

Institutional Embeddedness in Economic Rice Farmer: A Case Study in Duriaasi Village, Southeast Sulawesi



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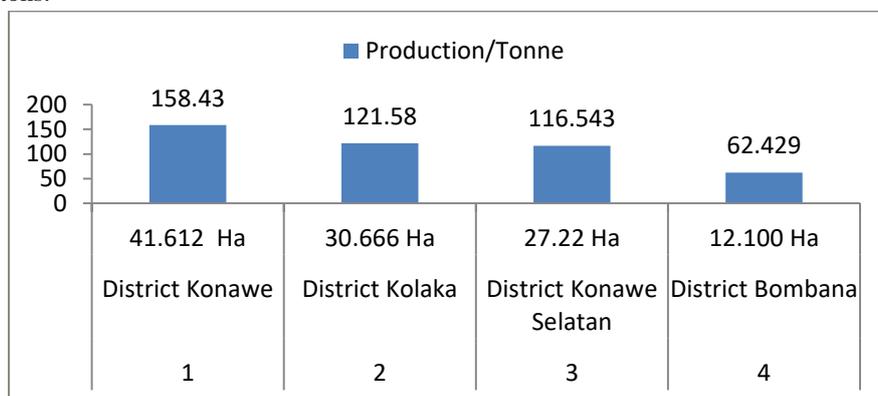
ABSTRACT: This article focuses on the role of institutions in Duriaasi Village, Konawe Regency, in improving the welfare of farmers through efficient rice field management. The farmers have been able to increase their productivity and income by organizing themselves under various village parties, in line with the concept of institutional embeddedness. There is an interesting phenomenon in Konawe Regency whereby the ratio of rice productivity to the area of agricultural land is higher than in other areas of Southeast Sulawesi province, resulting in the highest selling price of dry unhusked rice. This has attracted traders from other regions to come and buy rice. To collect data, a qualitative approach was used, and observations and in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants. The strong relationship between social activities and institutions at the village level has encouraged positive economic growth among farming communities. The good collaboration has resulted in the community's farming productivity exceeding the provincial minimum wage standard.

KEYWORDS: economic, embeddedness, institutional, Konawe, productivity, rice farmer

INTRODUCTION

As the third largest country in the world in consuming rice, Indonesia has many production centers that have their own dynamics. One of them can be seen in Duriaasi. That is a village in Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, where most inhabitants work as farmers. Konawe has 41,612 hectares of paddy land with an average crop of Dry Harvested Grain (Gabah Dried Harvest, abbreviated to DHG) production of 158,43 tons for 233,610 people. It has the highest number of DHG production per year compared to other regencies in Southeast Sulawesi such as Kolaka with 30,666 hectares of land and DHG production of 121.58 tons, South Konawe with 27.22 hectares of land and a yearly production of 116,543 tons, and Bombana with 12.10 hectares of land and an average DHG production of 62.429 tons per year. (BPS, 2015)

Nevertheless, the selling price of unhulled rice from it was higher than that of unhulled rice in other districts in Southeast Sulawesi. This attracted many traders from outside who came to buy grain in Konawe. The high price of grain originating from its farmers can be caused by several factors such as product quality and institutional aspects in the district. This high quality, of course, was due to the quality of the environment, especially the soil and an effective management system there. Konawe district had the highest rice production in Southeast Sulawesi. Among the four regencies in Southeast Sulawesi, This Regency has the lowest ratio of land area and production yield, averaging only 3.80 tons. Kolaka Regency reaches 3.96 tons, Konawe Selatan 4.28 tons and Bombana reaches 5.15 tons.



Figures 1. Land Area and Rice Production for 4 Regencies in Southeast Sulawesi in 2016.

Source: compiled by authors from several data

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The high price of grain originating from Konawe farmers can be caused by several factors such as product quality and institutional aspects in the district. In this study the authors focus on reviewing the role of institutions both in the community, government institutions, and (private) traders who have been able to generate economic benefits for the Konawe village community. Management of agriculture in order to increase productivity and income is based on institutional embeddedness as the primary argument.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Institutional embeddedness is the most significant thing in the success of development (Evans, 2005), especially in rural areas (Achwan, 2013) and strong institutions can overcome very difficult problems faced by the state (Adnan, R.S., et al., 2022; Muhammaditya, et al., 2021). As an agricultural commodity that is a staple food for most people in Asia, rice management has been carried out for centuries in a unique institutional system in each location.

