

COMMUNITY SERVICE THROUGH EMPOWERING KELULUT HONEY IN THE KELULUT MELAKA VILLAGE COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This community service program aims to improve community empowerment through the cultivation of stingless bee honey in Melaka by involving housewives and local farmer groups as the main targets. The methods used include education on the benefits and techniques of stingless bee cultivation, practical training in making and maintaining nests, and digital-based marketing strategies to increase product competitiveness in the market. Through ongoing mentoring, participants gain a better understanding of business management and marketing of stingless bee products through social media and e-commerce platforms. The evaluation results show an increase in community skills in cultivating stingless bees independently, while opening up new sustainable economic opportunities. Thus, this program not only increases public awareness of the potential of stingless bee honey as an alternative source of income, but also encourages more sustainable and productive management of natural resources.

Keywords: Kelulut Honey, Community Empowerment, Digital Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Community empowerment can be defined as an effort to restore or enhance the capacity of communities to act in accordance with their dignity in exercising their rights and responsibilities as a group. The concept of community empowerment is more than just a theoretical framework for rural development, but also includes the potential for development at the community level. The idea of empowerment is the acquisition of adequate skills, knowledge and power by individuals that enable them to influence their own lives and the lives of those they care about. The involvement of local communities in sustainable economic development through education and training can contribute significantly to improving well-being and the capacity to adapt to economic and environmental change.(Adiputra et al., 2021).

Community-based learning, also known as Community Service, is one of the learning and teaching methodologies that meet the above criteria. It is a type of teaching that combines teaching with meaningful community service opportunities. Service-based learning is a planned learning activity or community-centered education that is recommended to achieve academic goals while learning about community service. Reflection, community partner participation, and maintaining a balance between learning and service are important components in service-based learning. Kelulut honey cultivation as a local initiative in the Kelulut village community in Melaka has great potential in efforts to improve community welfare and maintain environmental sustainability.(Irwansyah et al., 2023).

Honey is part of the non-timber forest products (NTFPs) that is most in demand because of its nutritional value and potential benefits for health and beauty. Honey is a rich source of nutrients, antioxidants, and anti-allergic and anti-inflammatory properties, which contribute to improving body health.(Pramesti et al., 2023). Kelulut honey is famous for its propolis content, a natural medicine that comes from bees. Propolis has been proven to have health benefits that further emphasize the various benefits of honey. Kelulut honey has a higher nutritional value than regular honey and has the ability to regulate cholesterol levels in the blood(Nasirly et al., 2023).

The cultivation of stingless bees or stingless bees has been recognized as an activity with high potential to improve the welfare of local communities. This activity is not only promising in increasing income, but also in maintaining environmental and social sustainability. The practice of cultivating stingless bees can be a tool for economic empowerment, especially in the context of a sustainable economy. According toNoorahya et al., (2022)Kelulut honey cultivation has a high sustainability value, which is characterized by strong social acceptance in the community. This proves that education and training targeting local communities in encouraging increased acceptance and involvement among kelulut honey farmers in this activity(Vaulina et al., 2020).

Education and training play a crucial role in improving the ability of local communities to manage sustainable kelulut honey cultivation. Communities can understand the importance of environmental sustainability through education and training. On the other hand, education and training provide practical skills for kelulut honey farmers in understanding bee colony management, improving product quality and understanding the kelulut honey market.(Eladawiyah et al., 2023).

Certain management practices, such as colony inspection, maintenance, and the application of optimal harvesting techniques, have a significant impact on the productivity and income derived from stingless beekeeping. Dissemination of effective educational and training materials to beekeepers can facilitate the optimization of these practices, thereby ensuring more sustainable and profitable outcomes.(Fitriani et al., 2023).

ACTIVITY METHOD

The implementation method in this community service activity uses a participatory approach, where the community is actively involved in every stage of the activity. This approach is carried out through socialization, training, and mentoring which aims to improve the understanding and skills of the target community. The results of this activity are measured using descriptive and qualitative methods with success indicators that include changes in attitudes, socio-culture, and the economy of the community. The level of achievement of the success of the activity is evaluated through direct observation, interviews, and questionnaires distributed to participants. In addition, data analysis is carried out to assess the impact of activities on improving welfare and changing community behavior. This evaluation not only assesses the short-term impact but also sees the extent to which the changes that occur can be sustainable in the long term.

