

The Perception of Young Farmers Regarding the Sustainability of Food Farming in South Lampung Regency

Suci Amalia^{1*} and Ihsan Mustofa²

^{1,2}Agribusiness Vocational Education Program, Faculty of Science, Nahdlatul Ulama Institute of Technology and Science Lampung
Correspondence: suciamaliafm@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Food is a commodity that is always needed for the sustainability of people's lives, in Indonesia, and it serves as a cornerstone for economic development and growth. This study aims to understand the perceptions of young farmers regarding the sustainability of food farming in South Lampung Regency. The research was conducted from early November 2022 to January 2023. Primary data was collected through interviews with a group of 93 young farmers, assisted by questionnaire completion. Secondary data was obtained from the Lampung Agriculture Office. This research employed descriptive analysis methods. The results show that the perceptions of young farmers toward the sustainability of food farming are mostly categorized as high. This can be seen from internal factors, including education level, gender, and age. The higher the education level, the broader the horizons of young farmers, which increases their interest in farming. Women have a lower interest in farming because they prefer to take care of children and believe that agricultural work can ruin their appearance. Overall, respondents are in the productive age range of 30-35 years and fall into the category of young entrepreneurial farmers. External factors include income, availability of production facilities, and land area. The income of young farmers in South Lampung Regency is categorized as low, due to the limited agricultural land they cultivate. The availability of facilities is categorized as high. Young farmers believe that work in the agricultural sector is quite profitable in the long term and can maintain sustainability and stability in food security.

Keywords: Food, perceptions, sustainability, and young farmers.

A. Introduction

Food is a commodity that is always needed to sustain life in Indonesian society and serves as a foundation for economic development and growth. The sustainability of agricultural enterprises has become an increasingly important issue amid global challenges such as climate change, urbanization, and the rising demand for food. Sustainable farming not only impacts food security but also environmental conservation and the socio-economic well-being of rural communities. In Indonesia, the role of youth in the agricultural sector is often considered crucial to ensure the continuity of farming in the future. However, the number of young people involved in agriculture continues to decline, and their interest in this sector is often perceived as low. Youth perceptions of the sustainability of agricultural enterprises are one of the key factors that can influence their involvement and contributions to the agricultural sector.

Young farmers represent a new generation with the potential to bring positive change through the adoption of technology, environmentally friendly farming practices, and innovations in farm management. However, their perceptions of the benefits, challenges, and prospects of sustainable farming are greatly influenced by various factors, including personal experience, family support, access to technology, and government policies. Understanding young farmers' perceptions of agricultural sustainability is an important initial step in formulating strategies to keep this sector attractive and promising for younger generations. This study aims to identify young farmers' perceptions of the sustainability of agricultural enterprises and the factors that influence them. By understanding these perceptions, it is hoped that recommendations can be generated to increase youth involvement and contributions to sustainable, competitive, environmentally conscious agriculture that can create stable job opportunities.

B. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The sustainability of food farming is a concept that encompasses economic, environmental, and social aspects of agricultural practices to ensure a sustainable food supply for both current and future generations. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), agricultural sustainability involves efforts to increase food production without depleting natural resources, such as soil, water, and biodiversity. In the context of food farming, sustainability is measured by the agricultural system's ability to continue production, maintain ecological balance, and provide sufficient economic returns for farmers (Pretty, 2008). Implementing sustainable agricultural practices requires farmers' understanding and acceptance, particularly among the younger generation. Young farmers' perceptions of agriculture are crucial in determining their engagement in this sector. Research indicates that youth often hold negative perceptions of agriculture, viewing it as a less profitable, less prestigious, and challenging occupation (Moyo et al., 2014). However, as technology advances and government policy support increases, these perceptions are gradually shifting, especially among youth with access to training and modern agricultural technologies (Sumberg et al., 2014). This change in perception is vital to creating greater appeal for youth in the agricultural sector, ultimately supporting the sustainability of food farming.

Youth perceptions of sustainable food farming are influenced by various factors, including demographic factors such as age, education level, and farming experience (Rahman et al., 2020). In addition, access to information and modern agricultural technologies is also a significant factor that can affect youth perceptions of farming sustainability (Chikezie et al., 2012). Government support in the form of training, extension services, and access to agricultural credit plays a crucial role in encouraging youth interest in sustainable farming (IFAD, 2019). These factors not only shape their views of agriculture as a profession but also influence their attitudes and willingness to adopt sustainable practices.