Amrifo (2013) emphasized that development would develop well if social institutions in the village play an active role in supporting community-based development. The role of institutions among socio-economic institutions in society will influence growth patterns to increase productivity (Wigena 2011). The pattern of development in Konawe is of course very influential on the involvement of community institutions so that the economic life of the rice farming community is prosperous.

Economic development, especially in agriculture, is closely related to the significant role of institutions (Evans, 2005; Palmolina, M. et al., 2020; Shahbaz, M., et al. 2018) in organizing people to work well and in a directed manner. Evans' main concept is embedded autonomy, through which the state and society can strengthen each other in the economic sphere. The agricultural phenomenon in Duriaasi Village Konawe Regency can be further explained using the institutional embeddedness framework from Achwan (2013) which consists of 3 main components: economy, state, and society.

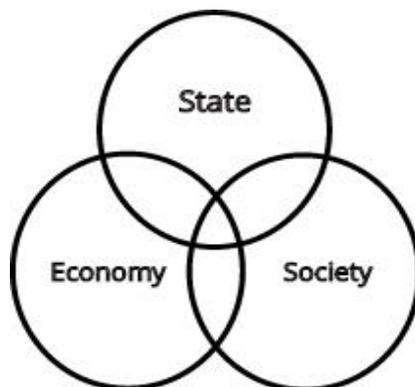


Figure 2. Institutional embeddedness framework. Source: Achwan, (2013).

The institutional embeddedness of the three macro institutions can be called ideal if they complement each other (synergy) in achieving economic and political goals (Block and Evans, 2005). The institutional embeddedness is dynamic and always changing. The dynamics of change can only be realized by the state, society, and industry through institutional innovation. Good institutional embeddedness does not mean that one aspect of a particular institution has to be highlighted. Instead, there is a balance of synergy between these macro institutions. As a main institution, the government plays an important role when it supports the management of farming businesses to produce better economic conditions for the community.

METHODOLOGY

In addition to secondary data, field research was carried out for 3 (three) weeks in July 2017 using in-depth interview techniques and "live-in" observation at the location. Duriaasi Village was chosen as the research locus because it has the largest area in Konawe Regency, which was around 11,376 Ha and has the largest rice farming area in Wonggeduku sub-district, which is 288.85 Ha. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were carried out with 11 (eleven) key informants consisting of 4 (four) people from representatives of the Konawe Regency Government (Agriculture Service, Irrigation Resources Office, Wonggeduku Sub-District Head and Duriaasi Village Head), 4 (four) people from the management of agricultural institutions, namely food storage and associations of water-consuming farmers (P3A) and 3 (three) people from traders (middlemen) in Duriaasi Village.

The analysis process began with data reduction and then selecting and simplifying to focus on the problem to be studied. Then the data obtained from the results of interviews, observations and secondary data were grouped and classified according to their respective characteristics. Then the data was described and analyzed by descriptive analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Duriaasi Village was one of the 15 villages in Wonggeduku District, Konawe Regency, which had been definitive since 1986 and was divided in 1997 into two villages and two districts. Its area was 288.85 hectares with most of the population working as farmers and relying on land as a means of agricultural production.

With agricultural production that stands out among other villages in the Wonggeduku District, the Duriaasi community also had a spirit and culture that adapted to changes. Rice production, which was previously for family needs, became oriented towards financial benefits by selling it to traders outside the village. Farmers also knew this fundamental change would require a trustworthy institution. Especially in facilitating the local government and middlemen's support and cooperation with Duriaasi villagers.

The farmer group organization in Duriaasi Village had two association institutions established on the initiative of residents. In addition, one was formed at the government's insistence: (1) it was a food storage institution maintaining village food security. This institution was established by the local community to maintain rice availability during a famine or crop failure. Institutional means of savings and loans for the community in the form of milled dry unhusked rice (GKG). This organization was a kind of "cooperative" in India, known as the Cooperative Development Foundation (CDF) which developed the role of women's businesses in the village economy (Stuart and Sandhya Kanneganti, 2003). Community members who administered the food store stored up to 2 quintals of unhulled grain in one growing season. It is used to assist people who lack the capital to process rice fields. Village residents elect alternate members to manage the food storage institution every 2 (two) years. The food storage organization provided benefits to Duriaasi Village, especially for crop failure victims. One obstacle was the awareness among those who borrowed grain that it was difficult to return.

"In most cases, people who borrow grain struggle to give it back because they don't have replacement grain. We, the barn administrators, have to wait again for the next planting season, so the program from the barns often gets stuck due to farmers themselves" (the chairman of the food barn).

