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Rubber Farmers' Activities in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village

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Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan aktivitas petani karet serta hambatan yang mereka hadapi dalam proses penyadapan. Lokasi penelitian berada di Desa Maruta Anjir Serapat, Kecamatan Kapuas Timur, Kabupaten Kapuas, Provinsi Kalimantan Tengah. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan utama petani meliputi penyadapan karet pada malam hari, pengumpulan getah, pengolahan, dan penjualan kepada pengepul lokal. Aktivitas ini merupakan sumber penghasilan utama petani. Namun, mereka menghadapi beberapa hambatan seperti cuaca yang tidak menentu, terutama saat musim hujan yang mengganggu proses penyadapan dan menurunkan hasil getah. Selain itu, harga karet yang fluktuatif menyebabkan pendapatan petani tidak stabil. Infrastruktur jalan yang rusak juga menyulitkan akses ke kebun dan distribusi hasil. Meskipun demikian, petani tetap gigih menjalankan usahatani karet. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa dukungan dari berbagai pihak, khususnya pemerintah, sangat diperlukan. Bentuk dukungan yang disarankan meliputi perbaikan jalan, subsidi pupuk dan alat produksi, pembinaan, serta peningkatan akses pasar untuk meningkatkan produktivitas dan kesejahteraan petani secara berkelanjutan.
Kata Kunci: *Aktivitas, Petani, Karet*

Abstract
This study aims to describe the activities of rubber farmers and the obstacles they face in the tapping process. The research location was in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village, East Kapuas District, Kapuas Regency, Central Kalimantan Province. The study used a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that the main activities of farmers include tapping rubber at night, collecting sap, processing, and selling to local collectors. These activities are the main source of income for farmers. However, they face several obstacles such as unpredictable weather, especially during the rainy season, which disrupts the tapping process and reduces sap yield. In addition, fluctuating rubber prices cause farmers' incomes to be unstable. Damaged road infrastructure also hinders access to plantations and distribution of produce. Nevertheless, farmers remain persistent in their rubber farming activities. This study concludes that support from various parties, especially the government, is urgently needed. Recommended forms of support include road repairs, subsidies for fertilizers and production tools, guidance, and improved market access to enhance farmers' productivity and welfare in a sustainable manner.
Keywords: Activities, Farmers, Rubber

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PRELIMINARY

Indonesia, as a developing country, is blessed with abundant agricultural resources, making this sector one of the main sources of income for its population. Given the importance of agriculture to the economic system, the government has implemented various policies to increase agricultural production. Agriculture can be defined as activities based on the growth of plants and animals. This activity began when humans started to play an active role in managing plants and animals to meet their daily needs. The level of progress in agriculture varies, ranging from gathering and hunting practices to traditional and modern agriculture (Rahayu, 2020).

Agriculture has great potential as a solution to existing problems, namely unemployment and poverty, by maximizing land use through the application of appropriate farming systems, which are expected to improve the welfare of farmers. In their business activities, rubber farmers certainly hope that every investment made will yield adequate income. Therefore, it is important for farmers to conduct economic analyses to determine whether the business is profitable or not. From these analyses, farmers can understand how much capital is needed and estimate the amount of income that can be obtained (Juliansyah, 2018).

Rubber farmers play an important role in the life of rural communities because rubber is their main source of income. However, in carrying out their activities, farmers often face various obstacles such as unpredictable weather, fluctuating rubber prices, and damaged roads. These conditions make farmers' lives unstable. Therefore, this research is crucial to gain a direct understanding of how farmers live their daily lives, what challenges they face, and how they respond to and overcome them. This research uses a qualitative approach to gain a deeper insight into the experiences and views of farmers directly from their own perspective. (Nugraha et al., 2018).

Rubber farmers in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village face various obstacles that affect the smooth running of their agricultural activities. Weather factors, especially during the rainy season, are a major obstacle because they interfere with the tapping process; rubber sap cannot flow optimally, and in certain conditions, tapping must be temporarily stopped, which has a direct impact on reducing yields and income. Economic uncertainty is further exacerbated by unpredictable fluctuations in latex prices, prompting some farmers to seek alternative employment. In addition, damaged and difficult road infrastructure, especially during rain, further complicates access to plantations and the transportation of produce. The complexity of

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these issues requires research that can realistically describe the dynamics of agricultural activities and the challenges faced in the field. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in raising the topic of "Rubber Farmer Activities in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village" as the focus of the study.

To reduce the obstacles faced by rubber farmers, more concrete efforts are needed, both from the farmers themselves and from the government. One solution that can be implemented is to improve the quality of road infrastructure leading to plantations so that the distribution of crops is not disrupted, especially during the rainy season. In addition, stabilizing rubber prices through market policies or farmer cooperatives can help provide income certainty. Farmers also need access to price information, technical training in tapping, and the use of simple technology to increase productivity. With these solutions, it is hoped that the sustainability of rubber farming in the village can be maintained and the welfare of farmers improved.