The main challenges young farmers face in sustainable farming include limited land, capital, and market access. Climate change also presents a major challenge that requires adaptation and innovation in farming practices (FAO, 2020). Despite these challenges, young farmers have the potential to become agents of change in the sector by utilizing digital agricultural technology and innovation to increase efficiency and productivity (Proctor & Lucchesi, 2012). Greater support in terms of policy, infrastructure, and market access can encourage active youth participation in developing sustainable food farming.

Young farmers are seen as having great potential to drive agricultural sustainability because they are more receptive to new innovations and technologies. With better knowledge of modern farming techniques, young farmers are expected to manage farming enterprises that are more productive, efficient, and environmentally friendly (Bezu & Holden, 2014). Research by Juma (2019) emphasizes the importance of supporting youth roles in agriculture through training and skill enhancement so they can meet the complex challenges of the agricultural sector and strengthen food security. Based on the literature review, the main hypothesis in this study is that young farmers' perceptions of the sustainability of food farming are influenced by factors such as education, access to agricultural technology, environmental awareness, and socio-economic support.

C. Research Method

This study uses a quantitative approach, employing a descriptive survey method with a cross-sectional approach, where data is collected at a specific point in time to understand young farmers' perceptions of the sustainability of food farming. The instrument used is a

structured questionnaire divided into several sections. The first section contains questions about the type of farming, age, gender, and education level. The second section includes statements about perceptions of food farming sustainability, measured on a Likert scale (1–5) to assess respondents' level of agreement. These statements cover aspects such as the availability of production facilities and infrastructure, land area, and income. The study was conducted in South Lampung Regency from November 2022 to January 2023.

The research location was deliberately selected (purposive sampling). The population of this study consists of young people aged 18–35 who are engaged in food farming. The sample was determined using Simple Random Sampling, yielding 93 respondents, and data was collected with the help of a questionnaire. The data collected includes both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from respondents, while secondary data came from the Provincial Agriculture Office of Lampung. The stages of data analysis included tests for normality and multicollinearity, as the descriptive analysis approach was used. This analysis was conducted using SPSS 16. To ensure the research instrument's validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha), the questionnaire instrument was tested before being applied to the study sample.

D. Discussion

1. Types of food farming businesses.

The respondents of this study consist of 93 young farmers in South Lampung. The distribution of the types of food farming businesses among young farmers in South Lampung Regency is as follows:

| Kecamatan | Tanaman pangan | | | | Total |
|----------------|----------------|------|---------|-------|-------|
| | rice | corn | cassava | other | |
| bakauheni | – | 156 | – | – | 156 |
| candipuro | 662 | 45 | – | – | 707 |
| jati agung | 418 | 445 | 43 | – | 906 |
| kalianda | 580 | 225 | – | – | 805 |
| katibung | 195 | 283 | – | – | 478 |
| ketapang | 527 | 557 | – | – | 1084 |
| merbau mataram | 361 | 292 | – | 21 | 674 |
| natar | 525 | 385 | – | – | 910 |
| palas | 1266 | 145 | – | – | 1411 |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|------|------|----|----|-------|
| penengahan | 112 | 270 | – | – | 382 |
| rajabasa | 135 | 37 | – | – | 172 |
| sidomulyo | 256 | 390 | – | – | 646 |
| sragi | 334 | 185 | – | – | 519 |
| tanjung bintang | 309 | 199 | – | – | 508 |
| tanjung sari | 131 | 114 | – | – | 245 |
| way panji | 12 | 371 | – | – | 383 |
| way sulah | 663 | 32 | – | – | 695 |
| total | 6486 | 4131 | 43 | 21 | 10681 |

2. Factors Influencing Perceptions of the Sustainability of Food Farming

The perceptions of young farmers in farming are influenced by two factors: internal and external factors. Internal factors include age, gender, and formal education, while external factors consist of the availability of production facilities and infrastructure, land area, income, and social support.

