

THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S FARMING GROUPS IN IMPROVING FARMERS' WELFARE IN LIMAU LUNGGO VILLAGE, LEMBANG JAYA DISTRICT, SOLOK REGENCY, WEST SUMATRA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of Women Farmers Groups (KWT) in improving the welfare of farmers in Limau Lunggo Village, Lembang Jaya District, Solok Regency, West Sumatra. The study used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The informants in this study numbered 52 people consisting of all active members of the Sejati Women Farmers Group and the Caniago Baruah Women Farmers Group. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, while data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that the Sejati Women Farmers Group and the Caniago Baruah Women Farmers Group have carried out their roles as learning classes, collaboration platforms, and production units. As learning classes, the groups play a role in increasing the knowledge and skills of members through extension, training, and agricultural product processing practices. As a collaboration platform, the groups are able to build cooperation, mutual cooperation, communication, and active participation among members. As production units, the groups have succeeded in developing productive businesses through the utilization of yards, plant cultivation, and agricultural product processing, thereby providing added value to the resulting products. The existence of the group contributes to improving the welfare of its members through increasing household income (an average of Rp2,665,000 per month), improving family food security, developing members' skills, and increasing women's self-confidence and participation in social and economic activities. However, there are still obstacles such as limited capital, suboptimal marketing access, and the need for increased mentoring from agricultural extension workers. It can be concluded that KWT Sejati and KWT Caniago Baruah have an important role in improving the welfare of farmers through women's empowerment, strengthening group institutions, developing productive businesses, and improving household food security.

Keywords:*Women Farmers Group, women empowerment, farmer welfare, group role, Nagari Limau Lunggo.*

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector remains a strategic sector in national development, particularly in the context of rural development. Agriculture plays a crucial role as a food provider, a source of employment, and a key pillar of the rural economy. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) notes that the majority of Indonesia's poor are still concentrated in rural areas, with agriculture as their primary livelihood. Therefore, agricultural development focused on improving farmer welfare is a key agenda item in national development policy (BPS, 2024).

Sustainable agricultural development emphasizes not only increasing production and productivity but also improving the quality of human resources in agriculture. One crucial aspect of agricultural development is the involvement of women. Women farmers make significant contributions to various agricultural activities, from production and post-harvest management to agricultural product management and household economics. Women's roles in the agricultural sector are often multidimensional and directly impact the economic stability of farming families (Sulastri & Hidayat, 2019).

One form of institution that facilitates women's involvement in agricultural development is the Women Farmers Group (KWT). According to the Ministry of Agriculture (2020), KWT functions as a learning class, a collaborative platform, and a production unit aimed at improving the capacity, skills, and welfare of its members. In Nagari Limau Lunggo, Lembang Jaya District, Solok Regency, there are two active women farmer groups: KWT Sejati and KWT Caniago Baruah, which run various programs such as agricultural training and extension, yard utilization, agricultural product processing, and the development of productive economic enterprises.

Despite this, Nagari Limau Lunggo still faces various issues related to farmer welfare, such as limited access to capital, low income, and minimal use of agricultural technology. These conditions make in-depth research on the role of KWT relevant to understand the extent to which these groups contribute to improving farmer welfare and realizing sustainable agricultural development in Nagari Limau Lunggo.

Based on the description, this study aims to (1) describe the role of Women Farmers Groups in agricultural activities; (2) analyze the contribution of Women Farmers Groups

to improving farmer welfare; and (3) identify factors that influence the effectiveness of the role of Women Farmers Groups in Nagari Limau Lunggo.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in the Women Farmers Group in Nagari Limau Lunggo, Lembang Jaya District, Solok Regency, West Sumatra Province, which was selected purposively because the two farmer groups in that location, namely KWT Sejati and KWT Caniago Baruah, are active and sustainable groups in implementing women farmer empowerment programs.

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to understand and interpret social phenomena in depth based on natural conditions and the perspectives of the research subjects, so that the resulting data is narrative and descriptive (Moleong, 2019; Sugiyono, 2022). The study population was all active members of the Sejati and Caniago Baruah KWT, totaling 52 people. The entire population was used as research informants (census) because this study used a qualitative approach that aims to obtain in-depth information about the role of the group. Informants consisted of the group leader, secretary, treasurer, active members, new members, agricultural extension workers, and village officials.

