

EMPOWERING MSMEs IN MATAKALI SUB-DISTRICT, POLEWALI MANDAR REGENCY, IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAGO PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION

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Abstract

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a significant role in the Indonesian economy, especially in rural areas, by providing employment and supporting economic sustainability. One local potential that can be developed is sago (*Metroxylon sagu* Rottb.), which has a strategic role in food security and the economy. This activity aims to strengthen MSMEs through training in sago-based product diversification, such as the production of sago cookies and chips, to increase added value and competitiveness in both local and national markets. The activity was conducted in the Matakali Sub-district, Polewali Mandar Regency, West Sulawesi, involving 20 MSME actors. The methods employed included socialization, training, and partner mentoring. Results showed a significant improvement in participants' understanding of sago's potential as a raw material for innovative products. Pre-test and post-test results indicated increased knowledge of the health benefits and economic opportunities of sago. Processed products such as sago cookies and chips were successfully developed, with broader market opportunities through more effective marketing strategies. A participatory mentoring approach was proven to enhance MSME capacities, both in product diversification and marketing. Production capacity constraints were identified as an area for follow-up training. This activity demonstrates that MSME empowerment based on sago is expected to not only support increased community income but also promote local food security and the recognition of regional flagship products.

Keywords: MSMEs, sago, product diversification, community empowerment, food security.

Abstrak

Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM) memiliki kontribusi besar dalam perekonomian Indonesia, khususnya di daerah pedesaan, dengan menyerap tenaga kerja dan mendukung keberlanjutan ekonomi. Salah satu potensi lokal yang dapat dikembangkan adalah sagu (*Metroxylon sagu* Rottb.), yang memiliki peran strategis dalam ketahanan pangan dan ekonomi. Kegiatan ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat UMKM melalui pelatihan diversifikasi produk berbahan dasar sagu, seperti pembuatan cookies dan chips sagu, untuk meningkatkan nilai tambah dan daya saing di pasar lokal maupun nasional. Kegiatan dilaksanakan di Kecamatan Matakali, Kabupaten Polewali Mandar, Sulawesi Barat, melibatkan 20 pelaku UMKM. Metode yang digunakan meliputi sosialisasi, pelatihan, dan pembinaan mitra. Hasil menunjukkan adanya peningkatan signifikan dalam pemahaman peserta mengenai potensi sagu sebagai bahan baku produk inovatif. Hasil pre-test dan post-test menunjukkan peningkatan pengetahuan peserta tentang manfaat kesehatan dan peluang ekonomi sagu. Produk olahan seperti cookies dan chips sagu berhasil dikembangkan, dengan peluang pasar yang lebih luas melalui strategi pemasaran yang lebih efektif. Pendekatan partisipatif dalam pendampingan terbukti mampu meningkatkan kapasitas UMKM, baik dalam diversifikasi produk maupun pemasaran. Kendala terkait kapasitas produksi yang terbatas menjadi perhatian untuk tindak lanjut pelatihan lanjutan. Kegiatan ini menunjukkan bahwa pemberdayaan UMKM

berbasis sago ini diharapkan tidak hanya mendukung peningkatan pendapatan masyarakat, tetapi juga mendorong ketahanan pangan lokal dan pengenalan produk unggulan daerah.

Keywords: UMKM, sago, diversifikasi produk, pemberdayaan masyarakat, ketahanan pangan.

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (UMKM) play a vital role in Indonesia's economy, contributing about 60% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 99% of all business entities (Azzahra, 2021; Yolanda, 2024). In rural and disadvantaged areas, UMKM is also crucial in absorbing labor and boosting the local economy (Budiarto et al., 2018). Given the importance of UMKM, the development of locally superior products based on local resources can be a key factor in enhancing competitiveness and ensuring the sustainability of local economies (Etty et al., 2020).

Sago has long been used as a primary ingredient in various traditional foods in Indonesia, particularly on the island of Sulawesi. Derived from the sago palm tree (*Metroxylon sago* Rottb), it is one of the local food sources with strategic importance in supporting regional food security and economic development (Arif, 2019). Indonesia's sago production area covers more than one million hectares, accounting for 51.3% of the global sago production area (Jong, 1999). The Indonesian government has actively promoted the use of sago flour as a substitute for imported wheat flour to support the sago-based industry and enhance its economic benefits (Melnigrani, 2022).

