

Empowering Women in Coastal Borders


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Coastal community in the northern sea in Timur Tengah Utara (North Central Timor) District, East Nusa Tenggara, mostly live under the highest poverty line in Indonesia. The area directly abuts with Timor Leste where its agricultural sector is difficult to be optimized due to the arid and barren conditions of the area and difficult access to water, while its fish potential from the fishermen still depends on the season.

Researcher team from Department of Fisheries, Faculty of Agriculture UGM conducted an economic empowerment program by implementing fish product technology which is targeting housewives. Housewives are expected to increase the economic welfare of their family. There are four groups of fish processing units that are spread in three sub-districts which are Insana Utara, Boboki Anleu, and Biboki Monleu.

Dr. Eko Setyobudi, one of the researcher team members, said the northern sea in North Central Timor has a long coastline area, thus it has abundant fisheries resources. Unfortunately, the fish does not exist in large quantities throughout the year and the price is so low when the catch is abundant. "When the catch is abundant, its price is so low in the market," said Eko Setyobudi on Wednesday (30/8).



In order to increase the economic level in the coastal area, UGM team performs an assistance in making processed fish products. The increase of product value is expected to increase its selling price. "For these processed fish products, we choose the dried product, thus it can have a long shelf life," said Eko when explaining the program background that has been started since two years ago through Community Resilience and Economic Development (CaRED) program, a result of cooperation between UGM and New Zealand government.

Eko said it is not easy for them to invite the housewives in the northern sea of North Central Timor as their target to involve in fisheries products enterprise group. Engaging the Fishery and Marine Institution of North Central Timor, UGM team tries to reactivate the fishery groups that had been developed by the local government before. "We reactivate the existing groups because all this while, their enterprises have stopped," he added.


Four enterprise groups that are spread in three sub-districts are finally empowered to process fisheries products using simple technology. "Moreover, we give an entrepreneurship and finance training as well as packing and marketing process," said Eko.

According to Eko, although there are only four enterprise groups that are empowered to initiate small scale household enterprises, they are expected to invite the other housewives who live around the coastal area in the future. "We hope they can share their knowledge and experience to the others," he added.

Initiating a productive enterprise for coastal women is not easy. Despite already having skill in processing fisheries products, these enterprise groups are faced with the bad fishing condition during the last two years that caused the fish price much more expensive than usual. However, this did not reduce their spirit to continue running their enterprises. Another problem is their products have yet to obtain production license. Fortunately, by assistance from the UGM students community service program two months ago, 2 of 4 enterprises succeeded to obtain Household Industrial Food license.

Wahdan Fitriya, M.Sc., another member of the research team said the dried products are shredded fish, crispy fish, and fried meatballs. These products are selected based on the experience of the team member who once implemented the same program in the coastal area in Tuban District, East Java. "We had tried to develop these products in Tuban and it has succeeded," said Wahdan. Meanwhile, the products are sold through their inner circle and social media. Some of the products are also sold to Kefamenanu city, Kupang, and Timor Leste. "We also sell our products to Timor Leste if there are orders," said Ivana Silitonga (27 y.o.) from Humusu Wini Village, Insana Utara (North Insana).

Ivana who previously sold fish at the roadside near her house felt lucky to be given training to



process fisheries products. They produce crispy fish, shredded fish, and jerky made from mackerel, tuna, and sardines. “Shredded fish and jerky are the best-selling products,” said Ivana.

Made in the form of 100 grams per pack, shredded fish and jerky are sold at 15 thousand to 25 thousand rupiahs. In this enterprise group, Ivana and the other four housewives have a monthly sales turnover up to 3 million rupiahs. On the other hand, Maria Eno (41 y.o.) from Biboki Anleu utilizes the integrated service center activity to sell her products.

Meanwhile, Veronica Enamariman Andani (37 y.o.) from South Oepuah village, Biboki Moenleo said their enterprise’s products have obtained production license so they can sell their products to Kupang. Several products are sold in drug store and supermarket in Kefamenanu. However, according to Veronica, her enterprise only produces them if there is an order. “We make the products during our free time, usually after gardening,” said Veronica.

Vice Regent of North Central Timor, Aloysius Kobes gives a positive response towards the small enterprises' assistance program for women in the coastal area. According to Kobes, the local people in the coastal area generally live under the poverty line. “It is the highest poverty line in Indonesia. During the famine season, the fishermen did not work. They do not have a fix livelihood. Actually, we have abundant sea resources but we can not utilize it due to low capacity of the human resources,” said Kobes.

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