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METHOD

The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative, with the aim of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the daily activities of rubber farmers in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village, as well as the various obstacles they face in carrying out these activities. This study begins with data, uses existing theory to provide explanations, and concludes with the formation of the theory of ". This study uses a qualitative approach because it is able to describe social reality in a natural and contextual manner, as well as understand the meaning behind farmers' activities through direct interaction. Data were obtained through field observations, in-depth interviews with seven rubber farmers who were purposively selected based on their involvement in tapping, processing, and selling rubber, as well as photo documentation. The research was conducted in November–December 2024 in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village, East Kapuas District, Kapuas Regency, Central Kalimantan. Data analysis was carried out through reduction, narrative presentation, and drawing conclusions based on data patterns and correlations. This approach is expected to provide a clear picture of the activities and challenges faced by rubber farmers on a daily basis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Maruta Anjir Serapat Village is located in the Kapuas Timur Subdistrict, Kapuas Regency, Central Kalimantan Province, and consists of 7 villages. Central Kalimantan and South Kalimantan Provinces are connected by the Trans Kalimantan road, which is the main

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connecting route between regions on the island of Kalimantan and is often used for transportation, trade, and daily community mobility (Darlan, 2020).

The community of Maruta Anjir Serapat Village consists of 42 households, with 56 men and 72 women. Most of the residents of Maruta Anjir Serapat Village are of Banjar ethnicity. The community's economic life largely depends on the agricultural sector, which has become part of their identity. The main activity carried out by the residents is tapping rubber sap. This activity not only provides income, but also creates jobs for other communities, thereby strengthening social bonds among them. The following are the activities of rubber farmers in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village:

1. Tapping Rubber

Tapping is the process of opening the sap flow so that the latex inside the rubber tree can come out. Generally, tapping is done by cutting part of the rubber tree trunk bark using a sharp tool with a specific technique. The right tapping technique is very important to maintain the health of rubber trees so that they can produce optimally in the long term (Amelia, 2016).

The rubber tapping process in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village is done manually. Tapping begins by making incisions in the bark of the rubber tree using a sharp tapping knife. The incisions are made at an angle following a specific direction so that the sap or latex can flow maximally into the prepared collection container or amplong, such as a bowl, coconut shell, or bottle hung on the tree trunk.

Figure 1. collect Latex

source: personal 2024

Rubber farmers in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village explain that they generally start tapping rubber at night, with times varying between 2, 3, or 4 in the morning. For those who feel less

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confident about tapping in the dark, 5 a.m. is considered the safest time to start. Some farmers also revealed that they sometimes start tapping as early as 10 p.m. or even midnight, depending on the situation and conditions. The people of Maruta Anjir Serapat Village start tapping rubber at night because the cooler air temperature helps the sap flow more smoothly. Based on their experience and observations, tapping before sunrise has been proven to produce more sap, because at that time the turgor pressure in the tree trunk is still high so that the latex flows more smoothly. The tapping process is carried out by cutting the tree trunk to extract the rubber sap. These sap channels have the ability to heal naturally, so tapping can be carried out.

This opinion is reinforced by Mustofa, who explains that when tapping is carried out, the latex will flow out at a fast rate, but this speed will decrease over time. The later the tapping is carried out, the slower the flow of latex will be until it eventually stops. The tapping time is related to the plant's capacity to maintain turgor pressure, so an effective method is needed when determining the time for latex harvesting (Mustofa, 2022).

This finding is reinforced by Sastra's statement that rubber tapping is most optimal between 4:00 and 8:00 a.m., when the plant's turgor pressure is at its peak. This pressure decreases as the intensity of sunlight increases, causing the flow of latex to decrease. Therefore, tapping management must be carried out carefully, including labor, frequency, consumption of tapped bark, and the use of stimulants (Sastra, 2023).

2. Collecting Latex

In the village of Maruta Anjir Serapar, during the process of collecting sap, rubber farmers in the village allow the sap to drip slowly into small containers attached to the tree trunks. The sap is left for several hours, usually until morning or noon, so that there is enough before it is collected. The coagulation process is carried out by adding a solution of alum to the liquid sap. The alum is first dissolved in a bottle of water, then the solution is gradually mixed into the liquid rubber sap.

Rubber sap is collected after the tapping process has been going on for several hours. The sap that comes out of the incision is collected in a container such as a bowl or can hung on the rubber tree trunk. Once the volume of sap is considered sufficient, the farmer will collect it and store it in a larger container in preparation for the coagulation or further processing. Generally, sap collection is carried out once or twice a day, depending on weather conditions and the amount of sap collected (Sasmi, 2023).

