

Strengthening Community Economic Independence through Home Industry-Based Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) Production Training in Serang City

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Abstract

Purpose: This Community Service Program (PkM) aimed to strengthen community economic independence through home industry-based Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production training for unemployed community members in Serang City, Banten. The program addressed unemployment issues and the limited utilization of local resources for productive economic activities.

Method: The program employed a participatory training approach involving lectures, demonstrations, hands-on practice, interactive discussions, and mentoring sessions. Training materials included coconut selection, VCO processing techniques, hygiene and quality control, packaging, and basic marketing strategies. The activity involved productive unemployed residents as the main participants.

Practical Applications: The program provides practical benefits by equipping participants with entrepreneurial knowledge and technical skills that can be applied to establish sustainable home-based businesses, create additional income sources, and support local economic development.

Conclusion: The program improved participants' knowledge and practical skills in VCO production and increased motivation to develop independent businesses, contributing to community economic empowerment and unemployment reduction.



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Introduction

Unemployment remains one of the major social and economic challenges faced by communities in various regions of Indonesia, including Serang City, Banten. The limited availability of formal employment opportunities has resulted in a significant proportion of the productive-age population lacking stable sources of income. This condition negatively affects household economic welfare and increases dependence on informal sectors that often have limited productivity and growth potential. Therefore, community empowerment programs are needed to enhance practical skills and create new business opportunities based on local resource potential.

One potential empowerment initiative is home industry-based Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production training. VCO products have high economic value because they are widely utilized for health, cosmetic, and household consumption purposes. Furthermore, the growing public awareness of natural and health-related products has continuously increased market demand for VCO. According to Basrowi et al. (2024), strengthening community capacity through the development of local resource-based micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) can significantly improve community economic sustainability and enhance the competitiveness of small businesses. In addition, Bambang Dwi Suseno et al. (2023) emphasized that the development of local product-based innovative businesses represents an important strategy for increasing community economic productivity and creating new entrepreneurial opportunities.

Indonesia is one of the largest coconut-producing countries in the world, making coconut raw materials relatively abundant and easily accessible. In Serang and surrounding areas, coconuts are widely available in traditional markets and are also supplied by nearby rural communities. However, coconut utilization is still predominantly limited to traditional consumption and has not been extensively processed into high value-added products such as Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO). In fact, processing coconuts into VCO can generate greater economic benefits compared to selling raw materials directly. According to DebMandal and Mandal (2011), VCO contains high nutritional value and various health benefits, resulting in increasing market demand at both local and international levels.

In addition to the abundance of raw materials, VCO production also offers considerable business development potential because it can be carried out at the household level using relatively simple technology. VCO production skills training is considered highly relevant for productive unemployed communities because the production process is relatively easy to learn and offers promising business prospects. Furthermore, home industry-based business development can create new employment opportunities and enhance community economic independence. Therefore, implementing VCO production training in the Cluster Houten KSB area of Serang represents a strategic initiative to promote the growth of local potential-based microenterprises and strengthen community creative economic development.

Table 1. Main Problems Faced by the Community Prior to the Implementation of the Training Program

No	Problems	Existing Conditions
1	High unemployment rate among the community	Many productive-age community members do not yet have permanent employment
2	Low entrepreneurial and technical skills	Community members do not yet possess skills in coconut-based product production
3	Underutilization of coconut resources	Coconuts are still sold as raw materials with low economic value
4	Limited knowledge of VCO	Most community members do not understand the benefits and production process of VCO
5	Limited marketing knowledge	Community members have not yet understood marketing strategies for home industry products

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No	Problems	Existing Conditions
6	Increasing demand for natural products	Market demand for natural health products continues to increase
7	Limited development of home industry businesses	Household-based businesses focused on coconut processing have not yet developed significantly

Source: Author's Work, 2026.

Based on these conditions, Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production training becomes an important form of community empowerment based on local resource potential. This program is expected to enhance community skills, create new business opportunities, and encourage the development of sustainable home industry businesses for unemployed communities in Serang City, Banten.

