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1 **The Importance of Community Empowerment through Strengthening Farmer Groups in the Forest Management Unit (KPH) Way Terusan Central Lampung, Lampung Province Indonesia**

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author CW designs research, looks for data sources and reviews research results. Author HK designs research methodology and reviews research results. Author SB makes research and collaboration administration letters and reviews research results. Author YSA taking field data and references from all sources and reviewing research results. Author CYV processing data and research results. Author PH Conclusions and summarizing the sources of research results. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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1 ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine and determine the implementation of activities in strengthening the Forest Farmer Group (KTH) in Way Terusan Forest Management Unit (KPH) of Central Lampung, Lampung Province. This study is conducted because apparently only about 87% of 42 forest farmer group still actively run their program. The research was conducted on August - September 2022 using *direct observation* research method by collecting primary and secondary data. There were 42 respondents that represented the 42 KTH as a research data. The data is analyzed by using descriptive approach that includes both descriptive qualitative and descriptive quantitative research. Based on the results, it is known that the implementation of activities in strengthening farmer groups in KPH Way Terusan are: forming the KTH and involving them in all activities, such as the Fire Care Community activity, Community capacity building based on needs, Improving community welfare through the development of creative economy businesses, Establishing Community Self - Help Forestry Extension Officers (PKSM) and the Establishment of Community Polhut Partners (MMP). The success of strengthening this KTH are supported by :(1) Understanding the potential and weaknesses of the group (39 respondents), (2) Considering the opportunities and challenges that will be faced in the future (28 respondents), (3) Choosing various alternatives that exist to overcome the problems faced (33 Respondents), (4) Organizing group and community life in harmony with the environment on an daily basis (42 respondents), (5) Have expertise and partners in promote results the forest after participate in programs implemented by KPH (40 Respondents). The conclusion of this research is 42 respondents agree that success reinforcement on KTH is supported with exists increase connection life group and coexistent society with environment in a manner continuous.

Keywords: Way terusan forest management unit (KPH); forest farmers group (KTH); strengthening famer group.

1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of forest farmer groups plays an important role in community empowerment-based forest management. A group of farmers that formed because of the damage level of forest every year caused an uneven development of the countryside and followed with increasing number poverty and unemployment [1]. That condition encouraged the community to fulfil their needs by doing a penetrate forest method, to shift cultivation until it becomes an open land that made a settlement resident. The gaps Among rural community and urban areas are increasingly conspicuous where the level of evenness well-being in this moment is not fully achieved because the existing forest farmer group expected to be capable to encourage the well-being in community that have a livelihood as forest farmer by optimizing the use of land for sustainable development [2]. In fact, the fundamental goal of reducing the gap between regions is not only for physical development but also the gap of well-being community [3].

As Global Forest Watch (GFW) notes, during 2001-2020 the primary forest in Lampung Province has lost 17,359.34 ha or 6.7% of the total primary forest. This influenced the

deprivation of carbon stock for 13,733,799.1 C. In 2016, the protected forest has lost 1716.11 ha. Next, the cumulative change of protected forest since 2001-2020 is 66,263.7 ha or equivalent with 140 million tons of C emissions [4]. The damage of forest in Lampung Province caused by several factors such as illegal logging and plotting forest area yet could under control [5]. Based on the forest damage caused by encroachment the government secrete a policy about Social Forestry through Regulation of the Minister of the Environment Life and Forestry Republic of Indonesia Number 9 of 2021 Concerning Management Social Forestry. The purpose of the policy is to increase well-being community through pattern empowerment and with permanent based on aspects sustainability. Therefore, needed an effort of implementation about community empowerment programs appropriately.

According to Waoruntu, Lengkong and Londa [6], community empowerment is one method or way that can used in huge national development. Community empowerment is a motivation and encouragement given to community intensively to be able to recognize theirself, find potency of theirself and act to repair the quality their life. The statement above aligned with the opinion of

Fauzi [7], that empowerment is an effort to make community empower to have a control of every decision they made, and took a right decision for the continuity of their life. Successful community empowerment could be conducted by strengthening farmer group program well [8]. Encouraging forest group farmer is an activity that aims farmer group to develop as an active healthy institution, participative, functioning and useful for its members.

The process to strengthen farmer group is not an easy thing to do because generally, farmer groups only active at certain times or if there is an activities / projects so they have no seldom after finished the project. So, when the task is finished, the farmer group return to be not active because of the low performance of the farmer group. According to Hermanto and Swastika [9], Low-performance group existing farm among other things because low role of farmer group administrator, group member that doesn't clear, farmer group structure that doesn't complete and functional, low effort of productivity and lack of farming coaching from the manager. Besides that, many of the member don't ensure the quality from farmer group. The low quality of farmer group resulted in incapacity and independence farmer group to develop farmer group independently so the farmer group become less productive and passive. That is necessary to have an appropriate reinforcement group program that adjust with conditions on the field.