The pattern of institutional development requires the involvement of each member and all stakeholders involved. Santos, et al. (2015) stated that the role of institutions in the village in building the community's economy was a facilitator who creates efforts to mutually encourage cooperation between villagers, agricultural extension workers, village development cadres, and the local government. The existence of social and economic institutions is able to contribute to the economic development of society.

The Duriaasi Village food storage institution also received attention from the local government by providing capital assistance of Rp. 25,000,000 which members could access. This assistance allowed for synergistic relations between government and community institutions. This gave a trend of success according to Block and Evans (2005), in developing the economy of rice farming communities. Cooperation between the government and community economic institutions would have a significant economic impact on community economic sustainability. This view was strongly corroborated by Friis-Hansen's (2008) study of African Uganda. According to the study, efforts to eliminate poverty in rural areas require the government, local institutions, and private organizations to provide services. By providing institutional services, rice farmers will be able to innovate and implement successful agricultural patterns.

This showed that the government was actively involved in launching community empowerment programs, especially for crop failure victims. Practically the empowerment of farming communities was carried out by agricultural extension workers in the field. In addition to pest control training, these workers also conducted pesticide training. Also, training on how to grow crops so that rice productivity does not decrease and grain quality improves.

(2) The Water User Farmers Association (P3A) was formed by the Konawe district government through the Decree (SK) of the Regent of Konawe No.490 of 2016. P3A was based on the needs of farmer groups in the village. It was responsible for ensuring the availability of irrigation water networks to the entire community. Government programs such as this one, especially those of the Department of Irrigation and Water Maintenance, are crucial to irrigation water supply availability during each growing season. P3A repaired the tertiary canals in each irrigation canal and provide water distribution to all communities during the growing season. Capital for repairing irrigation canals was still being used through self-help because the source of assistance for repairing tertiary networks was limited. While the two institutions have different functions, they both ensure farmers' welfare.

The Government's Role Against Farming Communities

Referring to Evans (2005), government institutions were the main component of developing the community economy. Government policies and programs could play an influential role in improving rice farming communities' economies. Developing innovative programs requires a strong government. As an institution with attachment, it could be said that farming communities' income can be measured through inclusive and innovative policy programs.

Wonggeduku District rice fields are paddy fields, most with irrigation canals. This means that these lands were arable and productive land managed by rice farming communities. However, development still leaves some lands without irrigation canals.

The government's efforts to innovate institutions to achieve ideal economic welfare goals can be seen in the assistance programs provided to rice farming communities. **First**, the Konawe Regency government implemented the rice fields program

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through the Agriculture Service. Farmers who had an area of no more than 0.5 ha were prioritized to expand their land. The newly printed land belongs to all the people who once lived in the forest. In 2016 the Wonggeduku District government created around 500 hectares of fertile land for agriculture. However, all farming community groups, especially rice farmers in Duriaasi Village, did not own such a large rice field area. According to Amal Rey (1979), inequality in the distribution of aid programs reflects weak administrative management of government institutions, which causes the distribution of program assistance to remain concentrated on one group.

Second, the Government Program on Agriculture Service assisted rice farming communities by providing seeds. According to the number of farmer group members in village communities, seed assistance was distributed based on proposals from farmer group institutions. Rice farmers without capital receive 25 kg of seed per hectare. This assistance was given directly by the government to the community. In addition, the government (Agriculture Service) offered technological tools for managing rice fields in the form of hand tractors, post-harvest tools, and planting tools. This assistance program was managed directly by the community via Farmers' Groups and Associations of Water User Farmers (P3A).

To reduce rice farmers' production costs, the central government provided assistance in the form of subsidized fertilizers which were transferred to all regions including Konawe Regency. The use of subsidized fertilizers for the rice farming community in Duriaasi Village uses Urea, SP-36, and NPK-Phonska fertilizers. Subsidized fertilizers were determined by the district government. In 2016 the distribution of subsidized fertilizer needs throughout Konawe Regency according to the food crop sub-sector can be described as follows: Urea was 4,649.05 tons, SP-36 was 1,300.59 tons and NPK-Phonska was 3,933.23 tons. Rice farming communities still used subsidized fertilizers very heavily.

