

## Partnership Synergy for Improving Farmers' Economy in Sepakung Village, Semarang Regency

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The main purpose of this service activity is to provide training on the development of business partnership networks that can open up more potential market opportunities, as well as have a positive impact on increasing the income of guava farmers in Sepakung Village. With the formation of a good partnership, it is hoped that a faster and more targeted business scheme can be built and be able to offer more competitive prices in the market.

**Method:** The service methods carried out are: Needs Assessment, Development, Cooperation Exploration, Monitoring, and Evaluation.

**Practical Application:** The results of the community service program show a positive impact on increasing the understanding of guava farmers regarding the development of partnership networks and marketing strategies. This increase in understanding can be seen from the results of the pre-test and post-test which showed a significant increase in various indicators. This shows that the training provided has successfully equipped farmers with practical skills that can be directly applied to expand market access, establish wider partnerships, and maximize profits from crops.

**Conclusion:** Based on the results of community service activities in Sepakung Village, Semarang Regency, this program has succeeded in improving the understanding and skills of guava farmers in the development of partnership networks and marketing strategies. Pre-test and post-test data showed a significant increase, especially in the use of social media for promotion. The understanding of marketing strategies and market analysis has also improved.



## Introduction

Semarang Regency has an agricultural sector which is one of the main pillars of the regional economy, with a contribution of 9.8% to the gross domestic product (GDP). In addition to agricultural products, fruits are also a leading commodity that continues to show significant development. One of the mainstays is guava, which ranks sixth in fruit yield after durian and avocado, according to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2023.

Sepakung Village, which is located at the foot of Mount Telomoyo, is one of the mainstay villages in the agricultural sector of Semarang Regency. The region has a soil contour that is perfect for the cultivation of crops and fruits, including guava. With an average production of five quintals per week per 1.5 hectares of land, Sepakung Village is able to produce around 18 tons of guava per week, with a plantation area covering 17% of the village's total agricultural area.

Despite having great potential, the guava agricultural sector in Sepakung Village still faces several challenges, especially related to marketing and partnerships. The price of guava, which is relatively stable in the range of 3,000 to 5,000 rupiah per kilogram, sometimes decreases when there is a post-harvest over-supply. Farmers in this village, who belong to the Sayidi Guava Merah farmer group, currently still rely on middlemen as the main market, which often offers prices below the market.

Based on the analysis of the situation, there are two main problems faced by guava farmers in Sepakung Village, namely the limited partnership network and market management. Currently, there is no partnership network that could protect farmers from price instability, and there is no adequate market management strategy. Guava entrepreneurs in Sepakung Village need to have the ability to develop a partnership network because this will provide wider access to the market and greater business opportunities. Good partnerships can open up new distribution channels, both in local and national markets, so that farmers are not just dependent on middlemen who often offer underprices (Safiteri et al., 2023) (Harianja et al., 2023). By forming strong partnerships, farmers can also increase their bargaining power in the market, get fairer prices, and reduce the risk of price fluctuations caused by over-supply (Nurazizah et al., 2022) (Dinar, 2017) (Pasaribu, 2015).

In addition, the ability to manage the market is also very important to maintain the stability of farmers' income. Good market management allows guava farmers to better understand market needs and trends, so that they can adjust production according to consumer demand (Zaroni & Pujiati, 2019). Thus, farmers can avoid overproduction that can reduce selling prices. This ability also allows them to segment the market, such as selling high-quality products at premium prices to more specific markets, such as supermarkets or exporters, so that the profits obtained are maximized (Hakim & Oktarina, 2015) (Marpaung et al., 2021)

Partnership development and market management capabilities will also help guava entrepreneurs in expanding their business scale. With a good network of partnerships, farmers can access funding or more modern agricultural technology, so that they can increase productivity and quality of crops (Kamakaula, 2023). On the other hand, effective market management will ensure that their crops can be absorbed by a wider market, both domestically and abroad, so that the potential for profits can continue to increase from year to year (Rusdiana & Amam, 2021). Therefore, the main goal of this service activity is to develop a business partnership network that can open up more potential market opportunities, as well as have a positive impact on increasing the income of guava farmers in Sepakung Village. With the formation of a good partnership, it is hoped that a faster and more targeted business scheme can be built and be able to offer more competitive prices in the market.

## Method

The method of implementing service in this program consists of several interrelated stages, namely needs assessment, development, cooperation exploration, monitoring, and evaluation.

### 1. Needs Assessment

The first stage carried out is a needs assessment, which aims to identify the basic needs of guava farmers in Sepakung Village, especially related to the market and partnership network. At this stage, an analysis of the existing production capacity is carried out to ensure a consistent supply, in order to prepare an effective draft business cooperation. This assessment involves interviews, surveys, and direct observation of the production and marketing processes that have been carried out.

### 2. Development

The next stage is development, which aims to find out the characteristics of farmers or business actors, especially regarding their interest and response to partnership practices. At this stage, training in the preparation of cooperation drafts is given to farmers. The training materials are structured based on the specific needs that have been identified in the previous stage, with a focus on solving market problems and partnerships faced by farmers. This training aims to increase the capacity of farmers in arranging professional and sustainable business cooperation.

### 3. Cooperation Exploration

After the training, cooperation was explored through an audience with local governments, especially the cooperative and MSME offices. In addition, exploration is also carried out by involving farmers in various crop exhibition events, such as agricultural product festivals organized by the local government. Before participating in the exhibition, farmers are prepared to prepare a mini portfolio or draft cooperation that can be a presentation tool in establishing new partnerships.