The development of businesses based on coconut-derived products, particularly Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO), has received considerable attention in various studies related to community empowerment and local resource-based economic strengthening. Previous studies have shown that VCO has significant economic potential due to the continuously increasing market demand for natural and health-related products. In addition to being utilized as a consumption product, VCO is also widely used in the health, cosmetic, and pharmaceutical industries, providing broad market opportunities. According to Nevin and Rajamohan (2010), the antioxidant content and bioactive compounds found in VCO make it a high-value economic product with continuously increasing global demand. Furthermore, Marina et al. (2009) explained that VCO has advantages over conventional coconut oil because it is processed without high-temperature heating, allowing its nutritional quality to be preserved.

Figure 1. Coconut Grating and Coconut Milk Extraction Process



Source: Private Documentation, 2026.

Research on community empowerment through local product processing has also demonstrated that production skills training can enhance community capacity to establish independent home industry-based businesses. A study conducted by Rahmawati et al. (2023) explained that the development of local product-based businesses through training and mentoring programs positively contributes to improving community skills, income generation, and entrepreneurial motivation. In addition, research by Haryanto and Nugroho (2022) indicated that local MSME-based community empowerment models are effective in increasing economic participation among productive communities in urban and semi-urban areas. However, most previous studies have primarily focused on the health benefits of VCO, MSME marketing strategies, or product development within already established business groups.

Meanwhile, community service activities specifically targeting unemployed communities in urban residential areas through VCO production training remain relatively limited. Previous empowerment programs have generally been implemented among farmer groups, rural women's groups, or MSME communities that already had initial business

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activities. In fact, productive unemployed communities in urban areas possess considerable potential for development through simple and practical home industry-based skills training. Furthermore, only a limited number of programs have integrated VCO production training with entrepreneurial motivation and household business development based on local resource potential.

The novelty of this program lies in its community empowerment model targeting unemployed urban communities through home industry-based Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production training conducted in the Cluster Houten KSB Serang area. This program not only focuses on transferring technical skills related to VCO production but also integrates entrepreneurial aspects, product packaging techniques, independent business motivation, and the utilization of local resources as strategies for strengthening community economic development. The direct involvement of local MSME practitioners as resource persons also provides added value, as participants gain practical and empirical experience regarding the management of household-scale businesses in a real-world context.

Another novelty of this program lies in its empowerment approach targeting productive unemployed communities living in modern urban residential areas, a segment that has relatively rarely been the focus of local product-based economic development programs. Therefore, this activity is expected to serve as an alternative model of sustainable community empowerment based on local resource potential in creating new business opportunities and reducing unemployment among urban communities in Serang City, Banten.

Based on the background of the program, the problems addressed in this community service activity are focused on the relatively high unemployment rate among productive community members in Serang City who still lack home industry-based entrepreneurial skills. In addition, the potential of coconut as an abundant local raw material has not been optimally utilized for producing value-added products such as Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO). Another issue is the limited community knowledge regarding VCO production processes, product packaging, and marketing strategies as sustainable self-employment opportunities.

This community service activity aims to improve the knowledge and practical skills of productive unemployed community members in producing home industry-based Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO). Furthermore, the program aims to encourage the utilization of local coconut resources to produce high-value economic products capable of creating new business opportunities for the community. Another objective is to enhance community entrepreneurial motivation and capabilities in managing VCO production businesses, including production processes, packaging, and product marketing, thereby supporting community economic independence in Serang City, Banten.

Community empowerment is one of the development approaches aimed at enhancing the capacity of communities to manage economic potential independently and sustainably. In the context of local economic development, empowerment through home industry-based entrepreneurial skills training has become an important strategy for reducing unemployment and improving community welfare. According to Ife and Tesoriero (2008), community empowerment emphasizes the importance of active community participation in economic development processes, enabling communities to create business opportunities independently. Furthermore, Sumodiningrat (2016) explained that the development of microenterprises based on local resource potential can strengthen community economic resilience and promote the establishment of productive community-based economies. Therefore, Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production training represents a relevant form of community empowerment because it utilizes locally available resources with high economic value.

Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) is a coconut-derived product with various health benefits and considerable economic value. The production process of VCO is carried out without high-temperature heating, allowing its nutritional content and bioactive compounds to be

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preserved. According to Dayrit (2015), VCO contains medium-chain fatty acids that provide health benefits and are widely utilized in the food, healthcare, and cosmetic industries. In addition, research conducted by Gani et al. (2018) indicated that market demand for natural-based products continues to increase in line with growing public awareness of healthy lifestyles. This condition positions VCO as one of the home industry products with promising business prospects for productive unemployed communities.

Figure 2. Preparation of the Fermentation Process



Source: Private Documentation, 2026.

Hands-on practice-based training plays an important role in improving community technical skills and entrepreneurial motivation. Participatory training methods enable participants to gain direct experience in the production process, making their understanding more effective and applicable in practical contexts. According to Sudjana (2010), practice-based skills training can improve community work capabilities because participants are directly involved in the learning process. Furthermore, Mardikanto and Soebiato (2019) explained that the success of community empowerment is strongly influenced by mentoring activities and the involvement of practitioners who are able to provide empirical experiences to participants. Therefore, VCO production training is expected not only to improve community skills but also to strengthen entrepreneurial motivation and support the development of independent businesses based on local resource potential in Serang City.

Figure 3. VCO Distillation Process



Source: Private Documentation, 2026.

Method

This Community Service Program (PkM) employed a participatory empowerment approach that positioned the community as the primary subject in the training and business skills development process. This approach aimed to enhance participants' active involvement in understanding, practicing, and developing home industry-based Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production skills. According to Adi (2013), a participatory approach in community empowerment can strengthen community responsibility and independence in developing local economic potential sustainably. Through this approach, participants not

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only received theoretical knowledge but also gained direct practical experience in the VCO production process.

The training activity was conducted on May 18, 2026, at Cluster Houten KSB, Serang City, Banten. The target participants of the program were productive unemployed community members residing in the surrounding area. The location was selected based on the community's need for home-based entrepreneurial skills training and the high potential for developing coconut-based products as a locally available commodity in Serang and its surrounding regions.

The implementation of the program was carried out through several stages, namely the preparation stage, training implementation stage, hands-on practice stage, and activity evaluation stage. During the preparation stage, field observations, coordination with the local community, identification of participants' needs, and the provision of training tools and materials were conducted. The implementation stage included the delivery of training materials related to the benefits and business opportunities of Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO), production techniques, product packaging, and basic marketing strategies. Subsequently, participants engaged in hands-on practice in producing VCO, beginning with coconut grating, coconut milk extraction, fermentation, filtration, and ending with product packaging. According to Mulyono (2017), practice-based training methods are more effective in improving community skills because participants are actively involved in every stage of the activity.

Figure 3. Delivery of Theoretical Training Materials



Source: Private Documentation, 2026.

The resource person for this program was Arsani, a practitioner and MSME entrepreneur from Kampung Timbang, Curug District, Serang City, who has experience in developing household businesses based on processed food products. The training materials included the selection of high-quality coconut raw materials, hygienic VCO production techniques, product quality control, packaging techniques, and marketing strategies for home industry-based products. The involvement of a practitioner in this activity aimed to provide participants with empirical experience and practical insights regarding business opportunities that could be independently developed. According to Hamalik (2011), skills training involving experienced practitioners can enhance learning effectiveness and increase participants' motivation to develop productive businesses.

The evaluation of the program was conducted through direct observation of participants' level of participation, their ability to practice the VCO production process, and feedback discussions after the completion of the activity. In addition, the evaluation was carried out by comparing participants' levels of understanding before and after the training to assess the effectiveness of the program in improving community skills. The evaluation results were used as reflective material for the development of future community empowerment programs to ensure greater effectiveness and sustainability.