Third, the most urgent Konawe Regency government program was the distribution of cropping season patterns agreed upon based on the Decree (SK) of the Konawe Regent No. 490 of 2016. This program was supported by the Association of Water-User Farmers (P3A) in the Duriaasi Village community. The cropping pattern program was adjusted to the availability of irrigation water in the community. This required a joint agreement between the rice farming community and the government. P3A accommodated the cropping pattern program based on the Konawe Regent's decree. 490 of 2016. In the Decree, the division of the planting pattern for the irrigation canal of Duriaasi Village, Wonggeduku sub-district, was included in the Wawotobi irrigation canal. The Wawotobi irrigation canal which covered approximately 18,000 hectares of paddy fields was divided into 3 (three) planting seasons in accordance with the Decree of the Konawe Regent No.490 of 2016.

The planting season pattern in the Wawotobi irrigation area and within it was part of the Wonggeduku sub-district which also includes Duriaasi Village, there were 3 (three) scheduled planting season patterns in a year. In accordance with the joint agreement between the government and farmers, the Decree of the Konawe Regent No. 490/2016 stated that the first planting season was for rice. During the second planting season, they planted crops, and during the third planting season, they planted rice. On the basis of the cropping pattern schedule, one can note that the government's commitment to increasing rice productivity in Duriaasi Village includes the support of the cropping schedule program for the community. To improve productivity and grain quality, cropping patterns of this sort must be determined.

Table 1. The pattern of cropping and water distribution in the Wonggeduku Irrigation Area, Duriaasi Village, which enters the Wawotobi Irrigation Channel in 2017

No	Planting season I: Paddy	Planting Season II: Palawija	Planting season III: Paddy
1.	Tertiary repair: (20 - 31 Dec 2016)	Land processing: (15 - 20 May 2017)	Tertiary repair: (25 July - 15 Aug 2017)
2.	Watering: (1 - 31 Jan 2017)	Plant: (21 May 2017)	Watering : (16 Aug 2017)
3.	Land processing: (1 - 31 Jan 2017)	Water release: (10 - 14 June 2017)	Land Processing: (16 Aug - Sep 2017)
4.	Sowing seeds: (15 - 20 Jan 2017)	Harvest: (7 Aug 2017)	Sowing seeds: (25 Aug - 5 Sep
5.	Plant (5 - 20 Feb 2017)		Plant (16 - 30 Sep 2017)
6.	Water closure (15 May - 15 Aug 2017)		Water closure (16 - 31 Dec 2017)
7.	Harvest (25 May 2017)		Harvest (20 - 31 Dec 2017)

Source: researcher

In the Duriaasi Village community, this cropping pattern was known as "transplanted planting" using the "jajar legowo" system. It was a way of planting rice in farming communities by adjusting spacing. Essentially, the cropping system involved manipulating the land by adjusting the spacing between rows. This was done so that the land could accommodate more plant populations by

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clearing one row of existing land. In addition, this cropping pattern was to ensure soil fertility was maintained so that grain quality in the Duriaasi Village area did not decrease. It remains a bone of contention for traders (middlemen).

The partnership of P3A and government institutions could improve farming communities' economies. These two institutions would build strong embeddedness in developing farming communities' economic success. Strong embeddedness could be seen in the cooperation between the Konawe Regency government (Water Irrigation and Water Conservancy Service) and water-using farmer associations (P3A) in determining the schedule of cropping patterns so that they could produce quality grain in Duriaasi Village as caused by the Wawotobi irrigation canal area. Strong embeddedness did not only depend on 2 (two) institutions between the existing community and government, but also on the existence of a synergistic relationship between all stakeholders involved, namely the community, the government, and traders. A network pattern formed by merchants would activate the economic system.

Even strong institutional embeddedness did not necessarily lead to positive results for rice farming communities' economic development if it was not supported by a reliable system (Evans, 2005). This study indicates that institutional cohesion in Duriasih was supported by an agricultural management system that worked in synergy with the government, traders (middlemen), and the community. These conditions have positively affected the community's economy.

The Role of the Market in the Rice Farmer's Economy

The role of the market was very dominant in determining the sale of agricultural products for the rice farming community in Duriaasi Village. By forming a cooperative relationship with traders, rice could be sold to them. Close cooperation between traders and the rice farming community could be seen in the capital assistance lent to the rice farming community in processing the rice fields. Every growing season, traders lend to farmers who lack capital of IDR 3,000,000. This allows rice farmers to process their fields easier. On the other hand, traders and farming communities cooperated in the purchase of agricultural products. This was because traders bought harvested dry unhusked rice (GKP) from the community above the set base price.

