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Marketing Strategies to Enhance the Competitiveness of Cassava Farmers in Mulya Jaya Village, West Tulang Bawang Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to formulate appropriate marketing strategies to increase the competitiveness of cassava farmers in Mulya Jaya Village, Tulang Bawang Barat Regency. The main challenge faced by farmers is their low bargaining power due to dependence on middlemen and unpredictable price fluctuations. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with SWOT analysis. Data were processed through IFE, EFE, and IE Matrices to determine the strategic position. The results show that the farmers' position is in quadrant V (Hold and Maintain) with an IFE score of 2.57 and an EFE score of 2.70. The primary recommended strategies are institutional strengthening through farmer cooperatives and product downstreaming efforts to create economic added value and reduce dependence on wet tuber sales.

Keywords: *marketing strategy, competitiveness, SWOT, cassava farmers.*

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector is a mainstay of economic development in Indonesia, particularly in rural areas such as Mulya Jaya Village, West Tulang Bawang Regency. As one of the leading commodities, cassava plays a strategic role as a raw material for the tapioca and ethanol industries, as well as for processed foods. Lampung Province itself has long been known as Indonesia's "cassava capital," contributing a significant portion of the nation's starch needs. However, this very high productivity does not automatically improve the economic well-being of farmers in Mulya Jaya Village. There is a wide gap between the volume of production and the actual well-being received by farming households. Despite its large production potential, cassava farming still faces various challenges, particularly price fluctuations and increasing production costs. Farmers also have limited access to technology and market information, which affects their competitiveness. Therefore, appropriate development strategies are needed to improve farmers' income and ensure the sustainability of cassava farming in Mulya Jaya Village.

Theoretically, strategic management, according to David (2017), serves as the foundation for organizations—including farmer organizations—to address

external threats using their internal strengths. In the context of agribusiness marketing, competitiveness is defined as a farmer's ability to efficiently produce goods of the quality demanded by the market while also achieving profitable market penetration. Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasize that marketing is not merely about selling crops but about creating value (value creation). Business strategy, market orientation, leadership, and knowledge management to measure organizational performance. Corporate governance and market orientation can also serve as mediating or moderating variables in the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, organizational culture, knowledge management, and organizational performance (Wijaya and Suasih, 2020). For farmers in Mulya Jaya Village, this value is often eroded by the length of the distribution chain, which involves many middlemen or brokers.

The main issue underlying this study is the market structure, which tends to be oligopsonistic. In Mulya Jaya Village, farmers face limited access to accurate price information. The prices set by local collectors (Lapak) are often final and non-negotiable for farmers. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the "ijon" system—a pre-season capital loan that binds farmers to sell their harvest to the lender at prices below market standards (Soekartawi, 2003). This results in very small marketing margins at the farmer level, while margins at the collector level are very large (Sudiyono, 2001).

Downstream processing is a key concept in modern agribusiness management theory. Selling in the form of fresh tubers leaves farmers highly vulnerable to product damage and price manipulation during the harvest season. In line with the concept of competitive advantage, farmers need to engage in strategic innovation. This study uses the SWOT analysis tool to formulate a strategic roadmap. By integrating local strengths—such as a culture of mutual cooperation and prime land suitability—with market opportunities in the mocaf flour industry, it is hoped that farmers in Mulya Jaya Village can achieve a more competitive bargaining position and economic self-reliance.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative methods are used to study objects in their natural settings, where the researcher acts as the key instrument. The descriptive approach was chosen because this study aims to systematically, factually, and accurately describe the facts, characteristics, and relationships between phenomena in cassava marketing strategies in Mulya Jaya Village. The primary focus is on a deep understanding of the interactions between farmers, middlemen, and the market within a strategic management framework.

Data analysis was conducted systematically through three main stages according to Rangkuti (2018). The first stage involved collecting internal and external data. The second stage involved analysis using the Internal Factor Evaluation Matrix (IFE) and the External Factor Evaluation Matrix (EFE). The third stage is the decision-making stage, which involves mapping the position into the Internal-External (IE) Matrix and compiling a TOWS matrix to identify strategic alternatives applicable to the community of Mulya Jaya Village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Internal Factor Analysis (IFE)

The internal analysis examines the capabilities of farmers in Mulya Jaya Village. Their main strength is the high-starch content of their tubers; however, this strength is hampered by their financial dependence on middlemen.

Table 1. Internal Factors Evaluation (IFE) Matrix

No	Internal Factor	Weight	Rating	Score
A	**Strengths**			
1	High-quality cassava products	0,15	4	0,60
2	Relatively low production costs	0,10	3	0,30
3	Strong farmer community ties	0,12	4	0,48
4	Generations of farming experience	0,08	3	0,24
B	**Weaknesses**			
5	Limited business capital	0,15	2	0,30
6	Dependence on middlemen	0,18	1	0,18
7	Lack of digital marketing	0,12	2	0,24
8	Limited post-harvest technology	0,10	2	0,20
	Total	**1,00**		**2,54**

Based on findings from in-depth interviews and field observations, the primary strength of farmers in Mulya Jaya Village lies in the quality of their cassava tubers, which have an above-average starch content (yield). This is a crucial strategic asset because the tapioca industry in Lampung Province employs a pricing system based on yield quality. However, farmers have not been able to fully capitalize on this strength due to fundamental weaknesses in management and finance.

The IFE Matrix calculation yielded a total score of 2.54, indicating an internal position in the average category. Key strengths such as the availability of fertile land and a strong culture of mutual cooperation in Mulya Jaya Village provide a foundation for high productivity. As stated by Soekartawi (2002), the physical advantages of the land and technical skills are the main prerequisites for agribusiness success.

