

The Existence and Strategy of Planting Bengawan Rice in Ekoleta Farmers, Detusoko District, Ende Regency

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

Research entitled The Existence and Cultivation Strategy of Bengawan Rice for Ekoleta Farmers, Detusoko District, Ende Regency. Focuses on how the strategy of the Ekoleta rice farming community maintains the existence of Bengawan rice, using the theory of Community Empowerment according to Robert Chambers. This study aims to determine the strategy of Ekoleta rice farmers in maintaining the existence of Bengawan Ekoleta rice. In accelerating these goals, the researchers used descriptive qualitative research methods, and for data collection using interviews, observation, and documentation techniques. Researchers found several strategies of Ekoleta rice farmers in maintaining the existence of Bengawan Ekoleta rice, namely through the selection of seeds and nurseries, rice casings, and rice care. The findings above are very relevant when linked to the theoretical basis of community empowerment according to Robert Chambers, namely Ekoleta rice farmers empower themselves through Bengawan rice farming activities in new ways that keep them cultivating Bengawan Ekoleta rice. In the end, the researcher recommends a number of suggestions: for the Ekoleta rice farming community to continue to maintain the existence of bengawan rice so that this bengawan rice will continue to exist at any time.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an agricultural country where most of the population lives from farming or farming, so agriculture is a sector that plays a role in the welfare of the lives of the Indonesian population. The potential of agricultural land in Indonesia includes dry land, irrigated rice fields, and rainfed rice fields. With such potential, the agricultural sector becomes the source of the national economy, which is supported by 80% of the Indonesian population making a living as farmers (Shafie et al., 2012)

The agricultural sector is the opening key to the success of food security, economic growth, socio-cultural development, environmental sustainability, stability, and security (Harjo & Adi, 2023). This is said because agriculture is inherent in the lives of farming communities in rural areas, where there are various kinds of agricultural activities occupied by farmers so that they become an important part that is inseparable from the lives of people in rural areas (Hidayatulloh et al., 2012)

Agriculture is the backbone of food supply for the life of the Indonesian nation. Agricultural land is the main capital for growing various types of staple foods (Wee et al., 2023). Historically, agriculture or farming is one of the oldest activities that mankind has pursued. As the population

increases, the supply of food that can be managed is increasingly limited, thus encouraging humans to cultivate food crops by planting and maintaining plants in a simple way and then being able to obtain results (Sipahelut, 2010b). Farmers began to plant a variety of crops that included food crops, plantations, fruits, and timber ranging from rice fields, plantations to yards (Suhardi & Handojo, 2007)

With consideration of the importance of food, the government always strives to increase food independence, especially those sourced from increasing domestic food production. These considerations are becoming increasingly important due to Indonesia's growing population. The definition of food independence is inseparable from Law Number 18 of 2012 concerning food. It is stated in the law that food independence is the ability of the state and nation to produce diverse food from within the country that can ensure the fulfillment of sufficient food needs up to the individual level by utilizing the potential of natural, human, social, economic, and local wisdom resources in a dignified manner (Takahashi et al., 2010).

Ende Regency is also one of the districts that has considerable potential in agriculture. The agricultural sector is one of the mainstays in Ende Regency. Agricultural land in this case is field gardens, irrigated rice fields, and rainfed rice fields that include lowlands and slope areas at the foot of the mountain. With such land potential, most of the population in Ende Regency depends on the agricultural sector, especially dryland agricultural businesses, irrigated rice fields, and rainfed rice fields (Purwono & Purnamawati, 2007; Sipahelut, 2010a).

Based on data obtained by researchers, Wologai Village is one of the villages in Ende Regency whose area has considerable potential in agriculture, both from plantation and rice fields. This is supported by natural conditions as well as climate and soil conditions that are fertile enough for agricultural business (ALRIDIWIRSAH et al., 2020; Koentjaraningrat, 1987). Of all the agricultural businesses in Wologai Village, the most prominent production is rice. The Ekoleta rice farming community produces Bengawan rice and has become a mainstay rice known by the wider community, with a total number of Ekoleta farmers as many as 474 people and a rice field area of 120.5 ha.