Government grain purchased from Bulog cost IDR 3,700/kg. In contrast, Duriaasi Village traders purchased grain for IDR 4,500/kg. Nevertheless, the purchase price of grain for farmers indicated the importance of traders' role in the rice distribution system. This might lead to traders' dominance. Nevertheless, the cooperative relationship between traders and farming communities had a positive impact on agricultural businesses' economic development. Mutually beneficial partnerships continue to be established because farmers' grain quality was much better than in other regions in Konawe. The high price of grain in Konawe was quite different from the price of grain in other areas, for example in East Kolaka and Bombana Regencies, which were still around IDR.4,000/kg.

With their high-quality grain, farmers in Konawe created competition among traders. As a result, many traders played up prices on the market so they could get grain according to their demand. Adamowicz and Strzicki (2010) described the agricultural market in Poland in relation to agricultural markets and information communication networks for developing small farmers. The most significant marketing institution was to build markets innovatively to benefit small farmers sustainably. Studies in South Africa by Blessing Mukabeta (2010), Okello et al. (2010) in Kenya, and Alozie (2010) in Nigeria concluded the same thing. Namely, the market played a dominant role in improving small farmers' economies in a sustainable manner. This was achieved through agricultural technology development and adequate social communication.

The studies above were highly relevant to the sustainability of the agricultural economy in Duriaasi Village, which was still influenced by traders. Farmers in Duriaasi Village were still small farmers. The institutional business network of farming communities influenced farming sustainability in the community as an imperative factor in grain marketing. The association of traders' organizations in Duriaasi Village was united into one institution called the rice mill association (Perpadi). This organization maintained grain price stability in the community and prevented traders outside Duriaasi Village from playing up grain prices on the market.

The economic embeddedness of the Rice Farming Community

The farming community group of Duriaasi Village conducted lowland rice farming using IR-64 Ciharang seeds at a unit price of IDR 8,000 to cover 25 kg of land with rice seeds. Seeds are usually obtained with local government assistance. Subsidies were provided for Urea, SP-36, and NPK-Phonska fertilizers. In processing rice fields, rice farming communities without capital could cooperate with traders by borrowing capital to meet rice field processing needs. This cooperation allowed for the establishment of a strong attachment (strong embeddedness) between rice farming communities and traders. Table 2 shows the economic benefits of rice farmers.

Duriaasi Village's lowland rice production was relatively low, with around 4 tons/hectare of harvested dry grain (GKP). These results were quite low compared to Wonggeduku District as a whole. The total rice production was between 8 and 9 tons per hectare (Central Bureau of Statistics Konawe 2016). It is estimated that Duriaasi Village's community income in one planting season is more profitable. This was despite rice productivity being relatively low in one planting season.

Tabel 2. Analysis of Lowland Rice Farming in Duriasi Village

No	Description	Unit/ Ha	Price/ unit (Rp)	Price (Rp)
1	Seed	25	8. 000	200.000
2	Fertilizer (Kg)			
	Urea	400	1.800	720.000
	SP-36	200	2.000	400.000
	NPK Phonska	400	2.300	920.000
3	Pesticide	-	-	1.000.000
4	Man power			
	Land processing	2		1.200.000
	Repair of paddy field bunds and creation of nursery areas	2	100.000	400.000
	Planting	15	-	1.200.000
	Fertilization	2	100.000	200.000
	Spraying	-	-	-
	Harvesting	1 ha	4.000	400.000
	Renting a car from the fields to the mill	18	5.000	90.000
5	Cost of production	-	-	6.730.000
6	Production GKP (Kg)	4.000	4.500	18.000.000
7	Profit (6-5)	-	-	11.270.000

source : authors compiled this information from various sources

This could be seen in the total production costs incurred by the community in one planting season of IDR 6,730,000 for one hectare of paddy field. The highest expenditure in the labor sector was IDR 3,490,000 and followed by the cost of fertilizer, IDR 2,040,000. After that, pesticides cost IDR 1,000,000 and the smallest need for rice production was seed cost IDR 200,000.

The production cost of IDR 6,730,000 produced 4 tons of harvested dry grain (GKP) by selling unhusked rice at IDR 4,500/kg to traders or hullers. The farmer's profit in one planting season was IDR 11,270,000. When profit was calculated, the ratio of average monthly income for the farming community for a 4-month period during one planting season was IDR 2,817,500. Farmers' income in one month exceeded the provincial minimum wage standard (UMP) of Southeast Sulawesi Province in 2017 of IDR 2,003,000. These advantages gave the impression that market structure still had power in community farming. Market power was based on community relations that support farming communities (Hinrichs C, 2000).

