

Analyzing the Barriers to Salak Export in Indonesia: The Role of Government Support and Farmer Communication

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Abstract. This research discusses the government's lack of seriousness in improving the welfare of farmers and efforts to regenerate the farming profession from among young people. In doing so, the author found evidence to strengthen the argument, looking at the facts in the field through mixed research methods, interviews with representatives of farmers and the head of Pakem village, as well as by distributing surveys to agricultural students throughout Indonesia. The results show that farmers in Pakem village complain about the lack of attention paid to them, especially in terms of mentoring. The survey also showed that both young people who are interested or not interested in becoming farmers have the same stigma about farmers, namely, poor groups, slum work, and so forth.

1 Introduction

Indonesia has a familiar nickname as an agricultural country. The nickname is given to a country with fertile land, and produces many commodities. Indonesia's ownership of this fertile land is a privilege that will greatly impact Indonesia's future economy. This is because agriculture has often been touted as crucial in the economic development of most third world countries. Recent researches on the causes of development and underdevelopment have identified agriculture as key to the economic emancipation of ailing states. Especially when the agricultural sector is accompanied by various other sectors, such as education, health, and so on. A study of the role of agriculture in Nigeria shows that the agricultural sector there does not have a very significant impact, seeing that it is not accompanied by support or development from other sectors. [1] However, other sectors (education, health, etc.) cannot survive without the existence of the agricultural sector.

One commodity product that has a significant role among various other commodities is salak. The fruit with a layer of snake-like skin scales that has an apple-like texture has a profitable selling value and has an impact on the economic welfare of the community, especially in this case farmers. Looking at the South Tapanuli region, an area with a well-

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known salak commodity, shows that salak processing there is very necessary and has an impact on the welfare of the community there. [2]

Salak as a potential commodity does not get more attention from the government. Especially in terms of geographical indications. Geographical indication is a component that means a sign (indication) of the origin of a product produced and known from a region, examples of weaknesses in Indonesia's geographical indications include Indonesian salak which often gets claims from Thailand marketed to China. [3]. The research will also stand on the argument that the government is not serious in improving the welfare of farmers and in regenerating qualified farmers from among young people, where these two problems contribute to the basic problems of agriculture in Indonesia.

2 Literature Review

Indonesia is a country with a geographical bonus to produce various commodities, one example is the salak commodity which is known as a fruit that can grow in a tropical climate. However, a study shows that Indonesia does not use its geographical indication well in salak commodities, in the sense that Indonesia's geographical indication is still weak. Many salak commodities from Indonesia are actually known not from Indonesia, but from Thailand which is marketed in China. [3]

In addition to geographical indications that are not considered by the Indonesian government, a study also explains the phenomenon of salak in Sleman, Yogyakarta. Salak as one of Sleman's representative commodities that contributes 27.44% of gross regional domestic product actually provides unexpected conditions for salak farmers. They get a low price during the salak harvest, this is because they do not get a bargaining position from the seller. [4]

In the midst of thousands of obstacles faced. All parties certainly continue to endeavour to preserve and improve the salak commodity. These efforts are discussed by various literatures. One of the literatures discusses the strategy of community empowerment in the development of salak nglumut agribusiness in Kaliurang, Magelang district. [5] It has even been discussed regarding the development of Agribusiness of prime certified salak nglumut 3.[6] Eka Dyah Wahyu Prasetyaningsi and Widjonarko (2015) even outlined a local economic development strategy based on salak commodities, in this case through processed salak products in Madukara District, Banjarnegara Regency.

From the literature above, it appears that Indonesia's salak farming sector is facing a variety of problems, however, the solutions provided tend to be standalone. Thus, this research will enter into the discussion to strengthen the argument of the weakness of policies and roles taken by the government by taking a case study of salak farmers in Kemiri hamlet, Yogyakarta. In addition, the author also discovers the government's lack of seriousness in improving the quality of life of farmers and efforts to regenerate the farming profession from among young people.

3 Methods

This research uses mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative. By conducting direct research and interviews with local hamlet heads and representatives of young people involved in the salak farming sector there. Quantitative by distributing a survey questionnaire using Google Form consisting of 6 questions, the questionnaire was addressed to agriculture students from various universities in Indonesia to find out the extent of interest and views of agriculture students themselves on the agricultural sector in Indonesia.

