

The Existence of Independent Palm Oil Plantations on The Socio-Economic Conditions of The Sungai Aur District Community West Pasaman District

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kondisi sosial ekonomi masyarakat Kecamatan Sungai Aur, yang mayoritas penduduknya bergantung pada perkebunan kelapa sawit mandiri sebagai sumber penghidupan utama. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, dengan fokus utama pada aspek-aspek seperti tingkat pendidikan dalam keluarga, kesehatan anggota keluarga, dan pendapatan kepala keluarga. Data yang dikumpulkan terdiri dari data primer dan sekunder, dengan sumber informasi berasal dari informan yang memiliki kompetensi dalam bidangnya, termasuk Kepala Jorong beserta staf yang terkait dengan isu penelitian, kepala sekolah, beberapa guru, dan tokoh masyarakat setempat. Metode pengumpulan data meliputi observasi langsung, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model interaktif yang dikembangkan oleh Miles dan Huberman.

Keyword: Ekonomi; Petani Sawit; Kondisi Sosial

ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the socio-economic conditions of the Sungai Aur District community, the majority of whose population relies on independent oil palm plantations as their main source of livelihood. The approach used is descriptive qualitative, with a primary focus on aspects such as the level of education in the family, the health of family members, and the income of the head of the family. The data collected consists of primary and secondary data, with sources of information coming from informants who have competence in their fields, including the Jorong Head and staff related to the research issue, the principal, several teachers, and local community leaders. Data collection methods include direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using an interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman.

Keyword: Economy; Palm Oil Farmers; Social Conditions

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1. INTRODUCTION

Palm oil plantations have become one of the main sectors in the Indonesian economy, especially in rural areas. The growth of this industry has a significant impact on changes in the economic structure of local communities, both in terms of income, employment opportunities, and household consumption patterns. According to Syahrul et al. (2020), the development of palm oil plantations encourages economic growth in the community by increasing land productivity and contributing to farmers' income. In addition, a study by stated that the presence of palm oil companies also creates new jobs that reduce unemployment in villages around the plantations.

Despite its positive economic impacts, the expansion of oil palm plantations also raises various social challenges at the community level. Several studies have shown that changes in social structures, land conflicts, and unequal distribution of benefits are issues that often arise. According to , agrarian conflicts between

indigenous peoples and plantation companies are one of the negative impacts of large-scale oil palm development. In line with this, research by revealed that differences in levels of access to economic resources can lead to social inequality in plantation areas.

In West Pasaman Regency, especially in Sungai Aur District, the growth of independent oil palm plantations has shown a significant upward trend in the last two decades. Communities are actively converting their agricultural land into oil palm plantations as a form of adaptation to new economic opportunities. According to , this land conversion is driven by the prospect of more promising economic benefits compared to food commodities. This is also supported by the results of research from which states that farmers in West Sumatra experienced an increase in economic welfare after switching to oil palm. However, this change also has an impact on local food security and social relations patterns in the community as expressed by in their studies in other areas of Sumatra.

The social impact of the growth of independent oil palm plantations not only touches the economic aspect, but also affects the lifestyle patterns and social values of the community . The community is beginning to experience changes in the structure of relationships between individuals, the emergence of new consumption patterns, and a shift in value orientation from mutual cooperation to being more individualistic. Research by shows that the intensification of oil palm plantations has contributed to the emergence of a consumerist lifestyle among farmers. In addition, revealed that social interactions between residents became more strained because the main focus was on garden management and harvest. Meanwhile, studies from noted that these social changes often occur slowly, but have long-term impacts on the social cohesion of rural communities.

Based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2004 concerning Plantations, plantations are all activities of managing certain plants on land and/or other growing media in an appropriate ecosystem, which includes processing and marketing activities of the results. These activities are supported by the application of science, technology, capital, and management to improve the welfare of business actors and society as a whole.

One of the leading commodities in this sector is palm oil which has a strategic role, both in contributing to gross domestic product, earning foreign exchange, and as a source of employment. In 2023, the palm oil industry contributed around IDR 88 trillion to the APBN—consisting of IDR 50.2 trillion from the tax sector and IDR 37.8 trillion from export duties (Ministry of Finance, 2023). This industry has also proven effective in alleviating poverty in rural areas, as stated by and , who stated that palm oil development has a positive impact on farmers' income and welfare.