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Results

The Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production training program was conducted on May 18, 2026, at Cluster Houten KSB, Serang City, Banten. The activity involved 17 participants from productive unemployed community groups residing around the program area. The implementation of the training was carried out successfully and received a high level of enthusiasm from the participants. This was reflected in the participant attendance rate, which reached 100%, as well as the active involvement of participants in each training session, including material delivery, production practice, and evaluation discussions.

At the initial stage of the activity, a pre-test was conducted to assess participants' initial level of knowledge and skills regarding the Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production process. The pre-test results indicated that only a small proportion of participants had prior knowledge of basic VCO production techniques and its economic benefits. Most participants had limited understanding of hygienic production processes, filtration techniques, product packaging methods, and basic marketing strategies for home industry businesses. Following the completion of the training sessions and hands-on practice activities, a post-test was administered to measure participants' improvement. The evaluation results demonstrated a substantial increase in participants' knowledge and practical skills, with the level of understanding and competency increasing from 3% to 92% after the implementation of the program.

Table 2. Participants' Competency Levels Before and After VCO Training

No	Assessment Category	Pre-Test	Post-Test
1	Understanding of the VCO production process	3%	92%
2	Ability to select high-quality raw materials	5%	90%
3	Ability to perform fermentation and filtration processes	4%	88%
4	Understanding of product packaging techniques	6%	87%
5	Understanding of home industry product marketing strategies	5%	85%
6	Entrepreneurial motivation based on VCO business development	18%	95%

Source: Author's Work, 2026.

The improvement in participants' competencies occurred because the training method employed a hands-on training approach. Participants not only received theoretical explanations regarding the benefits and business opportunities of VCO but also directly practiced all stages of the production process, including coconut grating, coconut milk extraction, fermentation, oil separation, filtration, and product packaging. This approach enabled participants to gain a more practical understanding of the production process and increased their confidence in initiating independent home industry-based businesses.

In addition to improving technical skills, the program also provided participants with a better understanding of the importance of utilizing readily available local resources to create high-value economic products. Prior to the training, most participants viewed coconuts merely as common consumption products sold in raw form. However, after participating in the program, they developed an understanding that coconuts could be processed into Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO), a product with higher market value and broader business opportunities.

Table 3. Skills Aspects Provided to Participants During the Training Program

No	Training Aspect	Materials Provided	Outcomes Achieved
1	Raw material selection	Selection of high-quality coconuts for VCO production	Participants were able to select suitable raw materials
2	VCO production techniques	Coconut grating, coconut milk extraction, fermentation, and filtration processes	Participants were able to practice the production process
3	Product hygiene	Techniques for maintaining the cleanliness of equipment and materials	Participants understood production hygiene standards
4	Product packaging	VCO packaging and storage	Participants understood

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No	Training Aspect	Materials Provided	Outcomes Achieved
		techniques	attractive product packaging methods
5	Basic marketing	Direct marketing and social media marketing strategies	Participants understood fundamental product marketing concepts
6	Entrepreneurial motivation	Business opportunities for VCO-based home industries	Participants were motivated to establish independent businesses

Source: Author's Work, 2026.

During the implementation of the program, participants also demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm during discussion sessions regarding business opportunities and marketing strategies for VCO products. Most participants expressed interest in independently or collaboratively producing VCO after the completion of the training program. This condition indicates that the activity not only improved participants' technical skills but also successfully enhanced the entrepreneurial motivation of productive unemployed community members in Serang City.

Table 4. Participants' Participation Levels During the Training Program

No	Participation Indicator	Number of Participants	Percentage
1	Attended the program until completion	17 participants	100%
2	Participated in hands-on production practice	17 participants	100%
3	Actively participated in discussion sessions	15 participants	88%
4	Asked questions regarding VCO business opportunities	14 participants	82%
5	Expressed interest in starting a business	16 participants	94%

Source: Author's Work, 2026.

