



Enhancing the Institutional Capacity of Farmer Groups through Data Management and Administrative Counseling at the BPP of Bukit Kapur District, Dumai City

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Abstract. *Farmer group institutions play a strategic role in supporting agricultural development; however, many farmer groups still face limitations in data management and institutional administration. These limitations often hinder effective planning, accurate decision-making, transparency, and access to various agricultural development programs and partnerships. This Community Service Program (PKM) aims to enhance farmers' understanding and practical skills in data management and institutional administration through structured extension activities conducted at the Agricultural Extension Center (BPP) of Bukit Kapur Subdistrict, Dumai City. The methods applied include lectures to introduce basic concepts, interactive discussions to encourage knowledge exchange, and hands-on practice in preparing, organizing, and managing farmer group administrative records. A participatory approach was employed to actively involve participants throughout the program. The results indicate a significant improvement in participants' knowledge and skills related to farmer group administration, along with increased awareness of the importance of orderly and accountable administrative management. In addition, the program fostered a collective commitment to implementing sustainable and systematic record-keeping practices. Furthermore, the activities encouraged the emergence of local leadership and strengthened farmer group institutions as social capital, contributing to greater farmer independence, organizational resilience, and long-term welfare improvement.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector plays a strategic role in economic development and food security, particularly in rural areas and urban buffer zones. In the context of agricultural development, farmers constitute the primary human resources organized within farmer institutions known as farmer groups. Farmer groups function as learning forums, cooperation platforms, and production units that play an important role in enhancing farmers' capacities both individually and collectively (Ministry of Agriculture 2016). The existence of strong farmer group institutions is one of the key prerequisites for the success of sustainable agricultural development programs.

However, a major challenge in current agricultural development is the still low quality of farmers' human resources. Low farmer welfare is often caused by weak managerial capacity, low bargaining power, limited access to capital and information, low levels of education, and the dominance of elderly farmers (Risti 2022; Wuli 2023). These conditions have a direct impact on the weakness of farmer institutions, particularly in terms of organizational

management and administrative practices within farmer groups.

A study by Wibisono (2016) shows that the main problems in farmer institutions lie in weak organization and managerial capacity within farmer groups. This is reflected in suboptimal task distribution, low member participation, and poorly organized group administration. In fact, indicators of farmers' human resource capacity include institutional management, area management, and business management. Institutional management, in particular, requires complete and orderly group administration, such as membership data books, cash books, inventory books, meeting minutes, and records of farmer group activities (Azizah 2021).

These objective conditions are also found among farmer groups fostered by the Agricultural Extension Center (Balai Penyuluhan Pertanian/BPP) of Bukit Kapur District, Dumai City. Based on information from the Head of the Bukit Kapur District BPP, farmer groups formed during 2023–2024 still have limited knowledge and skills in managing group data and administrative records. Many farmer groups do not yet understand the types of administrative books that must be maintained or how to systematically and sustainably record data. These limitations have the potential to hinder the effectiveness of farmer groups in carrying out their institutional functions and accessing various government assistance programs and support.

Based on these conditions, strengthening the institutional capacity of farmer groups through improved data management and administration has become an important issue that requires attention. The selection of farmer groups in the Bukit Kapur District BPP area as the subjects of this community service activity is based on actual needs in the field, particularly among newly established farmer groups that still require intensive assistance. This Community Service Program (PKM) also represents the implementation of the university's tridharma, especially in transforming and disseminating applicable knowledge and technology to the community.

This PKM activity focuses on providing counseling on data management and farmer group administration through an educational and practical approach. The counseling methods used include lectures and hands-on practice in preparing farmer group administrative books. This approach is expected to directly enhance farmers' knowledge and skills. Managerial training for farmer groups has been proven to improve farmers' capacities and foster proactive attitudes among group members as social capital that contributes to collective welfare (Wibisono 2016).

Furthermore, capacity development of farmers through institutional strengthening can build collective capabilities that contribute to improved problem identification, independence in decision-making, and solidarity in addressing issues faced by farmer groups (Prasetyono 2019). Thus, this PKM activity is expected to encourage social change in the form of enhanced institutional capacity of farmer groups, improved administrative organization, and the realization of more independent, professional, and competitive farmer groups in Bukit Kapur District, Dumai City.