2.1 Age of Respondents

The age of respondents is one of the factors that can influence a person's perception in farming. The general distribution of respondents in this study is as follows:

| Age (years) | number (people) | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 18-23 | 8 | 8,60 |
| 24-29 | 24 | 25,81 |
| 30-35 | 61 | 65,59 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

Based on the table above, it is known that the majority of respondents are in the 30-35 age range, with a percentage of 65.59%. According to Minister of Agriculture Regulation No. 07/Permentan/OT.140/1/2013 regarding guidelines for youth development, South Lampung is included in the group of young entrepreneurial farmers. According to this regulation, individuals in the 30-35 age range are considered independent young farmers, who run their own farms, have chosen agriculture as their livelihood, and possess an entrepreneurial spirit.

Young farmers in a younger age group (e.g., 18–25 years old) may tend to be more enthusiastic about innovation or new ideas, but they may lack experience compared to older farmers. This age group may be influenced by trends or the push

for digitalization in agriculture. On the other hand, older young farmers (e.g., 26–35 years old) tend to be more mature in decision-making and have a broader network, but they may be more skeptical about change. Older youth often think more about family stability or income, while younger ones are more interested in exploring ideas or innovations. Therefore, young farmers remain highly productive in pursuing agricultural ventures.

2.2 Gender

The gender of the respondents is one of the factors that can influence a person's perception in farming. The general distribution of respondents in this study is as follows:

| Category | Number (people) | Percentage (%) |
|----------|-----------------|----------------|
| Man | 89 | 95,70 |
| Female | 4 | 4,30 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

The results of the study show that the distribution of young farmers in South Lampung is predominantly male compared to female. This is because women have a lower interest in farming, as they prefer to take care of children and believe that agricultural work can damage their appearance.

2.3 Formal Education

The formal education of the respondents is one of the factors that can influence a person's perception in farming. The general distribution of respondents in this study is as follows:

| Category | Number (people) | Percentage (%) |
|--|-----------------|----------------|
| Elementary (Primary School) | 2 | 2,15 |
| Secondary (Junior High-Senior High School) | 75 | 80,65 |
| Higher (Bachelor's Degree) | 16 | 17,20 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

Based on the research results, the level of formal education among the youth in South Lampung Regency consists of elementary education (SD), secondary education (SMP, SMA/SMK), and higher education (D3/S1). Secondary education (SMP, SMA/SMK) dominates the distribution compared to the other two

categories. The educational level of farmers can influence their perceptions of farming. This is in line with Irsa's (2018) study, which states that the education level of farmer groups is predominantly at the SMP and SMA levels. A person's level of education can affect the speed at which innovations and information are accepted, thus changing knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to improving production outcomes.

2.4 Availability of Production Facilities and Infrastructure

The availability of facilities and infrastructure for the respondents is one of the factors that can influence a person's perception in farming. The general distribution of respondents in this study is as follows:

| Category | Jumlah (orang) | Persentase (%) |
|----------|----------------|----------------|
| High | 47 | 50.54 |
| Medium | 35 | 37.63 |
| Low | 10 | 10.75 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

The research results show that the availability of production facilities in South Lampung Regency falls into the high category. Based on field findings, the availability of production facilities for respondents in the high category is due to respondents' easy access to seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural chemicals. Respondents obtain these production facilities through technology platforms such as online marketplaces. The marketplaces used include Shopee and Tokopedia, which make it easier for respondents to obtain seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural chemicals in terms of distance. The availability of production facilities is easily accessible because young farmers are part of a generation that is tech-savvy.

Access to modern agricultural technology, such as efficient irrigation systems and innovative cultivation techniques, plays a key role in shaping young farmers' perceptions. Young farmers with access to this technology tend to be more optimistic about the sustainability of agriculture because it allows them to improve their production efficiently, easily, and in an environmentally friendly manner.

2.5 Land Area

The land area of the respondents is one of the factors that can influence a person's perception in farming. The general distribution of respondents in this study is as follows:

| Category | Number (people) | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Large (>1 ha) | 47 | 50.54 |
| Medium (0.5-1 ha) | 35 | 37.63 |
| Small (<0.5 ha) | 10 | 10.75 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

The land area owned by farmers is an important factor and a fundamental need for farmers. In this study, the land area refers to the land used or cultivated by young farmers for their farming activities, specifically food farming. Based on field findings, the land area for young farmers in South Lampung Regency falls into the small category. This is because the land owned by young farmers is inherited from previous generations.