However, the role of independent oil palm farmers as the main actors in the expansion of smallholder plantations cannot be ignored. They play a major role in local economic activities without direct dependence on the core company. However, they face serious challenges such as limited access to fertilizers, markets, technology, and institutional assistance. noted that the income of independent farmers tends to fluctuate compared to plasma farmers due to the lack of technical support. also emphasized the importance of strengthening farmer institutions and market connectivity to increase the competitiveness of independent farmers. On the other hand, oil palm remains a promising commodity in rural areas because of its high economic value and its potential to create jobs and increase community income.

Sungai Aur District is one of the areas that shows significant growth in the oil palm plantation sector. Most of the population depends on the results of the oil palm harvest and some others grow patchouli, chili, or other local commodities to support the household economy. This potential is strengthened by fertile geographical conditions and the support of a strong customary-based social structure, making oil palm development a strategic path in efforts to improve community welfare.

However, success in managing oil palm plantations is not only determined by the area of land and the amount of harvest, but also by socio-economic factors such as education, income, type of work, and the ability to adapt to market and technological changes. and emphasize that socio-economic status is influenced by a combination of economic access and socio-cultural factors that accompany community life. In this context, data from shows that the area of oil palm plantations in Sungai Aur District has reached 14,739 hectares, reflecting the intensity of community dependence on this sector as well as illustrating the ongoing socio-economic transformation.

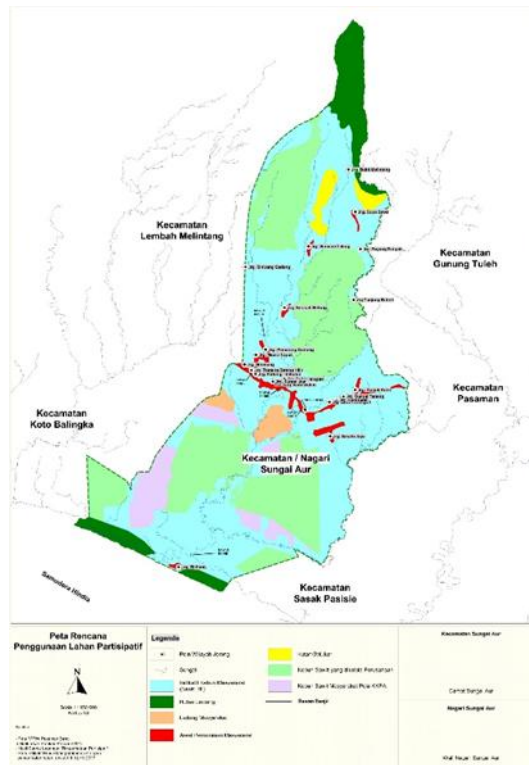


Figure 1. Location Map of Sungai Aur District, West Pasaman Regency

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research that will be used in this study is a type of qualitative descriptive research, namely research that describes, explains, classifies, and analyzes the variables studied. According to descriptive research is research conducted on independent variables, namely without making comparisons, or connecting with other variables. Meanwhile, according to qualitative research is a natural research, which depends on observations of humans in their own area related to people, backgrounds and behavior holistically (whole). Thus the type of research in this thesis is a type of descriptive research using qualitative analysis methods.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The socio-economic conditions of the community are an important aspect that cannot be separated from the development and management activities of natural resources such as oil palm plantations. Along with the development of the plantation sector, including in Sungai Aur District, social and economic changes have also occurred. Socio-economic conditions refer to the position of an individual in the social structure of society which is determined by various factors, such as economic activity, place of residence, income, level of education, and position in social organizations.

According to this position reflects a person's position in their social group. In line with that, (in Muharomi, 2009) emphasized that the socio-economic conditions of society are a collective effort to overcome life's difficulties and can be measured through parameters of livelihood, income level, education level, and type of residence.

Changes in the palm oil plantation sector, especially through exploration and exploitation of natural resources, have real consequences for the socio-economic aspects of the community. identified that the socio-economic impacts of a project or development activity include changes in income, business opportunities, and labor patterns. In fact, according to , these impacts can be distinguished into real impacts such as population migration or pollution, and special impacts that arise from the community's risk perception.

In this context, added that the exploitation of natural resources also has positive economic impacts such as increasing regional income and creating jobs. Therefore, to understand the real impact of the development of oil palm plantations in Sungai Aur, it is important to look at the socio-economic indicators of the community.