2. METHODS

This Community Service Program (PKM) was conducted at the Agricultural Extension Center (BPP) of Bukit Kapur District, Dumai City, on Thursday, 6 February 2025. The subjects of the program were farmer groups under the guidance of the Bukit Kapur District BPP, particularly those established in 2023–2024. The selection of these subjects was based on initial coordination with the BPP, which indicated that these farmer groups still had limitations in managing data and institutional administration. From the outset, the assisted subjects were actively involved through discussions and needs identification, ensuring that the PKM activities were designed according to the real problems faced by the farmer groups.

The activity planning process was carried out using a community organizing approach that emphasizes joint action planning between the PKM team and the farmer groups. This stage included coordination with the Head of the BPP, discussions with representatives of farmer groups, and agreement on the objectives and forms of community service activities. Community involvement in the planning stage aimed to foster a sense of ownership of the program and encourage active participation during implementation. The outcomes of this joint planning served as the basis for preparing counseling materials and methods relevant to the needs of the farmer groups.

The method used in this PKM activity was counseling, defined as a systematic process of delivering knowledge and skills so that they can be applied in practice. Counseling was conducted through a combination of lectures, interactive dialogue, and practical exercises. Lectures were used to convey basic concepts of data management and farmer group administration, while interactive dialogue was employed to explore participants' experiences, problems, and understanding. Practical exercises were implemented to train participants directly in preparing and completing farmer group administrative books, ensuring that participants not only understood the theory but also acquired applicable skills.

The implementation of the PKM activity was carried out through several stages: preparation, joint action planning, implementation, and evaluation. The preparation stage included problem identification, material preparation, and the provision of supporting facilities. The implementation stage involved counseling sessions and hands-on practice in preparing farmer group administrative books. Evaluation was conducted qualitatively through observation of participant involvement, assessment of practical outcomes, and reflective discussions to evaluate changes in participants' knowledge and skills. All stages of the activity were designed within a systematic planning and implementation framework, as illustrated in the PKM activity flowchart, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the institutional capacity of farmer groups at the Bukit Kapur District BPP.

3. RESULTS

The implementation of the Community Service Program (PKM) at the Agricultural Extension Center (BPP) of Bukit Kapur District was carried out in a participatory manner and demonstrated fairly active mentoring dynamics. The activity began with counseling on the importance of data management and administration in strengthening farmer group institutions. At this stage, participants showed high enthusiasm, particularly when the resource persons linked the material to real problems commonly faced by farmer groups, such as irregular records of membership, finances, and group activities. The initial discussion revealed that most participants had not yet developed an adequate understanding of the administrative function as a foundation for group planning and decision-making.

The range of activities implemented in this PKM included lectures, interactive dialogue, and hands-on practice. Through interactive dialogue, participants openly conveyed the obstacles they faced, such as limited knowledge of data recording, low administrative discipline, and minimal prior mentoring. This two-way interaction fostered a more egalitarian learning atmosphere, in which participants were not merely recipients of information but also active subjects who shared experiences and solutions.

The technical action carried out in this PKM activity took the form of practical exercises in preparing and completing farmer group administrative books, such as membership registers, meeting minutes books, cash books, and inventory books. At this stage, participants were directly trained to complete administrative formats according to the conditions of their respective groups. The results of the practice showed that participants began to be able to organize group administration more systematically and to understand the function of each administrative book in supporting the sustainability of farmer group institutions.

In addition to improvements in knowledge and skills, this PKM activity also led to initial behavioral changes among participants. Participants began to demonstrate awareness of the importance of orderly administration as part of institutional responsibility. This was reflected in the commitment of several farmer groups to assign specific officers to manage administration and in agreements to conduct routine record-keeping after the PKM activity concluded.

The expected social changes began to emerge through the appearance of new roles within farmer groups, particularly more active and initiative-taking administrators. Some participants with stronger literacy skills began to emerge as drivers or local leaders within their groups, especially in assisting other members to understand administrative record-keeping. This condition indicates the presence of a collective learning process with the potential to strengthen the social capital of farmer groups.