The method used in this program is a participatory approach through education and training that actively involves the community in all stages of the activity. This approach aims to ensure that each participant not only gains

theoretical knowledge but also has practical skills that can be applied directly. Thus, it is hoped that this activity can provide a sustainable impact on improving the welfare of the target community. The steps taken in implementing this method include:

1. Problem Identification – The initial stage of this activity is to conduct a survey and interviews with the target community to understand the problems they face in the field of kelulut honey cultivation. This identification aims to obtain accurate data on the main obstacles faced, both in terms of knowledge, skills, and access to markets. In addition, direct observation is also carried out to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the social, economic, and environmental conditions of the local community.
2. Training – After the problems are identified, participants are given theoretical and practical training related to kelulut honey cultivation techniques. Training materials include how to choose an ideal location for cultivation, kelulut bee care techniques, efficient honey harvesting, and digital marketing strategies to increase product sales. This training is provided by experts and practitioners who are experienced in the field of kelulut bee cultivation, so that participants can gain deeper and more applicable insights.
3. Mentoring – After the training, participants are not left to try on their own, but are given regular mentoring to ensure that the implementation of the techniques they have learned is going well. This mentoring includes field visits, technical guidance, and consultations that focus on solving problems encountered during the cultivation process. In addition, participants are also assisted in developing marketing networks so that the honey products produced can reach a wider market and have better competitiveness.
4. Evaluation – To measure the success of this program, an evaluation was conducted using pre-test and post-test methods to determine the increase in participants' knowledge and skills before and after participating in the training. The evaluation also included interviews and satisfaction surveys to determine the extent to which this program provided benefits to the community. In addition, monitoring of the development of the kelulut honey cultivation business run by participants was also carried out as an indicator of the sustainability of the program in the long term.

Through this series of steps, it is hoped that this program can provide real benefits and have a positive impact in improving community welfare through optimal utilization of the potential for cultivating stingless bee honey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This activity is carried out by lecturers and students and the community, the majority of whom are housewives, who aim to utilize local potential in supporting regional programs. This activity is focused on developing activities in an area in the form of training in making processed products. The development activities carried out refer to the potential in Kelulut Melaka village, one of which is kelulut honey. The activity began with an observation of the location of kelulut honey cultivation which was cultivated directly by the community in Kelulut Melaka village.

The harvest of stingless bee honey is usually sold in the form of honey water at a relatively high price. However, the marketing of stingless bee honey has not reached a national scale, mainly due to the lack of awareness and benefits of

stingless bee honey among the general public, even though this stingless bee honey product has quite a lot of potential. However, the sour taste of stingless bee honey reduces its appeal, even though it has many benefits. Therefore, a stingless bee honey business development strategy is needed to create new business opportunities through training programs that provide education on stingless bee honey cultivation to meet market needs.



Figure 1
Honey processing process



Figure 2
Discussion of observation results



Figure 3
Group photo



Figure 4
Expo MIEX 24 University Teknologi Mara

The program has positive impacts in environmental and social aspects. Field observations show that participants who previously paid little attention to the environmental impacts of beekeeping are now starting to implement more environmentally friendly practices. They have started to plant more flowering plants as a source of bee food, which not only helps increase honey production but also contributes to the local ecosystem. In addition, they also reduce the use of pesticides around the beekeeping area, thus maintaining environmental balance and ensuring the production of more natural and high-quality honey. In addition, this group of beekeepers also plays a role in sharing information on the latest cultivation techniques and helping each other in facing challenges in the stingless beekeeping business. This success shows that community-based business development can be an effective strategy in improving the social and economic welfare of the community, especially in rural areas that have natural resources that

can be optimally utilized.

In addition to the impact on the level of understanding and skills of participants in cultivating stingless bee honey, this program also opens up opportunities to expand marketing through participation in various events, including international expos. One of the opportunities utilized was involvement in an exhibition in Malaysia, where the stingless bee honey product was introduced to a wider audience. This expo became an important momentum in introducing stingless bee honey as a superior product that has export potential. During the expo, the response of visitors to stingless bee honey was quite positive. Many expo participants were interested in the uniqueness of stingless bee honey compared to ordinary honey, especially in terms of health benefits and more natural cultivation methods. Several parties even showed interest in establishing cooperation in product distribution, both nationally and internationally. This is an indication that marketing of local products can be expanded abroad with the right promotional strategy and support from various parties, including the government and academics. In addition, involvement in the expo also provides benefits in terms of education and business networking. Participants gain new insights on how to market products in the global market, including how to build a strong brand that meets international standards.

From the perspective of the kelulut honey farmer community, involvement in such events also encourages the spirit of innovation. After attending the expo, several farmers began to explore derivative products from kelulut honey, such as health supplements, honey-based cosmetics, and honey-based snacks. With this innovation, the added value of the product can increase, so that farmers do not only depend on the sale of pure honey but also have a more sustainable business diversification.

This success shows that community-based product marketing can be strengthened by collaboration and participation in international events. To maintain this momentum, strategic steps are needed in production management, improving product quality, and expanding distribution networks. If managed properly, stingless bee honey has the potential to become a superior product that can compete in the global market and provide a significant economic impact for the local community.

With the various benefits that have been achieved, this community service program can be a model for the development of similar businesses in other areas. The sustainability of this program can be maintained with the support of various parties, such as local governments, financial institutions, and advanced training programs that can help the community continue to develop their businesses independently. If this program continues to be developed well, it is not impossible that kelulut honey from this area can become one of the superior products that can compete in a wider market, both nationally and internationally.

CONCLUSION

This community service program has had a positive impact on community empowerment through the cultivation of stingless bee honey. Participants showed significant improvements in the technical aspects of cultivation, business management, and digital marketing. This success shows that an educational and hands-on approach can improve community skills and independence in developing local economic potential.

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