4 Result and Discussion: Barrier to Salak Eksport

4.1 Inadequate Communication Between Government and Farmers

The salak fruit commodity produced in Sleman, Yogyakarta, Indonesia is of high quality and should be able to compete in the international market. Salak typical of Yogyakarta, especially the Sleman area, remains the most important salak commodity in Indonesia. As stated by Syam Arjayanti, Head of the Department of Industry and Trade (Dinas Perindustrian dan Perdagangan), she sees great potential for export activities in this salak, with the highest export share in October 2023 being America at 16.2 million dollars or 41.43% followed by Germany, Australia, Japan and the Netherlands. Export activity in this commodity is hampered by the insecurity of salak, in the sense that it rots quickly, in many cases salak pests. [7]

Responding to such obstacles, researchers from Gajah Mada University, in collaboration with Multimedia Nusantara University, discussed tools to prevent pests in salak. This was prompted by a case when salak was sent to Australia, where pests were found in the fruit, explained Dr Suputa, Head of the Master Programme in Plant Pest Science.[8] Prior to this collaboration between UGM and UMN, there had been discussions about efforts to eradicate fly pests in salak, in order to maintain its freshness until it reaches the consumer country. The Ministry of Agriculture at that time launched the Gratiexs programme (Gerakan Tiga Kali Ekspor), post-harvest collaboration with export partners to extend the fruit storage period for a long time with significant results.

Increased efforts in salak commodity export activities are considered important, seeing that there are also many countries that are the target of salak importers, including China, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Timor-Leste, the Netherlands, Qatar, Hong Kong, Germany and the United Kingdom. The improvement must be massively intensified in all aspects, both from technology and human resources. [9]

The increasing demand for salak is very beneficial for the country, especially for the lives of farmers, but this is not the case for salak farmers in Pakem, Yogyakarta, who feel the opposite. The salak they produce does not find a market, has few buyers, suffers losses, and so on. And they claim no special attention from the local government. Such is the complaint poured out by Rizki, the only young man in Pakem village who plunged into becoming a farmer there. As a result, the farmers were forced to partially replace salak commodities with other commodities, while still maintaining the presence of salak there as a souvenir for relatives and visitors.

This gap leads to information asymmetry, where farmers are not fully aware of the export standards required by international markets or the support available from the government. This statement - Miscommunication and unsupported policy by government - is indirectly supported by the Centre Indonesia Policy Studies, stated that 'Indonesia may be determined to meet its ambitious emission reduction targets but without supportive agricultural policies'. [10] Instances have been documented where this poor communication has directly impacted farmer's ability to meet export regulations or access governmental aid program. For example, without clear guidelines or proactive communication, farmers may not comply with specific agricultural practices essential for meeting the phytosanitary requirements of target export markets, resulting in rejected shipments or lost opportunities. Meanwhile, this standardization is vital attributes for gaining and maintaining access to international markets. The agricultural sector in countries like Thailand and Vietnam have been significant improvement in export success following the implementation of stringent standardization measure these measures ensure that the agricultural products meet the

quality standards demanded by overseas buyers, suggesting a potential path forward for the Indonesian salak industry.

4.2 Insufficient Government Support and Extension Services

Effective extension services can provide farmers with the necessary training, resources, and subsidies specifically tailored to meet export standards. However, the level of support provided often varies significantly between regions, affecting export outcomes. Comparisons between regions, such as those with well-established support systems like in parts of Java compared to less developed areas, show that enhanced government support correlates with better agricultural productivity and export performance. These disparities highlight the need for more consistent and comprehensive government intervention.

In an interview with Rizki, the only young person involved in the farmer group there, he expressed several complaints felt by salak farmers in Pakem Village, Yogyakarta. These complaints provide potential that requires full support from the government. 'The selling price of salak is low mas', was the complaint made by Rizki, the salak commodity harvested there does not have a high selling price due to losing competitiveness with people living in urban areas, which can be easily reached by consumers compared to their agricultural products which are quite far away.

This problem should be of more concern to the local government to provide support in various ways so that salak commodities there can compete and even have the potential to go global. The training needed includes pest prevention training, training to improve salak quality, subsidies, and assistance in meeting export standards.