### 4. Monitoring

Monitoring is carried out periodically during the implementation of the program to ensure that all activities run according to plan and there are no deviations. This monitoring also aims to identify problems that may arise in the field so that they can be overcome immediately. The results of the monitoring are used as the basis for improvement and adjustment measures of the program.

### 5. Evaluation

The last stage is evaluation, which aims to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the program that has been implemented. The evaluation is carried out by comparing the results of the activity with the goals that have been set previously. The results of the evaluation will also be the basis for follow-up and further development, so that the success of the program can be ensured and improved in the future.

## Result

The results of community service activities carried out in Sepakung Village, Semarang Regency, show significant participation from local guava farmers. The program will be implemented for two months, starting from July to August 2024, with a focus on improving farmers' skills and knowledge in partnership development and market management. A total of 23 guava farmers actively participated in this activity, which was held at one of the guava farmer's houses as the main location of the training.

During the service program, the farmers participated in a number of training sessions that took place from morning to evening. The training material includes the development of partnership networks, crop marketing strategies, and the preparation of draft business cooperation that has the potential to increase farmers' bargaining power in the market. Each training session is filled with interactive discussions and hands-on practice to ensure that the participants understand the material well presented. The following are some of the results of

documentation of community service activities that have been carried out:

*Figure 1. Group photo with all participants*



Source: Service document, 2024

*Figure 2. Providing material on partnership network development, crop marketing strategies*



Source: Service document, 2024

## Discussion

The results of community service activities in Sepakung Village, Semarang Regency, which focuses on developing partnership networks and crop marketing strategies, show positive developments for guava farmers. The program is designed to help farmers understand the importance of strategic partnerships in maximizing the benefits of their crops. During the activity, the farmers were given an understanding of the basic concept of partnership, its benefits, and ways to build mutually beneficial business relationships.

In the training session, farmers were taught how to establish partnerships with various parties, such as cooperatives, wholesalers, and companies engaged in the agribusiness sector. The development of this network aims to reduce their dependence on middlemen who often offer below-market prices. Farmers are invited to participate in agricultural exhibitions and contact potential parties who can be partners in marketing their products.

In addition to the development of partnership networks, crop marketing strategies are also the main focus in this program. Farmers are given knowledge about the importance of market segmentation and how to position their products according to market needs. One of the strategies taught is to classify the quality of guava based on size and maturity level, so

that it can be marketed in different segments, ranging from traditional markets to supermarkets. This allows farmers to set more varied selling prices and avoid price drops when over-supply occurs.

The training also introduced farmers to the use of digital media and e-commerce platforms as a wider means of marketing. With technology, farmers can reach consumers directly without going through intermediaries, so their profit potential can increase (Putra et al., 2023) (Septriasih & Aminudin, 2017) (Hidayati et al., 2021). This step is expected to be able to expand farmers' market access, not only at the local level, but also regionally.

To measure the understanding of the service participants, at the beginning before the provision of materials, a pre-test was carried out to measure the farmers' initial understanding of the partnership network and the importance of product marketing. After the training activity is completed, then at the end of the activity a post-test is carried out to see changes in understanding after being given training. The following are the results of pre-test and post-test of community service activities for guava farmers in Sepakung village, Semarang Regency which are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Result*

No.	Comprehension Indicators	Average Pre-test Score	Average Post-test Score	Increase (%)
1	The importance of building a partnership network	65	85	30%
2	How to effectively build a partnership network	60	83	38,3%
3	The right marketing strategy for guava products	58	82	41,4%
4	Potentials distribution Channels	62	84	35,5%
5	Utilization of social media for promotion	55	80	45,5%
6	Market and competitor analysis	63	86	36,5%

Source: Processed primary data, 2024

Based on Table 1. The results were obtained that there was a significant increase in participants' understanding after participating in the training on partnership network development and guava marketing strategies. The average score of the post-test showed an improvement in all indicators compared to the pre-test. The highest increase occurred in the understanding of the use of social media for promotion, which was 45.5%, followed by the right marketing strategy for guava products at 41.4%. Other improvements, such as how to effectively build a network of partnerships, potential distribution channels, and market and competitor analysis, also show a positive trend with increases ranging from 30% to 38.3%. This shows that the training provided is able to significantly improve the understanding and skills of participants in various aspects.

Overall, this partnership network development program and marketing strategy has had a significant impact on the mindset and business approach of guava farmers in Sepakung Village. Farmers are now more confident in establishing business partnerships and better understand the importance of market diversification. With broader partnerships and better marketing strategies, it is hoped that farmers' incomes can increase sustainably, while creating better economic stability in the region.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of community service activities carried out in Sepakung Village, Semarang Regency, it can be concluded that this program has succeeded in improving the understanding and skills of guava farmers in developing partnership networks and marketing strategies for their crops. The pre-test and post-test data obtained showed an increase in understanding in various aspects, with the largest increase in the use of social media for promotion, which increased by 45.5%. This shows that farmers are increasingly understanding the importance of digital technology in expanding their market reach. Another significant improvement was also seen in the understanding of the right marketing strategy and analysis of the market and competitors, with an increase of over 30%. The program not only provides improvement in technical aspects and knowledge but also motivates farmers to be more actively involved in marketing activities and business partnerships. By utilizing digital media and participating in agricultural exhibitions, farmers are able to expand their market access, both at the local and regional levels. This success is expected to increase farmers' income in a sustainable manner. This activity emphasizes the importance of continuous mentoring and continuous evaluation to ensure that farmers continue to get the support they need to face challenges in a dynamic market.

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