Empowerment of farmer groups in development cocoa agribusiness in Soppeng Regency

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to analyze the process of empowering cocoa farmer groups. This study used a qualitative research approach. Sampling in this study was conducted purposively consisting of 50 cocoa farmers. The sample in this study were the cocoa farmers who participated in the empowerment of farmer group program conducted in Soppeng, South Sulawesi province. Data collection techniques are done by using interview, observation and documentation study. Data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. The results showed that the process of empowering cocoa farmer groups in Soppeng District consisted of the process of empowering cocoa farmer groups in Soppeng Regency includes 3 stages, namely the awareness stage, the organizing stage and the delivery stage. However, the process was not running well.

1. Introduction

The national development directed towards regional development based on Law 32 of 2004 is essentially to stimulate equitable development and improving people’s welfare. At the regional level, regional development in terms of economic aspects must be a top priority in driving the national economy. One of the focuses of the government in driving the national economy is the development of the agricultural sector. Agricultural development aims to increase farmers’ income and welfare by increasing agricultural production. In addition to supplementing industrial raw materials, increasing agricultural production also aims to increase foreign exchange from exports of agricultural products. One of the steps that can be taken to increase the contribution of the agricultural subsector is to increase the production of estate crops. One type of plantation crops that is exported and currently contributes a significant contribution to the acquisition of foreign exchange is the commodity of cocoa [1].

Cocoa (Theobroma cacao L.) is a plantation commodity that has an important role for the national economy, especially as a provider of employment, a source of income and foreign exchange. In 2017, cocoa contributed the third largest foreign exchange contribution to the plantation sub-sector after rubber and palm oil with a value of US $ 1.05 billion.

Based on BPS data [2], there are four provinces of cocoa production centers in Sulawesi, namely Central Sulawesi with a contribution of 19.37% to national cocoa production, then Southeast Sulawesi with a contribution of 16.29%, South Sulawesi with a contribution of 16.28% and West Sulawesi with 9.78% contribution. These four provinces contributed 61.725% of Indonesia's total cocoa production.
South Sulawesi as a province where the national cocoa production has decreased in production in a few years. Based on BPS data, the value of South Sulawesi cocoa exports as of August 2017 amounted to US $ 47.09 million. In fact, in the same period last year, South Sulawesi recorded an export value of US $ 97.48 million for cocoa. The value of cocoa exports decreased to 51.7 percent [2].

One area where cocoa production has not increased is Soppeng Regency. Even though Soppeng Regency is one of the regions with superior commodities in the plantation sector, namely cocoa. Following are the data of cocoa production in Soppeng Regency:

**Table 1. Cocoa production (2014-2017)**

| No. | Year | Amount of Production |
|-----|------|----------------------|
| 1. | 2014 | 11.576.55 ton         |
| 2. | 2015 | 12.345.39 ton         |
| 3. | 2016 | 12.361.39 ton         |
| 4. | 2017 | 12.361.32 ton         |

Source : BPS of Soppeng Regency [2]

Based on table 1, cocoa production increased from year to year but in 2016 to 2017, cocoa production did not increase. The amount of cocoa production can be influenced by the role of human resources to manage their farming [3].

Agricultural development specifically for cocoa agribusiness development is determined by its human resources. If human resources have high motivation, creativity and the ability to develop innovation, then agricultural development much be better. Therefore farmers need to be empowered to improve the ability of human resources. Empowerment means an increase in ability that actually has potential. Starting from the status of the less empowered to become more empowered, so it is more responsible [6].

In developing cocoa agribusiness, the goals of empowerment are better farming, better business, and better living. Farmers who are the main actors in agricultural development in Indonesia are generally classified as a weak economy, which is weak in terms of capital, knowledge and application of technology, and often also less motivated to move forward [4,7].

In the process of empowering the community, the first step is social conscientization. Communities need to be planted with critical awareness about the potential they have to be able to access a number of power in the social space, political space and psychological space. That the poverty they experience is not entirely due to their inherent inability, but because of the workings of structures that deprive them of their abilities, which can be recovered if they are planted with awareness to fight for them [5].

Secondly, community organizing (community organizing) which is a container in fighting back for a number of captured resources. The container is an organization, because through organizations their potential can be united, mutual consultation and exchange of experiences can take place, and collective action can be mobilized. These organizations are civil society organizations (CSOs), which are organizations that are born and grow from the community itself, based on the principle and ownership of collective assets which in turn creates a network of organizations between them [5].

Third, resource delivery, namely the process of delivering additional resources into the community. For governments that are specifically engaged in community empowerment, the specific roles that need to be defined and operationalized are facilitating, strengthening and supporting activities that are initiated indigenous by the community. The role of facilitation, strengthening and support in practice can be seen in two stages; the stage of social preparation in the form of community awareness and organizing (the role of strengthening) and the stage of resource delivery in supporting and facilitating (the role of facilities and their supporters) the implementation of proposed community activities to meet their needs and problem solving [5].

Based on the very complex problems often faced by farmers, the main problem occurs because the ability of human resources in managing farming is not optimal and maximizes their potential.
therefore, the government is trying to deal with the problem by providing various empowerment programs through agribusiness development.