4.3 Technological and Infrastructural Limitations

Technological and infrastructural limitations also present significant barriers to the scaling up of salak production for international markets. In many growing areas, basic infrastructure such as roads, storage facilities, and water management systems are inadequate, complicating the logistics of large-scale salak farming and export. Moreover, there is a notable gap in the adoption of advanced agricultural technologies, particularly in pest management, which can significantly affect crop yields and quality. Learning from technological interventions in similar agricultural contexts, like the adoption of drip irrigation and pest monitoring systems in Israel's citrus farms, could offer valuable lessons for improving the infrastructure and technology used in salak cultivation.

Comparing agricultural technology in Indonesia with the agricultural technology used in Japan certainly shows a big difference. Farmers in Indonesia tend to be unfamiliar with the use of technology so that the majority of them still use the traditional scientific basis, unlike in Japan which has involved robots in their agriculture, using sensors and Internet of Things (IoT) technology to monitor crops, climate control and irrigation management.

The development of information technology can also be used by farmers to increase their market and reach a wider range of consumers than through traditional marketing. Sales through e-commerce can reach more consumers and save money. For example, in the case of farmers in Sumberejo village, 50% of farmers are aware of social media and its benefits in marketing. However, they do not understand its use, only 30% of them understand it. [12] The data shows that few farmers understand social media as an information technology that is very useful for improving agricultural commodity markets.

4.4 Barriers to Youth Involvement in Salak Farming.

The narrative of the golden Indonesia of 2045 cannot be separated from its association with young people. Several factors encourage the emergence of this narrative, one of which is the large number of young people in Indonesia, this is called the demographic bonus. Looking at the 2024 Presidential voter data, it is dominated by 55% of young people. [11] by young people. Thus, the role of young people as a strong, productive and creative entity is indispensable for the progress of the nation.

Youth are also expected to participate and contribute in all sectors of the country, and agriculture is no exception. However, the sad thing is that few of them are willing to go into agriculture. A survey conducted by Jakpat shows that only 6-100 young people, generasi Z, want to work as farmers. economic factors are the main ones.

Interviews conducted with Sri Mahastuti as the head of Pakem Padukuhan and Rizki as the only young man who farms. 'The youth here are less interested in farming, because the capital is rather large, the work is dirty, not at home', the disinterest of youth in farming in Pakem Padukuhan has the potential to break the agricultural chain there, even though the potential generated is very impactful for the economy of local residents with the opening of many jobs. Sri said that young people there prefer to work in other sectors.

However, this is contrary to the results of a survey conducted by the author. The author launched a survey through Google Form containing questions related to their interest in a career as a farmer and the evaluation that needs to be done to increase youth participation. The survey was aimed at agriculture students at all semester levels from various campuses in Indonesia. The survey managed to get 30 respondents from different campuses including Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Sriwijaya University, Sudirman University, Nahdhatul Ulama University, Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang and Stiper Agricultural Institute.

Surprisingly, the results of the 30 respondents showed that 90% of them were interested in continuing their careers in agriculture, this is due to their awareness and knowledge that the profession as a farmer essentially brings benefits to the country, as well as a sustainable profession.

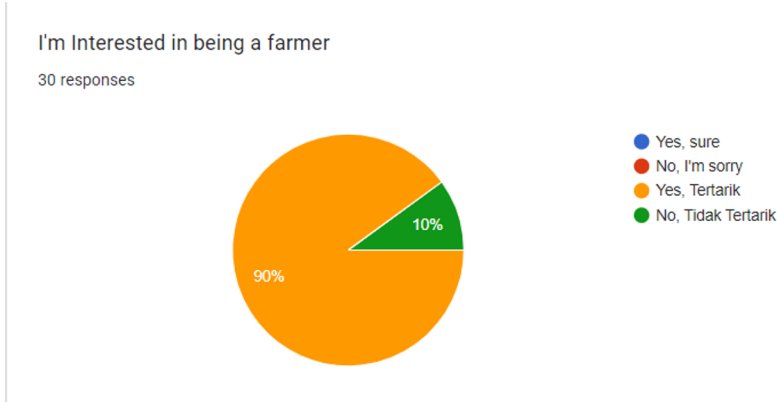


Fig. 1. Survey of Indonesian Generation Interest in Agriculture Sector

The 30 respondents' answers to the question of what needs to be done to increase youth participation in the agricultural sector revolved around the need for concrete steps to be taken for the welfare of farmers. they pushed for subsidies, technology development, modernisation of agriculture. it can be concluded that both the youth who are interested and those who are not interested in agriculture agree that the welfare of farmers is still not as expected, with the common idea that farming is an unmodern, tiring, dirty job, and so on.