Meanwhile, there was a strong bond between traders and rice-farming villagers, forming a positive economic network between them. The relationship was evident not only in traders lending money but also in increasing government trust in helping rice farming communities. From the mutually beneficial forms of cooperation between the government, traders, and community economic institutions, it was clear that the government's commitment to the rice farming community at both the Konawe regency and village levels was very clear. This cooperation would become more harmonious if the institutions involved complement one another and provide mutual benefits.

Challenges of Agricultural Business and Economic Sustainability

As stated by Block and Evans (2005) in (Achwan, 2013), social researchers should not focus only on one macro institution in explaining financial life dynamics in a society and a country. Because success dynamics always change depending on institutional innovation. It was this change that led the authors to conduct a mesoscale study. The findings of this study enrich Evans' thesis which uses an economic sociology lens for case studies in agricultural villages in Indonesia through an "institutional embeddedness" approach at the meso level of analysis. Duriaasih village's economic prosperity is not studied at the macro level as Evans did in his research conducted in non-Western countries (Achwan, 2013). It can be carried out by all institutions in society. The economic success story of the rice farming business in Duriasi Village, Konawe Regency, was marked by strong embeddedness between rice farming communities and traders or large entrepreneurs in marketing grain products then a strong partnership was formed.

This economic success would not necessarily last forever but depends on the farming community's institutional situation and conditions. Institutional innovations are needed to develop rice farming economies. From a sociological perspective, rice farming's economic sustainability is largely determined by the rice farming community. In Duriaasi Village, the rice farming community was still classified as small farmers and very vulnerable, so this will negatively impact rice field productivity. There is a lack of "regeneration" in farming families, and more farming families choose to change jobs to the palm oil industry and nickel mining rather than rice farming. Rice farming is greatly affected by such conditions in terms of economic sustainability. Meanwhile, due to the cooperation between the local community and the traders (middlemen) in marketing grain-quality products, the economic sustainability of the rice farming industry will be largely determined by the community's social relations.

However, the most challenging threat is the entry of office buildings in connection with the formation of several newly created autonomous regions in the Konawe Regency. In addition, the entry of the nickel mining smelter industry. These buildings will

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exploit some of the community's productive land to become office and industrial areas. To maintain the economic sustainability of agricultural businesses in Konawe in a situation like this, the agency will need to play the most influential role. Duriaasih village's agricultural economy must expand in various ways if it succeeds. For this reason, government agencies should remain focused and consistent on developing the village economy despite a change in leadership. Remember that changes in leadership at various levels in Indonesia often change policies and management styles. This causes confusion in the wider community. (Hartadi and Arianto, 2020).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study support Evans and Achwan's argument which states that economic life does not stand alone but is intertwined with another. Embeddedness occurs between the village community, countryside associations, the government, and the commercial network of traders. It had a positive impact on the community's economic development. Synergistic relationships in increasing farmers' income can be seen in the collaboration between the Konawe Regency government and water-using farmer associations (P3A). In addition, the government's commitment is to provide program assistance to rice farming communities in the form of subsidized seed and fertilizer assistance and expansion of community rice fields. Although the assistance program has not been significantly distributed, it has not affected the Duriaasi Village community's farming activities.

In addition, the relationship between the community and traders can also be seen in the capital assistance provided to the rice farming community. Having social network relationships between farming communities, the government, and traders will improve farming communities' economies. This can be seen in the profit of the farming community in one paddy rice planting season (4 months) of IDR 11,270,000/hectare. If the average monthly income is around IDR 2,817,500 - This means that it is higher than the standard minimum wage for Southeast Sulawesi Province which is only around IDR 2,003,000. In other words, about 40.6% more - a significant number.

It is imperative to increase the positive aspects of the food barn as much as possible. GKP lending should be disciplined to keep Duriaasi village's agricultural quality and productivity high. The government must be convinced that this has been done. This will prevent disappointment in the community. So that the printing of newly-planted rice fields in the Wonggeduku sub-district can be enjoyed by the whole community transparently.

Related to the above, the authors suggest several things for policymakers. (1) The Konawe Regency Government needs to issue a regional regulation (Perda) to strengthen institutionally. (2) Konawe Regency's agriculture office is required to offer assistance programs, specifically rice field expansion programs for farmers. This is very relevant for agricultural independence in the region and Indonesia. (3) The government needs to encourage young people to get involved in agriculture through various incentive programs. To maintain and improve agricultural productivity, this is very significant.

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