The community empowerment through strengthening group is an alternative to solve the problem. Empowerment programs could be conducted with utilise group that already formed. Groups that given education and training before, aim to refresh and upgrade knowledge and skills specifically the community around KPH Way Terusan. This statement supported by Bahua [10], reinforcement of institutional group farmer must boil down to the formation agenda as an independent, solid, and empowered farmer group to be used in fulfillment needed by farmer group member. Farmer group here besides functioning as a learning medium, also functioning as a political tool to strengthen the ability bid as well as an access for the farmer in taking decision to get agriculture resources. Based on a number form of the researcher, there is not yet related research about the importance of strengthening group in a framework to increase community empowerment [11-13]. Because that urgent exists, the study about strengthening farmer group in forest management area as an effort of

enhancement group farmer capacity through coaching series to realize the independence of farming group and farmers welfare around Way Terusan Forest Management Unit (KPH) of Central Lampung, Lampung Province.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted in August-September 2022 in KPH Way Terusan of Central Lampung, Lampung Province. Respondents of this study amounted to 42 respondents. They are one representative member of the 42 KTH in Way Terusan Forest Management Unit (KPH). Determination of total respondent based on total representation on each forest farmer group. According to Sugiyono [14] the method of study is a scientific method to get data with certain purpose and use. According to Yin [15], the data collection technique consists of from observation field, interview, survey until primary and secondary data collection. Research data analyzed with approach descriptive mix. According to Creswell [16], approach descriptive is an approach combined research among study qualitative with study quantitative and the results are valid.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 General Conditions of KPH Way Terusan

KPH Way Terusan is one of the Technical Implementation Units of the Lampung Province Forestry Region, which is located in Central Lampung. Through Lampung Governor Regulation Number 3 of 2017 dated February 1, 2017 concerning the Technical Implementation Unit of the Forest Management Unit (UPTD) VI Way Terusan at the Lampung Provincial Forestry Service. Then it underwent a nomenclature change through Governor's Regulation number 10 of 2020 to become a Regional Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD) for KPH Way Terusan. As a first step for KPH Way Terusan in carrying out its main tasks related to administration, a short-term forest management plan (RPHJPD) document for 2022 is required as a management plan document that maps out the journey for the success of the KPH in 2022 [17].

KPH Way Terusan is divided into 2 (two) registers, they are register 47 and register 08. Register 47 is geographically located at 105° 40' to 105° 50' east longitude and 4° 30' to 4° 40'

latitude, located in the flow area Way Seputih River (Sub-Das Way Terusan) at an altitude of 5 meters to 20 meters above sea level. The topography of the area is flat and wavy. The soil type is red yellow podzolic and the parent rock condition is sandy rock. According to Oldeman's classification, the Central Lampung Regency area belongs to the C2 climate type, which has a wet month of 5 to 6 months and a dry month between 2 to 3 months with the amount of rainfall for the last 10 years is 2390.2 mm/year and a temperature between 26 s/year. d 28° C. Administratively, Register 08 is located in 4 sub-districts in Central Lampung Regency and 1 sub-district in East Lampung Regency, namely: Kec.Bandar Surabaya, Seputih Surabaya, Rumbia and Putra Rumbia, and Way Bungur (East Lampung). Register 08 is included in the Way Seputih watershed which is directly adjacent to the Way Kambas National Park (TNWK). The topography of the area is flat to moderate with an altitude of 15-25 meters above sea level. The soil type in this KHL is red yellow podzolic. The area of KHP Register 47 Way Terusan is in accordance with the Decree of the Minister of Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia Number: SK.930/Menhut-II/2013 concerning the Designation of a Permanent Production Forest Area of Way Terusan (Register 47) [18] which is located in Central Lampung Regency, Lampung Province, covering an area of ± 13,749.3 (thirteen thousand seven hundred forty-nine and three tenths) Ha. Meanwhile, KHL Register 08 according to the Decree of the Minister of Forestry and Plantations Number: 256/Kpts-II/2000 dated August 23, 2000 has an area of 5666.72 Ha [17].

KPH Way Terusan is a forest management site at the group level that carries out the duties and responsibilities for the implementation of forest management, by carrying out activities namely forest governance and management plans, forest utilization using forest areas, forest rehabilitation and reclamation, forest protection and nature conservation [19-22]. In addition, KPH Way Terusan has a main function as a producer of timber and non-timber forest products. Also, it has additional function as a protector of life support system such as arranging water management, prevent the flood, and controlling the erosion [17]. In realizing the main function of the KPH Way Terusan, it requires the participation of the community around the Way Terusan KPH to jointly manage and utilize the forest area in a sustainable and sustainable manner.