Data collection techniques were conducted through direct observation and light participatory, in-depth interviews with a semi-structured approach, documentation, and supporting questionnaires to obtain a numerical picture of household members' income and expenses. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) which includes data reduction, data presentation in the form of tables, diagrams, and thematic narratives, and drawing conclusions that were carried out continuously until data saturation was reached.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Characteristics of Informants

The research informants had diverse backgrounds in terms of age, education level, length of membership, and occupation as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Informants (n = 52)

Characteristics	Category	Number of people)	Percentage (%)
Age	20–35 years	9	17.3
	36–50 years	24	46.1
	51–65 years	17	32.7
	66–75 years	2	3.8
Education	Elementary School	24	46.2
	Junior High School	12	23.1
	High School	13	25.0
	Diploma/PGAN	2	3.8
Length of time joining	1–10 years	19	36.4
	11–20 years	26	49.8
	21–30 years	7	13.5
Work	Farmer	30	57.7
	Housewife	18	34.6
	Trader	4	7.6

Source: Processed primary data (2026).

Most informants were in the productive age group of 36–50 years (46.1%) and had been members of the group for 11–20 years (49.8%), thus having considerable experience in participating in group activities. The majority of informants had an elementary school education (46.2%) and worked as farmers (57.7%). The relatively low level of formal education did not hinder member participation, as farming experience, active participation in training, and a willingness to learn were also important factors in improving the knowledge and skills of group members.

3.2 The Role of Women Farmers' Groups in Agricultural Activities

According to the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture (2023), the Women's Farmers Group (KWT Tani) is a farmer organization established to empower women in agriculture. In line with Minister of Agriculture Regulation Number 67 of 2016 concerning the Development of Farmer Institutions, research shows that the Sejati KWT and Caniago Baruah KWT have fulfilled three main functions: as a learning class, a collaborative platform, and a production unit.

KWT Sejati and KWT Caniago Baruah as Learning Classes

Through regular monthly meetings, members receive materials on plant cultivation techniques, yard utilization, organic fertilizer production, pest and disease control, and agricultural product processing facilitated by agricultural extension workers. The head of the Sejati KWT stated that extension workers regularly provide materials on good planting practices, fertilizer use, pest control, and how to process crops for higher sales value. A member of the Caniago Baruah KWT also said that before joining the group, she only grew vegetables for her own needs, but after attending the training, she began growing more and selling some of her produce.

This finding is in line with Mardikanto (2021) who stated that the learning process in farmer groups is a form of community empowerment that improves individual abilities through the exchange of information and experience, and is in line with research by Nursalamah, Kuswana, and Rahmawaty (2023) and Nazhifah (2025) who emphasized that extension and training in KWT can improve women's knowledge, skills, and capacity in developing productive businesses.

KWT Sejati and KWT Caniago Baruah as a Vehicle for Cooperation

Cooperation among members is evident in the collaborative activities of land preparation, planting, maintenance, harvesting, processing, and training. The head of the Sejati KWT explained that members assist each other in every group activity, from setting up meeting venues to preparing training materials. KWT Caniago Baruah also stated that if any member experiences cultivation problems or pest attacks, the issues are discussed together, including with agricultural extension workers.

This collaboration reflects social capital in the form of trust, communication, and active participation, which are crucial factors in group success (Al Nido et al., 2024; Sari, Wibowo, & Anwar, 2024). These results indicate that the KWT's function as a collaborative vehicle has been effective in creating harmonious relationships among members while supporting the success of agricultural activities.

KWT Sejati and KWT Caniago Baruah as Production Units

Both groups developed a business processing agricultural products into value-added products, namely ginger powder in KWT Sejati and cassava chips in KWT Caniago Baruah, which are marketed to the local community and through local government exhibitions. The head of KWT Caniago Baruah explained that the harvest is processed

into products with higher sales value, while a member of KWT Sejati stated that previously the harvest was only sold fresh, but after training some of the produce is processed, resulting in increased selling prices and profits.

This finding is in accordance with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia (2023) which states that KWT-based production units are a women's empowerment strategy to improve food security and household economy, and is in line with Pratiwi (2024) that the development of productive businesses through KWT strengthens the economic independence of women in rural areas.