Farmers begin collecting the sap into buckets or angkung. Collection is carried out by going from one tree to another until all the sap has been collected. The collected sap is then soaked in a river. This soaking serves to clean the sap of impurities, such as tree bark fragments,

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leaves, or small insects that are carried along during tapping. In addition to maintaining cleanliness, soaking also helps to preserve the quality of the sap before it is further processed.

3. Selling Rubber

Selling rubber is the process of transferring ownership rights over harvested rubber sap from farmers to a toke or collector through several stages that have become customary in the community. The rubber sap is collected and then taken to a weighing station designated by the middleman, who will then pay for the sale based on the weight and quality of the sap received. This buying and selling process is carried out in accordance with the agreements and customs that apply in the local community (Ritonga, 2021).

In Anjir Serapat Village, the current price of rubber is 8,000 per kilogram, while if sold outside the village, the price can reach 10,000 per kilogram. Rubber prices have experienced significant fluctuations, where at certain times the lowest price recorded reached 5,000 rupiah per kilogram, while at other times the highest price reached 10,000 rupiah. The price of rubber sap sold in a dry state or soaked in water first does not differ; both are usually priced at almost the same range by buyers. However, this is not the case if the rubber sap is sold immediately after tapping. This type of sap is usually still wet and has not undergone any processing, so its quality is considered lower. As a result, the selling price is cheaper, only around Rp6,500 per kilogram. This shows that the method of processing the sap before it is sold greatly affects its selling value.

The selling price of rubber in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village is generally not determined by farmers, but by buyers or collectors. The price is usually determined based on several factors, one of which is the considerable distance and difficult road access, especially during the rainy season. This causes the price of rubber received by farmers to be lower than in other areas that are more easily accessible.

Although many rubber farmers in this area prefer to sell their rubber to the nearest buyer, there are also a number of farmers who decide to sell their rubber elsewhere where they can get a higher price. This decision is often driven by urgent economic needs, where farmers try to get the maximum profit from their harvest. However, not all farmers have the freedom to choose, as there are also farmers who are forced to sell their rubber to more distant locations due to debts that must be repaid. This is reinforced by Purwasih in his research, who states that rubber farmers tend to sell their crops to middlemen because of debt obligations that prevent them from freely choosing other buyers. This system has been in place for a long time and has become a tradition passed down through generations. Middlemen provide farmers with loans without a repayment deadline, on the condition that farmers must sell their rubber exclusively

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to them. As a result, even when rubber prices are low or there are burdensome weight deductions, farmers continue to endure because they feel bound and economically dependent.

Challenges Faced by Rubber Farmers

In Maruta Anjir Serapat Village, there are several obstacles faced by rubber farmers, which greatly affect their activities in tapping and managing rubber plantations.

1. Weather

In Maruta Anjir Serapat Village, when the rainy season arrives, rainfall in the village increases significantly compared to other seasons. This condition not only affects the physical environment of the village but also has a direct impact on the lifestyle of the local community, especially those who depend on agriculture, such as rubber farmers. During the rainy season, the people in this village must adapt to often unpredictable weather changes, including increased rainfall intensity, which affects their daily activities and agricultural yields.

During the rainy season, the weather is often unpredictable, which can create major challenges for rubber farmers. For example, there are times when the weather looks sunny and hot, so farmers feel optimistic about starting the rubber tapping process. However, suddenly, when they have started tapping, heavy rain falls. This kind of weather uncertainty is very disruptive. It often happens that when farmers are tapping, it suddenly rains. In such conditions, many farmers immediately add a coagulant to the sap container or amplong, in the hope that the sap will quickly coagulate. However, in reality, because the tree trunks are already wet from the rain and water enters the amplong, the sap inside is mixed with water. As a result, the sap cannot freeze properly, and some even remains liquid even after the coagulant has been added. Such sap cannot be sold and is wasted.

This is in line with Rismarini et al opinion that weather and environmental conditions play an important role in determining the work results of rubber farmers. Rubber plants are very sensitive to changes in weather and the surrounding environment, which can affect the quantity and quality of the sap produced. One example of this impact is when it rains continuously, rubber yields tend to decline. If it rains suddenly in the morning when farmers are tapping, the rainwater will mix with the sap in the collection container, rendering the collected latex unusable (Rismarini et al., 2025).

Farmers' income When the rainy season arrives, their income decreases dramatically compared to the dry season, when they can tap regularly and produce high-quality sap. The inability to tap regularly during the rainy season makes it difficult for farmers to meet their daily needs, such as buying food, paying for their children's education, and fulfilling other basic needs.