Melly G. Tan emphasized that socio-economic status can be measured through three main indicators: type of work, level of education, and income. These three indicators will be the focus in assessing the socio-economic dynamics of independent oil palm farmers in the area, both in the context of the challenges and opportunities they face.

A. Income Factor

Basic human needs such as food, drink, and shelter are primary needs that must be met continuously as long as the individual is alive. To meet these needs, humans are naturally driven to make various efforts, which then develop into economic activities known as livelihoods. Mutakin explained that efforts to obtain food are not only carried out once, but continuously throughout human life. These ongoing efforts give rise to various forms of economic activities aimed at obtaining food and other necessities of life. In this context, the people in Sungai Aur District, West Pasaman Regency, mostly make the oil palm plantation sector their main source of livelihood. The income obtained from this sector is relatively stable and in accordance with the West Pasaman Regency Minimum Wage (UMK) in 2024, which is IDR 2,811,449 per month. This stability helps people meet their basic daily needs and encourages an increase in the quality of life.

In addition, some residents have also begun to diversify their income by developing other agricultural businesses such as patchouli, corn, and chili. This step not only increases sources of income, but also strengthens household economic resilience by reducing dependence on one type of commodity. Increased income from the plantation sector has a positive impact on people's lifestyles. With better income, consumption of goods and services increases, including the use of modern tools and access to other life support services. This reflects improvements in the quality of life and welfare of the community as a whole. However, the community also faces challenges, especially related to fluctuations in palm oil prices in the global market. This price instability can affect farmers' incomes and cause economic uncertainty.

Therefore, the community hopes that the government can maintain price stability through appropriate policies, so that the sustainability of the oil palm plantation sector can be guaranteed and the welfare of the community is maintained. If associated with the concept of socio-economic conditions according to Jerniwati, 2011, p. 6), then a person's social position in society is greatly influenced by the type of economic activity undertaken, income earned, type of residence, level of education, and involvement in organizations. Thus, the stability and diversity of livelihoods of the Sungai Aur community are important factors in determining their socio-economic conditions as a whole.

B. Education Level Factor

Table 1. Number of Schools by Education Level in Sungai Aur District 2023-2024

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	COUNTRY	PRIVATE	AMOUNT
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Kindergarten (TK) ¹	-	69	69
Raudhatul Athfal (RA) ²	-	6	6
Elementary School (SD) ¹	284	42	326
Elementary School (MI) ²	-	-	-
Junior High School (SMP) ¹	102	22	124
Junior High School (MTS) ²	28	129	157
Senior High School (SMA) ¹	36	-	36
Vocational High School (SMK) ¹	19	9	28
Senior High School (MA) ²	-	66	66

Table 2. Number of Teachers by Education Level in Sungai Aur District 2023-2024

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	COUNTRY	PRIVATE	AMOUNT
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Kindergarten (TK) ¹	-	25	25
Raudhatul Athfal (RA) ²	-	1	1
Elementary School (SD) ¹	20	2	22
Elementary School (MI) ²	-	-	-
Junior High School (SMP) ¹	5	2	7
Junior High School (MTS) ²	1	3	4
Senior High School (SMA) ¹	-	1	1
Vocational High School (SMK) ¹	1	1	2
Senior High School (MA) ²	-	2	2

Table 3. Number of students by education level in Sungai Aur District 2023-2024

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	COUNTRY	PRIVATE	AMOUNT
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Kindergarten (TK) ¹	-	971	971
Raudhatul Athfal (RA) ²	-	77	77
Elementary School (SD) ¹	3766	260	4026
Elementary School (MI) ²	-	-	-

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	COUNTRY	PRIVATE	AMOUNT
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Junior High School (SMP) ¹	571	46	617
Junior High School (MTS) ²	267	666	933
Senior High School (SMA) ¹	565	86	651
Vocational High School (SMK) ¹	250	77	327
Senior High School (MA) ²	-	192	192

Table 4. Number of Civil Servants Number of students by education level in Sungai Aur District 2023-2024

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	AMOUNT
(1)	(2)
Vocational High School/Equivalent	2
Diploma I/Act I and Diploma II/Act II	-
Diploma III/ Certificate III	2
Diploma IV/Act IV or SI/Bachelor	11
Masters/ Postgraduate or S3/ Doctoral/ Ph.D	2
TOTAL	17

According to (Adnan 2004), education plays an important role in supporting the success of agricultural activities, because a higher level of education can affect the way farmers work, accept innovations, and treat crops. The level of farmer vulnerability can be measured by the length of education they have taken. The higher the level of education they have, the better the farmer's ability to adapt to various changes.