3.2 Forest Farmers Group (KTH) KPH Way Terusan

Based on the vision of the KPH Way Terusan, Community Empowerment-Based Production Forest, of course, in order to achieve the vision, there is a mission that can encourage the realization of the vision, Such as : 1) Assuring the existence of forest areas and realizing the economic, ecological and social functions of forest areas, 2) Developing both KPH and the community in area of forest management. This mission was created to make KPH and the community to be involved actively in planning, managing, monitoring and supervising the management of the KPH Way Terusan, 3) Tightening the community attitude to manage the forest areas in accordance with sustainable forest principles, where the purpose of this third mission provides obligations to the community KPH to provide assistance [17]. For realize KPH Way Terusan vision and mission to be Forest Production based Community Empowerment then KPH Way Terusan form group known farmer as KTH whose purpose is order management area forest could be utilized with good and wise.

Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Forestry Republic of Indonesia Number: P.57/Menhut -II/2014 Forest Farmers Group (KTH) is a group of farmers or individual Indonesian citizens and their families who manage business in the forestry sector inside and outside the forest area which includes business of wood forest products, non-timber forest products and environmental services, both in upstream and downstream. KTH has a function as a media for community learning, capacity enhancement for members, cooperation and mutual cooperation, productive business development, processing and marketing of forest products and increasing awareness of forest sustainability [23,24]. This is in line with the policy of Government Regulation Number 6 of 2007 concerning Forest Management and Preparation of Forest Management Plans, as well as Forest Utilization where community empowerment is carried out to obtain optimal and fair benefits of forest resources through capacity building and providing access in order to improve their welfare. Forest Farmers Groups (KTH) located in KPH Way Terusan are spread out on Register 47, Register 8 and in the area of forest area. The number of KTH at Way Terusan KPH consists of 42 (fourty two) KTH spread over 6 (six) banners.

The following Table 1. KTH in Register 47 UPTD KPH Way Terusan [17].

KTH is a tool of empowering the community around the Way Terusan KPH forest. The existence of KPH indirectly encourages managers to develop strategies for community forest management by prioritizing the principles of wise and sustainable use. In addition, the Way Terusan KPH provides opportunities for members to strengthen farmer groups by gaining knowledge, new experiences and economic resources, providing a conducive climate, so that each group member has the awareness to make changes to their attitudes and behavior according to group expectations. Besides that according to Holle [25], Reinforcement institutional group farmer must boils down to the formation agenda group independent, solid, independent and empowered farmers To use in fulfillment need member farmer. As well as that strengthening institutional group farmer help members for solve their problem face, fine individual and collective problems. In effort strengthening something group farmer endeavored farmer no placed in position weak bargain because farmer will always be harmed in every policy therefore through strengthening institutional group farmers, limitations farmer for reach resource agriculture good form access to capital, technology, credit, skills and information could affordable [10]. According to Supriono, et al. [26], Technically the strategy for strengthening forest farmer groups is:

- a) Increase the interest of farmer groups in farming through intensive coaching, such as the benefits that can be obtained from the business, recognizing market potential, information on market prices and business opportunities;
- b) Utilizing the potential of local wisdom in order to develop farmer group institutions, namely synergizing farmer group activities with the spirit of kinship, mutual cooperation, and self-help of farmers;
- c) Utilizing the psychological aspect of the community in the form of a sense of trauma to the consequences of illegal logging during the reformation period (1998-2000), this will awaken the community to support the mobilization of the policy implementation of the National Movement for Forest and Land Rehabilitation (GN-RHL);
- d) Utilizing local government support in initiating the formation of cooperatives and

implementing the national movement for forest and land rehabilitation.

3.3 Strengthening Farm Group on Each Activities at KPH Way Terusan

Empowerment through group strengthening is the empowerment that is using the groups as media intervention. One form of strengthening farmer groups is to increase the ability of each member of the farmer group. This statement is supported by Hermanto and Swastika [9], farmer group empowerment programs must be able to improve the ability of farmer groups in terms of: (1) understanding the potential and weaknesses of the group, (2) taking into account the opportunities and challenges faced in the future, (3) Choosing various alternatives that exist to overcome the problems faced, (4) Organizing group and community life in harmony with the environment on a daily basis.