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Seasonal differences have an impact on rubber sap yields. During the dry season, sap production is usually abundant and of higher quality. However, the opposite occurs during the rainy season, when high rainfall hinders the tapping process because the rubber tapping fields are blocked by rainwater. The quality of the latex produced also decreases because it is mixed with water, which can damage the latex and lower its selling price (Harahap, 2023).

2. Rubber Price Fluctuations

Rubber farmers' income is affected by fluctuations in rubber prices in the market. A decline in rubber prices has a significant impact on farmers, as most of their income depends on the sale of rubber sap. When rubber prices fall, farmers face difficulties in meeting their daily needs, which can cause stress and economic uncertainty. This is in line with the thoughts of which reveals that rubber price fluctuations are a major concern for farmers, as they depend entirely on rubber for their livelihood . The main problem in the industry is that rubber selling prices often fluctuate and tend to decline. This problem is not only found in rubber but also in other plantation commodities. The decline in rubber prices has an impact on the economic conditions of farmers' families, which is further exacerbated by the increase in the prices of basic necessities. Farmers' income, which relies solely on rubber plantation yields, must cover the costs of basic necessities, which are becoming increasingly expensive.

Rubber farmers in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village clearly show that rubber prices in the area are relatively cheap compared to prices in the city. The factors affecting these low prices are the geographical location far from the city center, which results in high transportation costs and difficult access to wider markets.

3. Road Infrastructure

The problem faced by rubber farmers in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village is that damaged roads make access to rubber plantations difficult. The roads leading to the rubber plantations in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village currently experience significant difficulties in terms of accessibility, caused by a number of factors that contribute to poor road conditions, such as the presence of many potholes that disrupt traffic flow, as well as soil that becomes very slippery and dangerous in wet weather, making it difficult for vehicles, especially heavy vehicles used to transport rubber harvests, to pass safely and efficiently.

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Figure 2. Damaged Road Infrastructure

source: personal 2024

This is in line with Alfarizy's research, which states that damaged road infrastructure has been proven to greatly disrupt community activities. Potholes, damaged roads, and severely damaged roads cause delays in the distribution of agricultural and plantation products, hinder the mobility of residents, and increase the risk of accidents. In a study in Gawan Village, road repair priorities are urgently needed. Due to the large number of roads damaged at the same time, the repair process will not yield maximum results if it is not based on priority scale (Alfarizy et al., 2021).

Access for buyers or collectors to resell rubber purchased from farmers in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village is via river routes. This is because the condition of the roads leading to the village does not allow cars to pass, meaning that cars cannot enter residential areas and plantations. Collectors use kelotok boats as their main means of transportation to transport rubber sap to the nearest location from the highway. Upon arrival at this point, the rubber is then transferred to pickup trucks for further transport to the factory. This system serves as the primary distribution route due to limited land access, while also reflecting the community's dependence on river transportation for local economic activities.

The Role of the Government

The government plays an important role in supporting the agricultural activities of rural communities, including rubber farmers in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village. One form of assistance provided is through the provision of subsidized fertilizer to ease the burden of production costs on farmers. The type of fertilizer commonly offered to farmers is Phonska fertilizer, which is sold at a more affordable price of IDR 145,000 per bag. This price is certainly much more

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affordable than the price of non-subsidized fertilizer on the market, which is Rp. 175,000 per sack. The availability of fertilizer at a relatively low price greatly helps farmers in maintaining soil fertility and optimal rubber tree growth. This price is considered quite helpful, given that fertilizer is vital in the process of maintaining rubber trees so that they continue to grow well and produce optimal sap.

This statement is in line with Lepa's 2019 research. One form of government assistance in supporting agricultural development in East Passi District is through the provision of subsidized fertilizer. This assistance aims to help farmers, especially small farmers with limited capital, to continue to access agricultural production facilities at more affordable prices. Fertilizer subsidies are expected to enhance farmers' purchasing power and encourage the adoption of more optimal agricultural technologies that do not consume excessive resources, thereby increasing production yields (Lepa et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

Rubber farming activities in Maruta Anjir Serapat Village are an important part of the community's life that has been passed down from generation to generation and is the main source of livelihood. Tapping is done manually, usually starting at night until early morning, because the cool temperature and high turgor pressure can facilitate latex flow. However, this activity is not without various obstacles, such as unpredictable rainy weather, rubber price pressures, and poor road infrastructure leading to the plantations. Nevertheless, farmers continue to carry out their activities with various adjustments so that rubber production can continue. Dependence on middlemen also indicates structural problems in the marketing of products, which are exacerbated by restricted market access. Therefore, more attention is needed from various parties, including the government, to support the sustainability of rubber farmers' businesses through subsidized fertilizer assistance.

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