still low, which only reaches 500 kg, while generally, it should reach 1000 kg. This can be increased through assistance and technology.

Production sales are mostly going to wholesalers because it is easier. However, the price is only around Rp 6,000/kg, which is very low. Compared to the market, the price reaches Rp 30,000/kg. Therefore, farmers get very little profit because of the relatively long harvest time, around 10 to 12 months. On the other hand, the wholesalers get more significant profits in a shorter time.

Agromakmur and PT. Jamu Air Mancur strives to help the farmer's productivity and marketing. They buy their crops so that the farmers can get more benefits. This is in line with Ambar, suggesting that the goal to be achieved from community empowerment is to shape individuals and communities to become independent¹⁷. This includes the independence of thinking, acting, and controlling in ginger farming.

Eko defined empowerment as the process of developing, self-reliant, self-supporting, and strengthening the bargaining position of the lower classes of society against oppressive forces in all fields and sectors of life¹⁸. Ginger farmers are expected to be independent, self-reliant, and have a strong bargaining position so that they can sell their crops at a price that benefits all parties.

¹⁸ Eko, 2002.

Conclusions

Our analysis underlined that the age of the farmers ranges from 20 years old to 60 years old. Their level of education varies from elementary school to college. The planting area starts from the smallest of 200 m². The farmers are willing to implement CSR programs as they are assisted regularly. The land productivity is still low of 5 tons/ha; in fact, it potentially can reach 10 tons/ha. Also, selling price from the farmers is relatively low (Rp 6,000/kg), while it reaches Rp 30.000/kg for the retailers. Most of the crops are only going to the wholesalers. The farmers must be regularly assisted by Agromakmur and PT. Jamu Air Mancur during the CSR program, to create such empowered resources and a better future for the industry.