Overall, the results of the PKM activities indicate the emergence of new awareness among farmer groups regarding the importance of institutional strengthening through data management and administration. This awareness serves as an initial capital toward social transformation, in which farmer groups function not only as production units but also as orderly, independent organizations capable of supporting the improvement of their members' welfare.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this PKM activity indicate that strengthening the institutional capacity of farmer groups through counseling on data management and administration is a relevant strategy for addressing the problem of low quality of farmers' human resources. These findings are consistent with the view of the Ministry of Agriculture (2016), which emphasizes that farmer groups function as learning forums, cooperation platforms, and production units, and therefore require well-organized administrative systems to support their functions optimally.

The improvement in participants' understanding and skills after participating in the PKM activity reinforces the findings of Wibisono (2016), who stated that weak farmer institutions are often caused by low managerial and administrative capacities within farmer groups. Through counseling and hands-on practice, participants gained not only conceptual knowledge but also applicable skills that are essential prerequisites for strengthening farmer institutions.

The counseling approach used in this activity proved effective in encouraging participation and behavioral change among participants. This is in line with the opinion of Mardikanto & Pertiwi (2019), who argue that counseling is a communication process aimed at

enabling individuals or groups to make conscious and rational decisions. The interactive dialogue applied also aligns with the views of Van den Ban and Hawkins (1999) regarding the importance of two-way communication in adult learning processes.

The findings related to the emergence of local leaders within farmer groups indicate that the PKM activity had impacts not only on technical aspects but also on social aspects. This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of social capital, in which trust, cooperation, and local leadership are key factors in institutional sustainability (Coleman 1988). Strengthening the roles of administrators and active members has the potential to enhance cohesion and performance within farmer groups.

Initial behavioral changes in the form of commitment to administrative record-keeping reflect a process of internalization of organizational values. This supports the view of Prasetyono (2019), who stated that farmer capacity development can form collective abilities in identifying problems and making independent decisions. With orderly administration, farmer groups have a stronger foundation for planning and evaluating activities.

Theoretically, this PKM process demonstrates that institutional strengthening is part of community empowerment efforts. Empowerment does not focus solely on improving individual skills, but also on strengthening the social structures and systems that support community life (Freire, 1970). In this context, farmer group administration becomes an important instrument in building farmers' independence and empowerment.

The social transformation that has begun to emerge through this PKM activity is still at an early stage, but it has the potential for sustainability if supported by continued mentoring from extension officers and relevant stakeholders. Therefore, the results of this community service activity reinforce the importance of synergy between universities, BPPs, and farmer groups in building strong and competitive agricultural institutions.

5. CONCLUSION

The Community Service Program (PKM) conducted at the Agricultural Extension Center (BPP) of Bukit Kapur District, Dumai City, demonstrates that strengthening the institutional capacity of farmer groups through counseling on data management and administration is a strategic step in improving the quality of farmers' human resources. Theoretically, the results of this community service activity affirm that strong institutions are determined not only by production aspects but also by managerial capacity and orderly, systematic organizational governance.

Reflection on the service process indicates that a participatory counseling approach combined with interactive dialogue and hands-on practice is capable of enhancing farmer groups' knowledge, skills, and awareness regarding the importance of group administration. The changes observed are not only technical but also social in nature, marked by the growth of collective awareness, the emergence of local leadership roles, and a shared commitment to implementing orderly administration as part of farmer group organizational culture.

From a community empowerment perspective, this PKM activity demonstrates that learning processes that actively involve assisted subjects can encourage gradual social transformation. Well-organized data management and administration serve as an important foundation for farmer groups in enhancing accountability, strengthening internal trust, and opening access to various agricultural development programs and external resources.

Based on these results, it is recommended that institutional mentoring for farmer groups be carried out on a continuous basis through synergy between universities, Agricultural Extension Centers, and local governments. In addition, strengthening the role of extension officers as field facilitators is necessary to ensure the sustainability of group administrative practices. Thus, farmer groups are expected to develop into independent, professional, and competitive institutions in supporting sustainable agricultural development.

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