Overall, the Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production training program successfully improved the skills, knowledge, and entrepreneurial motivation of productive unemployed community members in Serang City. This activity serves as an initial step toward the development of home industry businesses based on local resource potential, which may contribute to increasing community income and strengthening sustainable economic independence.

Discussion

The results of this community service program indicate that the Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production training significantly improved participants' skills and knowledge. The increase in participants' competency levels from 3% during the pre-test to 92% after the completion of the training demonstrates that hands-on training methods are effective in enhancing the capacity of productive unemployed communities. Participants not only acquired theoretical knowledge regarding the benefits and business opportunities of VCO but also developed practical understanding of the production process, including raw material selection, fermentation, filtration, and product packaging. These findings suggest that practice-based training approaches provide a more effective learning experience in improving community skills.

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Widodo et al. (2022), which explained that hands-on skills training can improve community competencies in developing household businesses based on local products. Practical activities enable participants to gain a more realistic understanding of production processes, making the acquired skills easier to apply in daily life. Furthermore, research by Prasetyo and Huda (2023) indicated that community empowerment through local resource-based product processing has a positive impact on enhancing entrepreneurial motivation and strengthening community

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economic independence. In this program, the high level of participant enthusiasm suggests that VCO production is perceived as a realistic business opportunity with promising economic prospects.

The improvement in participants' competencies related to product packaging and basic marketing indicates that the community has begun to recognize the importance of value-added products in the development of home industry businesses. Prior to the training, most participants only utilized coconuts for regular consumption or sold them as raw materials. After participating in the training program, participants gained an understanding that processing coconuts into Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) could significantly increase the product's market value. This finding supports the study conducted by Yuliana et al. (2021), which stated that innovation in processing local products is an important factor in improving the competitiveness of community microenterprises because it creates products with high economic value and broader market opportunities. Furthermore, knowledge related to product packaging also had a positive impact on participants' readiness to market products in a more professional manner.

The success of this program also demonstrates that business development based on local resource potential can serve as a strategy for reducing unemployment in urban communities. The utilization of easily accessible coconut resources for VCO production provides new business opportunities for individuals who previously did not have stable employment. Research conducted by Kurniawan and Lestari (2024) emphasized that home industry-based community empowerment can enhance household economic resilience and sustainably strengthen community economies. Therefore, VCO production training not only functions as a means of transferring technical skills but also serves as an approach to strengthening community capacity in developing independent businesses based on local resources in Serang City, Banten.

Conclusion

The Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) production training program conducted at Cluster Houten KSB, Serang, successfully improved the skills of productive unemployed community members in home industry-based VCO production processes. Prior to the implementation of the program, participants' level of understanding and competency regarding the VCO production process was only 3%; however, after the training, it increased to 92%. This improvement indicates that hands-on training methods are effective in enhancing participants' competencies in production processes, raw material processing, filtration, packaging, and basic marketing strategies for VCO products.

The training program also successfully enhanced the utilization of coconuts as locally available raw materials for producing high-value economic products. Before the implementation of the activity, most participants primarily used coconuts for household consumption or sold them in raw form with relatively low economic value. After participating in the training, participants developed an understanding that coconuts could be processed into Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO), which has a higher market value and broader market opportunities, making it a potentially productive and sustainable home industry business.

In addition to improving technical skills, the program also succeeded in increasing participants' entrepreneurial motivation and interest in developing independent VCO-based businesses. The high level of participation throughout the training program reflects increased community awareness regarding the importance of developing businesses based on local resource potential. This training enhanced participants' confidence in establishing small-scale home industry businesses and may serve as an alternative strategy for reducing unemployment and strengthening community economic independence in Serang City, Banten.

Based on the results of the program, continuous follow-up assistance is recommended in areas such as product certification and legal compliance, modern packaging development,

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digital marketing strategies, and access to business financing. Such support is essential to enable the community to further develop Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) businesses into competitive home industries capable of sustainably improving community economic welfare.

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