The presence of sago in the Matakali district, Polewali Mandar, West Sulawesi, presents a significant

opportunity for processing various local products that can help improve the community's economy. According to the Polewali Mandar Department of Industry and Trade (2023), the Matakali district has a considerable sago production area, with still many opportunities for further utilization. However, most of the processed sago products remain traditional, which limits their added value and popularity in broader markets.

A strategic approach to address this challenge is to strengthen sago-based UMKM (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises), particularly through product diversification training (Fitri, 2023). Product diversification enables UMKM actors to develop various sago-based innovations, such as noodles, crackers, cookies, and even other instant products. These innovations can attract more attention in regional and national markets (Ammam, 2021). Through this training, UMKM participants not only enhance their technical skills but also open up new market opportunities by creating more varied products with higher added value.

This approach can also support the government's vision of introducing local products as part of a sustainable economic development program. Strengthening UMKM through training in product diversification processing is expected to allow the abundant sago resources to be managed efficiently and environmentally friendly while also encouraging economic independence within the community (Purnomo, 2016).

With this approach, it is hoped that sago-based UMKMs in the Matakali district will not only improve their income but also establish sago as a symbol of local products that can be promoted and recognized more widely. This can be a catalyst for local economic growth while contributing to the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

METHOD

This community service activity was carried out in July 2024, involving 20 micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (UMKM) participants from the Matakali district, Polewali Mandar Regency, West Sulawesi Province. The implementation was conducted in several stages, as follows:

1. Socialization and Training

The initial stage of this activity involves socialization and training for the partners to provide an understanding of how to utilize sago flour as the main ingredient for producing various food products. Before and after the socialization session, participants are given a pre-test and post-test to assess their understanding. The material presented covers the benefits of sago, its potential for processing, and methods for creating sago-based products. This process helps participants grasp the economic and nutritional value of sago while introducing them to new, innovative product possibilities.



Figure 1. The production of sago flour by the partners

2. The product processing

The product processing focuses on two types of products: sago cookies and sago chips.

3. Partner Guidance

Partner Guidance is carried out using a mentoring approach, focusing mainly on aspects of product marketing. The goal of this guidance is to enhance the partners' ability to market sago-based products, ensuring they are competitive in local and wider markets. Active participation from partners is highly encouraged, from involvement in each phase of the activity to contributing relevant ideas and feedback. All activities, including socialization, training, product creation, and guidance, are conducted directly at the partner's location to ensure the program's sustainability and effective adaptation to local needs.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first activity carried out in this program was a discussion with the Pusat Pelatihan Pertanian Pedesaan Swadaya (P4S) Cahaya Duta Palili, another partner involved in the community service activity. This discussion was aimed at aligning perceptions regarding the strengthening of Matakali sub-district's flagship commodities through the diversification of sago-based processed products. The collaboration focused on establishing a common understanding of how to enhance the local economy by diversifying the use of sago, creating value-added products, and ensuring sustainable development in the region.



Figure 2. Discussion with P4S Cahaya Duta Palili

The next step in the program was the socialization and training session on sago product diversification, held on July 31, 2024. This event was attended by sago-based product entrepreneurs and members of the PKK (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga, or Family Welfare Movement).



Figure 3. Socialization Activity

In the socialization session, the benefits of sago plants and sago flour were presented, along with various sago product diversifications and business opportunities in the development of sago-based products. After the presentation, the session continued with training on the production of processed sago products.



Figure 4. The training on the production of sago flour-

a. The steps of making Sago Chips

Sago Chips is a diversification of sago flour-based processed products in the form of thin slices, which are then made into a crunchy snack. Here's how to make sago chips:

- Boil 3 kg of dry corn until the skin peels off (usually for 3 hours using a pressure cooker).
- Drain the cooked corn into a prepared container to let it air dry.
- Heat 1 litre of water in a pan over low heat.
- Weigh 500 grams of sago flour and add 10 grams of salt, then mix it into the heated water and stir until well combined (until it reaches the consistency of kapurung or papeda).
- Meanwhile, grind the corn using a grinder (usually a meat grinder).