Farmer group institutional strengthening is part of farmer group development. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture Number: 273/ KPTS / O T .160/4/2007 of 2007 concerning Guidelines for Growing and Developing Farmer Groups and Farmer Groups Associations, as for the principles in growing farmer groups that support the strengthening of these farmer groups, namely:

1. Freedom means respecting each member of the farmer group according to their wishes and interests. The manager must be able to read the needs of farmer groups that are aligned with applicable policies and regulations;
2. Openness, means that the operator of the extension agent is carried out openly between the extension worker and the farmer group;
3. Participative, mean that all members are involved and have the same rights and obligations in developing and managing (planning, implementing and conducting performance appraisals) of farmer groups;
4. Self-reliance means developing the ability to explore the members' own potential in the provision of funds and facilities as well as the utilization of resources in order to realize the independence of farmer groups;
5. Equality means the relationship between extension workers, main actors and business actors who must be equal partners;

6. Partnership means the implementation of extension which is carried out based on the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit, mutual strengthening, and mutual need between the main actors and business actors facilitated by extension workers.

The implementation activity growth and development group farmer Forests are also explained in the Minister of Forestry Regulation Republic of Indonesia Number: P 57/Menhut - II/2014 concerning Guidelines coaching Group farmer Forest there is a Azas as following:

1. Familial means growing and developing psychological on each its members that in implementation strengthening group this conducted cooperatively reach purpose together;
2. Cooperation means that good cooperation naturally will produce good too otherwise. The most important thing in the principle of this cooperation is unity and commonality vision and mission group farmer;
3. Equality means the connection among agents, perpetrator principal and actor must be aligned;
4. Participatory means all involved members own the same rights and obligations in plan, develop and implement work programs;
5. Self-sufficiency means the volunteerism from all member for participate are shared in the implementation and will develop the ability of group farmer to make a progress;

The strengthening of farmer groups that are implemented in the activities formed by KPH Way Terusan are as follows:

- 1) Strengthening KTH involved in the Fire Care Society. The form of group strengthening is to provide knowledge to the community about forest fire control, how to prevent forest fires, not to carry out activities that trigger forest and land fires and provide fire suppression stimulation in the event of forest and land fires, how to deal with forest and land fires. The role of the community in caring for fire will be felt during the dry season, when many lands experience drought and strong wind conditions;
- 2) Strengthening of KTH who are members of the Non- Governmental Forestry Extension

Service (PKSM). The form of strengthening the PKSM group is to assist the manager in disseminating the activities that can be carried out by the community around the area based on the applicable rules and regulations based on the Decree of the Head of the Lampung Provincial Forestry Service Number SK.33.a/V.24/B.IV. 1/2020 concerning the Determination of Community Self-Help Forestry Extension (PKSM) in Lampung Province, there are 24 (twenty four) PKSM in the working area of UPTD KPH Way Terusan which is located at register 47 and register 08;

- 3) Strengthening KTH members whose are part of the Polhut Partner Community (MMP). MMP aims to assist the Forest Police (Polhut) in implementing forest security and protection under the coordination, guidance and supervision of KPH. There are 92 (ninety two) MMPs in KPH Way Terusan, whose members come from forest communities located in the production forest register area 47 and protected forest 08. MMPs are provided with briefing and basic knowledge about forest security, coordinating which synergize with the Forest Police and formulate forms of activities that can be collaborated together;
- 4) KTH through capacity building by participating in training and hands-on practices such as grafting plants, cultivating plants (bonsai) or utilizing Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) located in the area such as honey, latex, resin and others. The role of the management, namely Way Terusan KPH, is to find market prey and help market handicrafts and NTFPs so that this encourages KTH to be independent and help in terms of the economy of the KTH members;
- 5) Strengthening KTH through the creative economy where this activity is accompanied by a Social Forestry assistant. Farmer groups that already have forest management approvals are directed to form a Social Forestry Business Group (KUPS), which is to form a creative business with the type of activity, namely making compost fertilizer, cultivating seasonal crops such as watermelon, cassava, and carrying out a durian grafting system, longan, mango with shoot grafting, insertion grafting, honey bee cultivation, and food processing such as cassava chips. The same case with point 4 where

the role of the manager becomes very important in facilitating the business of farmer groups.

The process of strengthening farmer groups is one of the efforts towards their independence. Strengthening farmer group could be conducted through activity assistance and meetings or farmer discussion that also attended by community dignitaries, village head, agriculture extension and related institutions so that farmer group can be more bound by interests and goals together to increase production and income from farming [9]. The success or failure of a work program cannot be separated from the influence of the social environment. The social environment has an urgent role in increasing

the ability of farmers to become self-sufficient. According to Purba [18], the social environment is a protected area where various social interactions between groups and institutions take place. A supportive social environment will make it easier for managers to be able to approach strengthening and involving farmer groups in empowerment. The factors that influence the success rate of strengthening farmer groups according to Elizabeth [28], namely 1) Clear structure and values, 2) There is certainty of members and the implementation process, 3) There are written rules in the articles of association and bylaws, 4) There are official leadership, and 5) The importance of awareness of all parties involved.