For the level of education based on the table above is quite good, both from educational institutions that are available from Kindergarten to Senior High School, the number of teachers who teach and the number of students who are studying. However, it is still very minimal and limited for the number of those who are studying higher education even to postgraduate level. Based on the Central Statistics Agency of West Pasaman Regency, the number of those who are studying at university is not listed. However, based on the results of observations and interviews with one of the local community leaders, it was stated that there were not many children who went to college, let alone postgraduate, due to economic factors. Where the price of palm oil harvests tends to be unstable. Most children choose to continue working.

A person's level of education has an influence on the economic conditions of the household, where low formal education often has an impact on family welfare. However, the skills and abilities needed to achieve a prosperous life are not only obtained through formal education, but can also be developed through non-formal education. In this case, agricultural extension plays a role as a form of education outside of school that aims to improve the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of farmers. Through this extension, farmers are expected to be able to manage their farming businesses independently and more optimally in order to achieve a better standard of living. Human resources are important assets that must be empowered to increase the capacity and potential of individuals for the progress of the region and the nation. Education is one of the important means in the development process (Aini et al., 2018)

C. Health Factors

Table 5. Number of health workers in Sungai Aur District in 2023

NATION	COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER SERVANT	POLINDUSTRIES	POSYANDU	PHARMACY
(1)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Aua River	-	2	6	3
Muaro River	-	3	7	2
Malintang Realm	2	3	-	-
Hajj Water Realm	-	1	3	1
White Chief of Tanang River	1	1	3	-
Aua Sarunpun	1	3	5	-
South Aur River Crossing	1	1	-	-
Total	5	14	24	6

Table 6. Number of Disease Cases in Sungai Aur District in 2023

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
(1)	(2)
HIV	1
IMS	-
dengue fever	17

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
(1)	(2)
Diarrhea	121
TB	56
Malaria	-

Table 7. Number of BPJS participants in Sungai Aur District 2023

GROUP	AMOUNT
(1)	(2)
PBI	31,718
Non PBI	14,736
Total	46,454

For the level of public health in Sungai Aur sub-district, it is classified as good as seen from the table above, not reaching 1,000,000 people affected by the disease. If people get sick, in general, people as recipients of assistance contributions or BPJS programs are covered by the government. So as not to complicate and burden people who are sick.

4. CONCLUSION

The Sungai Aur District community is highly dependent on the oil palm plantation sector as their main source of livelihood, with incomes that are generally stable and in accordance with the 2024 West Pasaman UMK standard. This stability allows for the fulfillment of basic needs and an increase in living standards. Diversification efforts through planting other commodities such as patchouli, corn, and chilies demonstrate the community's initiative in strengthening economic resilience. The positive impact of increased income can be seen from changes in lifestyle and access to modern services. However, fluctuations in palm oil prices in the global market remain a challenge that threatens the economic stability of farmers. Therefore, an active role is needed by the government in maintaining price stability and supporting the sustainability of this sector in order to maintain community welfare in a sustainable manner.

Education plays an important role in improving the quality of human resources in the agricultural sector, because it influences how farmers work, accept innovation, and adapt to change. In Sungai Aur District, although primary to secondary education is available with an adequate number of teachers and students, there are still limitations in access to higher education, mainly due to economic factors and the instability of income from oil palm harvests. This condition has an impact on low community participation in higher education and tends to encourage the younger generation to go straight to work. The low level of formal education has the potential to worsen the economic conditions of households, although skills can also be developed through non-formal channels such as agricultural extension. Therefore, strengthening education, both formal and non-formal, is key to increasing the capacity of farmers to be able to manage farming businesses independently and achieve prosperity. Empowering human resources through education is a strategic step in encouraging regional progress and national development.

The level of public health in Sungai Aur District is considered good, as indicated by the low number of people suffering from diseases based on available data. People who need health services are generally covered by contribution assistance programs such as BPJS Kesehatan which is covered by the government. This provides easy access to health services without burdening the economy of people who are sick, and reflects the positive role of health insurance programs in supporting the welfare of society as a whole.

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