2. Method
This research used a descriptive qualitative research approach. A qualitative approach was used to collect data and information as completely as possible by describing the process of empowering farmer groups in developing cocoa agribusiness in Soppeng District. This research was conducted from September to October in Soppeng Regency. Sampling in this study was done by purposive sampling consisting of 70 cocoa farmers. The sample in this study was the cocoa farmers who participated in the farmer group empowerment program conducted in Soppeng Regency. Data collection techniques were done by interview, observation and documentation study. The collected data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation and making conclusions.

3. Results and discussion
The cocoa farmer group empowerment activities in Soppeng Regency consisted of training and guidance activities which include the development of superior seedlings, good cocoa cultivation field schools and integrated pest control, training programs and technology operation guidance, cocoa processing training programs and group dynamics training programs. The activity was attended by farmers and accompanied by staff from the Soppeng Regency Plantation Office and counselors.

The counseling activities implemented in the process of empowering farmer groups began with the empowerment program planning for several times, then the farmers do their own practice according to the instructions during the training activities based on their own abilities, desires and needs. In addition, farmers who were given training must be included in farmer groups. Before farmers receive training activities, the counselor and staff from the Soppeng Regency Plantation Office informed the farmers about the empowerment program that will be implemented. Farmers who want to take part in an empowerment program must join a farmer group by submitting the RDKK which was assisted by counselors and staff from the Soppeng District Plantation Office.

3.1. Awareness stage
Empowerment of farmer groups in the development of cocoa agribusiness in Soppeng Regency starts with increasing the ability and awareness to participate.

a. Increasing the ability of cocoa farmer groups is the first stage of empowering farmer groups. The ability of farmer groups in managing their existing farming continues to be fostered and improved so as to support the development of cocoa agribusiness in Soppeng Regency. Increasing the ability of farmer groups by providing training and developing human data. This program was carried out with the aim of creating a community that has the ability to manage agribusiness-based farming.

b. Increasing awareness of farmer groups needs to be done because increasing cocoa productivity requires the support of human resources. At this stage the instructor as an empowering party, provided a touch of awareness that will open the desires and awareness of the farmer group about the current state of the farmer group. The awareness of farmer groups can stimulate their awareness that there needs to be improvement in the group so that it can create a better future. Likewise with the process of awareness raising on the empowerment program of farmers groups in Soppeng Regency, where extension workers and the Plantation Office of Soppeng Regency jointly carry out socialization and counseling activities to cocoa farmers in Soppeng Regency regarding empowerment programs that were appropriate and needed by cocoa farmers. The enthusiasm of cocoa farmers in participating in extension activities regarding the empowerment program was still lacking, as seen from the percentage of farmers who were present, it was usually only around 50% of the total number of farmer group members.
3.2. The Organizing stage
The farmer group formed in this empowerment program was not only a place to carry out activities as given, but also a place to discuss or exchange opinions on problems encountered both while the empowerment program was still ongoing, and after the empowerment program ends. Farmer groups were expected to remain active even if they were not currently participating in a farmer group empowerment program. However, the tendency of cocoa farmer groups in Soppeng Regency was passive if they were not participating in an empowerment program. Therefore, the Plantation Office of Soppeng Regency required farmers who want to get help to be involved in farmer groups. The Soppeng Regency Plantation Office did not provide production facilities and training to farmers individually but in groups.

3.3 The Delivery Stage
Empowerment of farmer groups in increasing cocoa productivity can deliver farmer groups to become more empowered and develop their potential. Based on an interview with the Head of the Soppeng Regency Plantation Office, “this farmer group empowerment program is expected to deliver the farmer groups so that later when the program was finished they can continue to develop with their potential.” Delivery of additional resources to cocoa farmer groups in development in the form of agribusiness, in the upstream agribusiness subsystem, namely counseling on the development of superior seeds, in the farming subsystem, namely counseling about appropriate technology to improve the skills of farmer groups, in the processing subsystem, namely training for processing cocoa production and in the subsystem training supporting dynamics to improve performance from members of the farmer group.

In the process of delivering resources to farmer groups, it was hoped that farmer groups will have the awareness to continue implementing the programs provided by the Plantation Office even though the empowerment program that has been given was complete.

Increased independence of farmers was characterized by increased knowledge, attitudes and skills. Increased knowledge from cocoa farmers was changing knowledge about cocoa cultivation techniques and integrated pest control. The attitude of cocoa farmers were increased that were initially passive because they considered the empowerment program organized by the Soppeng District Plantation Service as having no benefit for farmers to be actively participating in the empowerment program and practicing according to the lessons learned in the empowerment program. Enhancing the skills of cocoa farmers is increasing their skills in cocoa farming which, based on their own experience, becomes skills that are in accordance with good cocoa cultivation techniques.

4. Conclusion
Based on the results of research on the empowerment process of cocoa farmer groups in Soppeng Regency, it can be concluded that the process of empowering cocoa farmer groups in Soppeng Regency included 3 stages, namely the awareness stage, the organizing stage and the delivery stage. However, the process has not gone well.

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