This is in line with Pinem's (2020) study, which states that the land owned by youth today is decreasing due to the inheritance system, where parental land is divided equally among their children. Small land area becomes one of the factors influencing young farmers' perceptions of not engaging in agriculture, as they believe that small land will result in low income.

2.6 Income

The income of the respondents is one of the factors that can influence a person's perception in farming. The general distribution of respondents in this study is as follows:

| Category | Number (people) | Percentage (%) |
|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| High | 10 | 10.75 |
| Sufficient | 35 | 37.63 |
| Low | 47 | 47.54 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

The income of the youth in South Lampung Regency in this study was measured based on the income from rice farming during one planting season. The research

results show that the income from farming among the youth in South Lampung Regency falls into the low category. Low income is directly related to the limited land used by young farmers for their entrepreneurship. As many as 35 respondents are still hesitant to engage in farming entrepreneurship due to factors such as fluctuating climate conditions and extreme pest attacks in recent years, as well as their reluctance to take risks regarding market prices for their products.

3. Young Farmers' Perceptions of the Sustainability of Food Farming

The perceptions of young farmers influence the sustainability of food farming. The general distribution of respondents in this study is as follows:

| Category | Number (people) | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Good | 43 | 46.24 |
| Fairly Good | 41 | 44.09 |
| Poor | 9 | 9.68 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

Perception is a viewpoint that arises from an individual's awareness of an issue. Perception can serve as a way to broaden someone's knowledge or understanding, allowing them to view things with a broader perspective. Perception has characteristics such as: someone with a high perception tends to think broadly and does not discriminate, thus not viewing problems from a narrow or fragmented perspective. Based on field findings, the perception of young farmers toward the sustainability of food farming falls into the good category. This good category is because young farmers believe that farming is a prestigious and profitable job in the long run. The social environment in South Lampung Regency is one where young farmers are highly active in agriculture, and the region has even established specific groups for young farmers.

The formation of these young farmer groups has become a source of pride for young farmers in their involvement in agriculture, as they feel valued and supported by the government. This aligns with research by Qudrotullah (2022), which found that young farmers generally feel the same way—they feel respected by their community, and many take pride in being young farmers. They feel honored, even by those working outside the agricultural sector, as there is mutual respect and assistance among both

young and older farmers. They motivate and support each other in their profession as farmers.

However, there are some obstacles, such as limited land and market uncertainty, which may affect income and discourage some young farmers from working in agriculture. Despite these challenges, the majority of young farmers believe that agriculture is a sector that will never die, as it is always needed by society. Moreover, young farmers view working in this sector as a noble profession, as it provides food to many people. This is in line with research by Pinem (2020), which suggests that farming is a job that anyone, regardless of education level or social status, can engage in, and young farmers believe farming is an honorable job because it benefits all living creatures. Additionally, farming does not diminish the pride or dignity of young people within their communities. Qudrotullah (2022) also mentioned in his research that young farmers feel respected and valued in their surroundings. This perception indirectly contributes to the sustainability of farming enterprises and helps maintain food security stability.

E. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the perception of young farmers towards the sustainability of agricultural enterprises is influenced by two factors: internal and external factors. Internal factors include age, gender, and formal education, while external factors encompass the availability of production facilities and infrastructure, land area, income, and social support. The results of the study show that the perception of young farmers towards the sustainability of food farming enterprises mostly falls into the high category. This can be seen from the internal factors, including education level, gender, and age. The higher the education level, the broader the perspective of young farmers, leading to an increased interest in farming.

Women have a lower interest in farming as they prefer to take care of children and believe that farming could negatively affect their appearance. Overall, the respondents are in the productive age range of 30-35 years and belong to the category of entrepreneurial young farmers. External factors include income, availability of production facilities, and land area. The income from young farmers' enterprises in South Lampung falls into the low category due to the limited land area cultivated by young farmers. The availability of

production facilities falls into the high category. Young farmers consider working in the agricultural sector to be quite profitable in the long term and capable of maintaining sustainability and food security stability.

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