Table 1. KTH in register 47 UPTD KPH way Terusan

KTH register number	Name of KTH	KTH'S leader	Pennant
1	Karya Tani Makmur	Wayan Sunarta	
2	Sido Makmur	Agus Trisulo	
3	Suka Makmur	Giono	
4	Karya Makmur	Samsudin	SP4
5	Subur Makmur	Suwandi	
6	Sumber Rejeki	Sargino	
7	Maju Makmur	Saryanto	
8	Maju Jaya	Putu Bambang Irawan	
9	Permata Biru	Saikun	HTI
10	Tunas Mandiri	middle Astawa	
11	Semakin Jaya	Subagio	
12	Sri Agung Lestari	Zainul	
13	Tanjung Agung Lestari	Budi Yanto	
14	Sari Agung Lestari	Dowi Riyanto	
15	Karang Agung Lestari	Yuli Yanto	
16	Rejo Agung Lestari	Sharif	
17	Dadi Agung Lestari	Siswanto	
18	Hidayah Agung Lestari	Agus Priyanto	Mekar Agung
19	Mulyo Agung Lestari	Sugiyanto	
20	Sido Agung Lestari	Ketut	
21	Makmur Agung Lestari	Sutris	
22	Muncul Agung Lestari	Kusnan	
23	Badri Jaya Abadi 1	Sarimun	
24	Badri Jaya Abadi 2	Rusmaji	
25	Timbul Jaya 1	Agus Susanto	
26	Timbul Jaya 2	Made Griye	
27	Mandiri Jaya 1	Anwar Sanusi	
28	Mandiri Jaya 2	Cecep	
29	Mekar Sari 1	Tarwono	Sekring Atas
30	Mekar Sari 2	Parlan	
31	Mekar Wawai	Darsan	
32	Berkah Tani Makmur	Komang Rate	
33	Tegar 47	middle Sumatra	
34	Sekring Jaya Makmur I	Khoirudin	
35	Sekring Jaya Makmur II	Dadang Marabunta	
36	Karya Tani Sejahtera	Hadi Sutrisno	
37	Berkah 47	Agus totong	
38	Sediyo Makmur 1	Marsudi	Sekring Bawah
39	Sediyo Makmur li	Setiawan	
40	Sediyo Makmur lii	Zainal Abidin	
41	Sediyo Makmur Iv	Marsono	
42	Sediyo Makmur V	Ali Masbudi	
43		Yen Mahful	Raman Agung

*Source: [17]

Based on the opinion of respondents, strengthening success at KTH will be obtained if: (1) Understand the potential and weaknesses of the group (39 respondents), (2) pay attention to the opportunities and challenges faced in the future (28 respondents), (3) Choose various alternative solutions problems faced (33 respondents), (4) Organizing life groups and social harmony with the environment in a sustainable manner (41 respondents), (5) Having expertise and partners in promoting forest products after participating in a program implemented by the KPH (40 respondents). From the results of the respondent's research, it was concluded that a total of 41 respondents agreed that strengthening success in KTH was supported by an increase in the relationship between life groups and communities that coexist with the environment on an ongoing basis. This is supported by the opinion of Subekti, Sudarko and Sofia [29], Strengthening farmer groups can be grown by increasing the synergy of relations between farmer groups and the social environment so that the success of strengthening KTH can be more optimal. The moment of establishing a harmonious and sustainable relationship among the members of the farmer group so that the cooperative relationship will strengthen the dynamics towards independence (Subekti, 2013).

4. CONCLUSION

Empowerment of communities around the forest through strengthening farmer groups in KPH Way Terusan is one of the right and wise steps taken by the management. Strengthening farmer groups can be grown by increasing the synergistic relationship between farmer groups, managers and the social environment. The form of implementation of activities that support the strengthening of the Forest Farmers Group (KTH) in the KPH Way Terusan is that together with the KPH management participate in carrying out every activity in the context of forest conservation on Register 47 and Register 08, both in counseling activities, socialization, controlling crops, forming approval groups. forest management and security in KPH Way Terusan. Based on results respondent about success KTH reinforcement is obtained results highest as many as 41 of 42 respondents agree that success reinforcement on KTH is supported with exists increase connection life group and coexistent society with environment in a manner continuous.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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