- Mix the ground corn and the cooked sago flour mixture until evenly combined, then pass it through the grinder repeatedly until smooth and the dough is ready to be flattened.
- The mixture is then made very thin.
- After flattening, dry it for 2-3 hours.
- Once dried, the sago chips are ready to be fried and consumed.

b. The Process of Making Sago Cookies

Cookies are a type of dry cookie made from sago flour. *Cookies* are popular for their unique taste, crisp texture, and melt-in-your-mouth quality. Below are the steps to make sago cookies:

- Prepare and measure the ingredients: 400 gram tepung sago, 200 gram gula merah, 100 gram coklat bubuk, 15 ml air, 20 ml minyak goreng, dan garam secukupnya. 400 grams of sago flour, 200 grams of palm sugar, 100 grams of cocoa powder, 15 ml of water, 20 ml of cooking oil and a pinch of salt
- Mix the ingredients: Combine all the ingredients until the dough is smooth and easy to mould.
- Shape the dough: Shape the dough into your desired forms, ensuring a thickness of approximately 0.5 cm.
- Bake the cookies: Preheat the oven and bake the shaped dough for 30 minutes.
- Once baked, the cookies are ready to be served or consumed.



(a)



(b)

Gambar 4. Sago Cookies (a) and Sago Chips (b) that have been packaged

Chips Sago holds significant potential as an innovative and healthy snack in promoting local sago-based products. Sago chips and cookies are not just snacks but serve as tangible examples of sago-based product diversification, capable of increasing the added value of sago at both local and national levels. This contributes to supporting the local economy, particularly in sago-producing regions (Syamsuadi et al., 2020).

Based on the *results of the pre-and post-tests*, there was a significant increase in participants' knowledge and understanding of sago as a high-value local food source. Before participating in the community service program, most participants were only familiar with sago flour as a raw material for traditional products such as kapurung, jepa, and ongol-ongol. However, after the socialization and training sessions, participants were able to identify various innovative sago-based products, such as cendol, chips, and cookies, which have higher market value potential. Additionally, participants gained a deeper understanding of the

health benefits of sago, including its ability to aid digestion, support dietary programs, reduce cancer risk, and prevent blood sugar spikes (Dewayani et al., 2022).

This community service activity not only enhanced participants' knowledge but also positively influenced their attitudes and interest in developing sago-based businesses. The post-test results indicated an increased frequency in participants' plans to consume sago products, with many intending to include sago in their diet at least once a week. This suggests that product diversification and improved knowledge can stimulate public interest in sago as a local resource with the potential to support food security and economic growth (Abbas et al., 2020).

Furthermore, participants showed high enthusiasm for developing sago-based businesses, recognizing its significant potential for SMEs and its versatility in being processed into various products. To enhance the competitiveness of sago products in the local market, participants proposed several strategies, including improving product quality, enhancing packaging, promoting products through online platforms, and organizing training and outreach programs specifically to promote sago products. However, they also acknowledged that the general public's knowledge of sago remains limited, highlighting the need for further efforts in educating and promoting sago as a healthy and economically valuable alternative food source.

This community service activity demonstrates that education- and guidance-based empowerment is an effective strategy for increasing community awareness and fostering the development of local potential (Silmi, 2017).

The mentoring approach employed to assist partners successfully improved their ability to market sago-derived products. This was evidenced by the active participation of the participants in every stage of the service activities. Their engagement not only deepened our understanding of the partners' marketing strategies but also helped us develop creative ideas tailored to local market needs. For instance, processed sago products, which were previously sold only locally, have now begun to reach wider markets through the use of social media and partnerships with local eateries.

However, there are several challenges in implementing the activities, including the limited community resources to produce on a larger scale to meet potentially growing market demand. To address this, follow-up training on production efficiency and financial management is planned. This collaborative approach aligns with the findings of Seugiana et al. (2020), which state that the active involvement of partners throughout the empowerment process increases independence. With this strategy, community service activities can significantly enhance the competitiveness of sago-based derivative products in the local market and open opportunities for expansion into broader markets.

CONCLUSION

This community service activity has successfully enhanced the understanding and skills of SMEs in processing sago into higher-value products, such as cookies and chips. This indicates that education, outreach, and training play a critical role in empowering communities to utilize local resources optimally. The increased knowledge of the health benefits of sago, product diversification, and

marketing practices shows that integrated mentoring can be a highly effective solution to overcome market barriers and improve the quality of sago-based SME products. Additionally, the diversification of processed sago products demonstrates the potential to expand market opportunities and enhance economic resilience for local businesses. There is great potential in supporting local food security, enhancing the competitiveness of local products, and expanding the market share of sago-based products.

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