The data on the number of farmers who are still producing Bengawan Ekoleta rice and who are no longer producing Bengawan rice include the following:

Table 01 Data on Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers and other rice farmers

No	Description	Sum	Percentage (%)
1.	Bengawan rice farmers	20 inhabitants	4,21%
2.	Other rice farmers	454 inhabitants	95,79%
	Total	474 inhabitants	100%

Source: Wologai Village Profile and Bengawan Rice Farmer Profile, May 2022

The Ekoleta rice farming community relies heavily on the results of rice field farming business, which is characterized by Ekoleta rice farmers trying to produce rice twice a year, namely in the dry season and rainy season. It was conveyed by Mr. Aurelius Rada who is one of the Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers that Bengawan rice itself is Ekoleta local rice which has been inherited by the ancestors of the Wologai community for a long time, besides that Bengawan rice has good quality in terms of resistance to disease, can be stored for a long time because it is in accordance with local natural conditions and uses an organic farming system. In addition, when viewed from an economic point of view, Bengawan Ekoleta rice is very promising even though the production process takes longer than other rice, but the benefits obtained are greater because in terms of price and quality, it is certainly far different from other rice (Armañ et al., n.d.).

But currently, the productivity of bengawan rice has decreased. This is because the number of Ekoleta farmers who produce bengawan rice began to decline because some Ekoleta farmers began to switch to producing other rice. In fact, without realizing it, by producing other rice, of course, the existence of bengawan rice, which has become the main product of Ekoleta farmers, loses circulation (Awan Santosa et al., n.d.). This situation resulted in the smaller volume of

Bengawan rice production (Chambers, 1992). Meanwhile, consumer needs for bengawan rice from time to time continue to increase. This situation certainly encourages Ekoleta farmers who are still cultivating Bengawan rice to carry out the right strategy in maintaining Bengawan Ekoleta rice.

Based on the background description above, researchers are interested in researching the "Strategy of Ekoleta Rice Farmers in Maintaining the Existence of Bengawan Ekoleta Rice in Wologai Village, Detusoko District, Ende Regency.

METHOD

In this study the author uses qualitative research methods, (Creswell, 2015) defines it as an approach or tracing to explore and understand a central phenomenon. To understand these central symptoms, researchers interviewed study participants or participants by asking general and broad questions according to Creswell quoted by (Suharsaputra, 2012). While the descriptive approach, namely research in the form of words and images, the data here intends to be transcripts of interviews, field data records, personal documents, photographs, cameras, notes and others. The research data must be described by the researcher.

By using descriptive qualitative research, researchers will approach it with an interview method so that they can understand and know the strategy of the Ekoleta rice farming community to maintain the existence of Ekoleta bengawan rice in Wologai Village, Detusoko District, Ende Regency.

The unit of analysis is the smallest unit in a study that contains all the characteristics of the study. The unit of analysis can be an object of occurrence that is a reference from the study. Research must determine the unit of analysis in order to focus on the basis of analysis on what or whom. This object becomes the population that is the focus of research. The unit of analysis in this study is Ekoleta rice farmers in Wologai Village, Detusoko District, Ende Regency.

The method of collecting data through interviews in qualitative research is generally intended to further explore an event or activity of the research subject. Therefore, in qualitative research an in-depth interview is needed, both in a situation and in several stages of data collection (Cempaka et al., 2022). An interview is essentially a conversation, a purposeful conversation. Interviews are very necessary in qualitative research, because many things are impossible to observe directly such as feelings, thoughts, motives, and past experiences of respondents / informants. Therefore, interviews can be viewed as a way to understand or tap into other people's perspectives on the world and their social lives (Sugiyono, 2010). In this case, the researcher will use the interview guidelines that have been provided previously and also create new questions from the interview results that are not in the interview guidelines.

The data analysis technique that will be used by researchers is by collecting all qualitative information obtained from interviews and documentation and then categorized into each theme. Next, the researcher will connect all available information and dissect it in more depth using relevant theories so as to produce a final conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the discussion and analysis are used by researchers as a reference to find final conclusions comprehensively related to the problems raised by researchers in this study, namely;

Seed Selection and Seeding

Seed selection and seeding is also one of the initial strategies used by Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers to use superior rice seeds, to conduct good breeding, and prepare quality rice seeds to be used for cultivation. The selection of seeds and nurseries is meant in terms of increasing awareness in individual farmers themselves to maintain the existence of Bengawan Ekoleta rice. Based on the findings of researchers, the method carried out by Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers is by continuing to use Bengawan rice seeds every planting season, sorting rice seeds (*seru pare*), storing rice seeds from the harvest, and using the right seeding techniques. In these ways,

Bengawan rice farmers are able to overcome the problems faced in maintaining Bengawan rice which is one of their sources of income.