The government is expected to be more aware of this, to increase the interest of young people, so that domestic commodities are fulfilled, and can even boost export activities of agricultural commodities, especially salak. Various things can be done by the government to increase this interest, including holding agricultural programs, discussion forums on agriculture, improving technology in agriculture so as not to tire young people in farming, holding socialisation about agriculture, intensifying agricultural doctrines or trends, and so on.

4.5 The solution as a respond to the barriers to Salak Export

Responding to the varied obstacles felt and raised by salak farmers, the author sees the need for strong awareness and commitment first from policy makers. One fundamental thing that needs to be scheduled is in the financial aspect (budget) of agriculture that is used as well as possible, ensuring that there are no negative activities that accompany it.

Structured coordination and effective communication must be established between the central government, local governments, farmers, academics and the public (consumers). When farmers face complaints, they can complain to the government/government initiates to go directly to the field, obstacles found can be brought and studied further with a group of academics (experts), consumers get good results, and if comments are found, they can be submitted to farmers, so the cycle will rotate like that. Here is the description:

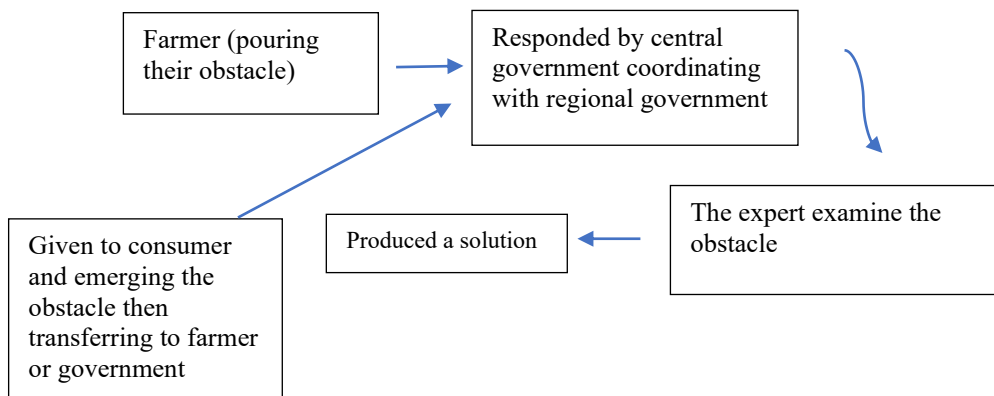


Fig. 2. Communication Pattern

Such communication patterns will provide a variety of innovative solutions, and the problems of agricultural technology will automatically be resolved. In overcoming the problem of regeneration, young people can be involved in the policy-making process for agriculture or by making agricultural programmes into the independent curriculum programme of the Ministry of Education, involving young people directly in farming, or by providing special research funds for the agricultural sector.

5 Conclusion

Indonesia as an agricultural country faces various problems including farmers' welfare, lack of communication, lack of government support, and no regeneration efforts. For example, in Pakem Village, Yogyakarta, where this research took place, researchers found many obstacles and complaints from farmers, ranging from their salak products being sold at low prices, not selling well, to the lack of interest from the youth to continue the salak production chain. Through the survey, the researchers also found that both young people who have an interest in agriculture and those who do not have an interest both have a view of farmers as the lowest level profession.

As a solution, a strong commitment is needed, accompanied by seriousness from the central government in coordination with local governments, farmers, academics, experts, researchers, and the public as consumers. This will provide varied and innovative solutions. In addition, there is a need for agricultural programmes or research funding programmes for the agricultural sector aimed at young people, in this case students, to increase their awareness and interest. Hopefully, these solutions will have a positive impact on the progress of Indonesian agriculture.

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