3.3 Contribution of Women Farmers' Groups to Farmers' Welfare

Contribution to Income Increase

The results of the supporting questionnaire show that product processing businesses in both groups provide additional net income for members, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Average Revenue, Production Costs, and Net Income of KWT Processing Businesses per Month

Group	Number of Respondents	Revenue (Rp)	Production Cost (Rp)	Net Income (Rp)
KWT Sejati (ginger powder)	26	5,000,000	1,720,000	3,280,000
KWT Caniago Baruah (cassava chips)	26	3,000,000	950,000	2,050,000
Average	52	4,000,000	1,335,000	2,665,000

Source: Processed primary data (2026).

The average net income of Sejati KWT members reached IDR 3,280,000 per month from the ginger powder business, while members of Caniago Baruah KWT earned IDR 2,050,000 per month from the cassava chips business, with a combined average of IDR 2,665,000 per month. This difference was influenced by the production capacity, number of orders, member experience, and marketing reach of each group. Most informants stated that the additional income was used to meet food needs, children's education costs, and other household needs. This finding supports Pratiwi (2024) that group-based productive businesses can increase members' income sustainably, while also being in line with Al Nido et al. (2024) that social capital and active participation are important factors in the success of empowerment programs.

Contribution to Household Food Security

Utilizing yard space for growing vegetables, medicinal plants, and food crops has been shown to increase household food availability while reducing food expenditures. One informant stated that the family's current vegetable needs are largely met from their own yard produce, reducing the frequency of vegetable purchases at the market. This finding aligns with the concept of household food security, which is the ability to meet food needs sufficiently, safely, and sustainably, and supports the Ministry of Agriculture's program on optimizing yard utilization.

Contribution to Women's Empowerment

Participation in the KWT improves women's knowledge, skills, self-confidence, and participation in family economic activities. Before joining, most members only assisted their husbands in agricultural activities; after participating in training, members began to gain the courage to manage their own businesses, process crops, and even participate in marketing group products. This finding aligns with Mardikanto's (2021) theory of community empowerment and Nursalamah's (2023) theory that women's empowerment through KWT improves family welfare by increasing women's participation in economic and social activities and decision-making.

Contribution to the Improvement of Knowledge and Skills

The group's training and extension materials cover cultivation techniques, organic fertilizer production, pest control, packaging, and agricultural product marketing. One informant explained that training on organic fertilizer production using household materials helped lower farming production costs. This increased knowledge and skills are key assets for members in developing sustainable businesses.

3.4 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of the Role of Women Farmers' Groups

There are three main factors that support the success of KWT Sejati and KWT Caniago Baruah, namely (1) high member participation in routine meetings, extension, training, and mutual cooperation; (2) support from agricultural extension workers in providing materials, technology, and technical assistance; and (3) cooperation between members as social capital that strengthens group institutions (Nurhayati et al., 2022; Nugraha, 2023).

On the other hand, the study also identified inhibiting factors, namely (1) limited business capital to increase production capacity; (2) limited facilities and infrastructure, such as processing equipment and product storage; and (3) product marketing reach that is still limited to the village environment and exhibition activities. These constraints result in suboptimal production capacity and sales volume, so strengthening access to capital, production facilities, and digital marketing is crucial for the future sustainability of the group's business.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that: (1) KWT Sejati and KWT Caniago Baruah have carried out their roles as learning classes, cooperation vehicles, and production units through extension activities, training, cooperation between members, and development of agricultural product processing businesses; (2) the existence of KWT contributes to improving farmer welfare, which is shown through increasing member knowledge and skills, increasing income from productive businesses (average Rp. 2,665,000 per month), increasing household food security, and empowering women in family economic activities; and (3) the success of KWT is supported by active participation of members, good cooperation, and assistance from agricultural extension workers, but group development still faces obstacles in the form of limited capital, facilities and infrastructure, and product marketing.

4.2 Suggestions

KWT administrators and members are advised to continue increasing their participation, strengthening collaboration, developing business innovation, and utilizing information technology for product promotion and marketing. Local governments are expected to increase support through ongoing training programs, assistance with production facilities, easier access to capital, and strengthening group institutions. Agricultural extension workers are expected to continue providing assistance according to members' needs, while the community is expected to support KWT through active participation and the use of local products. Further research is recommended to expand the scope of the region and use a quantitative or mixed methods approach, as well as examine other factors such as group leadership, the use of digital technology in marketing, and access to business financing.

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