In empowerment theory according to Robert Chambers explained that empowerment is a process and goal. As a process, empowerment is a series of activities to strengthen the power or empowerment of weak groups in society, including individuals who experience poverty problems. Referring to the empowerment theory, Bengawan rice farmers are optimistic about empowering themselves by using new ways in seed selection and seeding strategies, namely in the seed sorting process, Bengawan rice farmers not only pay attention to the age of rice that is ready to be used for sorting but pay attention to superior rice quality for use such as having large grains, Good grain, has the same weight, because if the rice seeds used are of low quality, it will affect the results obtained. The nursery is also carried out by farmers by soaking rice seedlings using water, salt and eggs to separate pithy and empty seeds. This technique is an empowerment effort carried out by Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers in developing agricultural patterns that are better than old habits that are often made so that they are able to maintain the existence of Bengawan rice. Empowerment is carried out with the aim of maintaining bengawan rice, increasing local food production, reducing the risk of farm failure, to get good harvests.

Planting

Planting is also a strategy used by Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers in maintaining the Bengawan Ekoleta rice planting method in Wologai Village. In this case, planting is done so that rice plants can grow well, and get good yields. Based on the findings of researchers in the field, the strategies used by Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers to maintain the existence of Bengawan rice are using traditional planting patterns, planting using seedlings with a maximum age of 3 weeks, planting using 4-5 rice seedlings in one planting hole. This method aims to grow rice well according to farmers' expectations.

Empowerment in the theory proposed by Robert Chambers is seen as the center of development where development essentially starts from the needs of the community, then the community itself raises the idea of what it experiences as a social action or problem solving that is happening. The empowerment referred to here is that Bengawan rice farmers themselves are the center of development so that Bengawan rice farmers must build and change themselves from the old way to the most appropriate new way. Empowerment carried out by bengawan rice farmers in planting by paying attention to planting distance and planting time. The planting distance used by Bengawan rice farmers is a maximum of 20 x 20 cm, in this way, the rice plants get enough sunlight and evenly distributed food substances because the planting distance used is the same. Several methods in the planting process used by Ekoleta bengawan rice farmers have the aim of getting abundant harvests, and producing many rice shoots.

Therapy

Treatment is also a strategy used by Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers to maintain the survival of rice from being eaten by pests. Based on the findings of researchers, the methods used in carrying out treatment are regular water management, cleaning weeds (ghejo bene) in the fields, cleaning rice fields (dhawe kolo go), re-embroidery of dead rice, cleaning snail pests using manual methods, snail medicine and spreading leaves. This is done so that farmers' hopes to get good yields can be realized.

The theory of community empowerment according to Robert Chambers asserts that empowerment is a process and a goal. As a goal, empowerment refers to the circumstances or outcomes to be achieved by a social change; namely people who are empowered, have power or have knowledge and ability to meet their needs both physically, economically and socially such as having self-confidence, being able to convey aspirations, having a livelihood, participating in social activities, and being independent in carrying out their life tasks. Treatment is an empowerment carried out by Bengawan rice farmers independently, the empowerment in question is that Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers cultivate rice in an organic or natural way, farming with an organic system makes Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers not dependent on chemical drugs, reduces costs for procurement of chemical drugs, maintains nutrients in the soil and maintains the ecosystem in rice fields. Because currently it is very rare for farmers to use organic methods

because farming using organic methods is considered to require more time and energy while non-organic agriculture is chosen by farmers to speed up the process of cultivating plants. Care is carried out to care for their rice plants so that rice plants get enough water intake, are not eaten by pests, and get good yields.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of interviews and analysis conducted, the researcher concluded that the strategy of the Ekoleta rice farming community in maintaining the existence of Bengawan Ekoleta rice is as follows:

1. Seed selection and seeding

The selection of seeds carried out by Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers using Bengawan rice seeds, sorting rice seeds (seru pare) during harvest while seeding is carried out in several ways, namely: drying rice seeds, soaking rice seedlings using water, salt, and eggs for approximately 2 nights until rice buds appear and then rice seedlings are ready to be sown into rice plots. This is so that bengawan rice farmers continue to maintain bengawan rice, increase local food production, reduce the risk of farm failure, to get good yields, and minimize seed scarcity and want to encourage other rice farmers to return to cultivate bengawan rice seeds.

2. Plant

The planting process carried out by farmers uses a traditional planting system with a distance of 20 x 20 cm or more tightly and no rows are emptied, using a maximum seedling age of 2-3 weeks for planting, planting 4-5 seedlings in one planting hole. It aims to get abundant harvests, and produce many rice shoots.

3. Treatment

The care carried out by Bengawan Ekoleta rice farmers is by first cleaning weeds that grow in rice plots (ghejo bene), cleaning rice fields (dhawe kolo go), embroidery on dead rice, cleaning snail pests manually, using drugs, and using foliage. This is done so that rice plants get enough water intake, are not eaten by pests, and get good yields.

REFERENCES

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