However, the main weakness identified is the extremely high dependence on middlemen (Lapak) through an informal financing system (ijon). This dependence reduces farmers' autonomy in determining harvest timing and selling prices. Sudiyono (2001) emphasizes that weak internal capital structures often force farmers into disadvantageous verbal contracts, where profit margins are absorbed more at the intermediary level than at the producer level.

External Factors Analysis (EFE)

An analysis of external factors was conducted to identify various opportunities and threats affecting the development of cassava farming in Mulya Jaya Village. These external factors stem from the environment beyond farmers' control, such as market conditions, government policies, climate change, and

technological advancements. Through the EFE analysis, it is possible to determine the extent to which farmers are able to capitalize on available opportunities and anticipate emerging threats. The results of this analysis serve as the basis for formulating more adaptive and sustainable farm business development strategies.

Table 2. External Factors Evaluation Matrix (EFE)

No	External Factors	Weight	Rating	Score
A	**Opportunities**			
1	Trends in healthy and local foods	0,12	2,7	0,32
2	Government assistance programs	0,15	3,7	0,56
3	Demand from the food industry	0,14	3,3	0,46
4	E-commerce market access	0,09	2,0	0,18
B	**Threats**			
5	Market price fluctuations	0,16	1,3	0,21
6	Climate change and extreme weather	0,12	1,7	0,20
7	Competition from other commodities	0,10	2,3	0,23
8	Rising agricultural input costs	0,12	2,0	0,24
	Total	**1,00**		**2,40**

An analysis of external factors was conducted to understand how farmers in Mulya Jaya Village respond to opportunities and threats from the industrial environment. The results of the EFE matrix calculation showed a score of 2.40, indicating that farmers respond fairly well to market dynamics but remain vulnerable to macroeconomic fluctuations.

The greatest opportunity emerging is the increasing demand for national tapioca flour and the significant potential of the Modified Cassava Flour (Mocaf) market. Suryana and Hidayat (2019) in their study published in an agribusiness journal state that the trend toward cassava-based product diversification presents a golden opportunity for farmers to break free from dependence on the fresh tuber market. Government support programs in the form of seedling assistance also serve as a positive stimulus for agricultural business development.

On the other hand, the primary threat faced is the extremely volatile price of cassava, particularly during the peak harvest season when supply is abundant but factory absorption capacity is limited. Additionally, rising prices of agricultural inputs (saprotan), such as non-subsidized fertilizers and pesticides, continue to drive up farmers' production costs. Prasetyo (2020) explains that price instability for agricultural commodities in Lampung is often influenced by tapioca import policies and high logistics costs resulting from uneven infrastructure development.

Strategic Positioning and the IE Matrix

Based on the combined total scores of the IFE (2.54) and EFE (2.40), the strategic position of cassava marketing in Mulya Jaya Village is mapped onto the Internal-External (IE) Matrix and falls into Cell V (Quadrant Five). This position indicates a "Hold and Maintain" strategy.

Table 3. Strategic Position and IE Matrix

IFE/EFE Score	Strong (3.0-4.0)	Average (2.0–2.99)	Weak (1,0 -1,99)
High (3,0 - 4,0)	I (Growth)	II (Growth)	III (Maintain)
Moderate (2,0 - 2,99)	IV (Growth)	**V (Maintain & Defend)**	VI (Harvest)
Low (1,0 - 1,99)	VII (Maintain)	VIII (Harvest)	IX (Divest)

The priority strategies in this position are market penetration and product development. In accordance with the strategic management theory of Wheelen and Hunger (2018), at this stage the organization is advised to strengthen the efficiency of the internal supply chain and increase product value-added to maintain existing market share. This means that farmers in Mulya Jaya Village do not need to undertake massive land expansion, but should instead focus more on improving distribution efficiency and the quality of post-harvest processing.

Price Dynamics and Information Asymmetry

A more in-depth analysis reveals that the competitiveness of farmers in Mulya Jaya Village is eroded by information asymmetry. Collectors have real-time access to factory price information, while farmers are often in a passive position. Stanton (2017) notes that in modern marketing, control over information is the key to bargaining power.

The practice of determining Rafaksi (weight deductions) by buyers is often not based on transparent measurement tools, but rather on subjective estimates that tend to disadvantage farmers. Sudiyono (2001) explains that high marketing margins at the trader level result in a low farmer's share (the portion of the price received by farmers), making it necessary to intervene through digital price transparency and the standardization of yield measurement tools at the village level.

Supply Chain Efficiency Analysis

The current supply chain involves: Farmers -> Village Market -> Wholesalers -> Factory. Each level takes a 10–15% margin. If farmers can cut out one link (the Village Market) through a cooperative, their net income can increase significantly. This requires investment in a collective transportation fleet so that farmers do not have to rely on the transport services of the collectors.

Downstream Processing Implementation: Mocaf Flour

Downstream processing of cassava into dried chips or mocaf flour is a strategic solution for enhancing competitiveness. Research by Setiawan and Rahayu (2018) demonstrates that marketing processed products significantly boosts competitiveness compared to selling raw materials.

By converting fresh tubers into dried products, farmers gain the benefit of a longer shelf life. This provides farmers with holding power; they are no longer pressured to sell their harvest when prices are falling because these processed products can be stored and sold when prices stabilize again. Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasize that product differentiation through processing is an effective strategy for creating value that is directly felt by both industrial and household consumers. Innovation has a direct, positive, and significant impact on competitive advantage. This means that the higher the level of innovation undertaken by silver craft SMEs, the greater their competitive advantage (Wijaya et al., 2022).

The Use of Digital Technology

Digitalization in agribusiness marketing enables farmers in Mulya Jaya Village to monitor prices through apps or community communication groups. Price transparency will compel middlemen to offer fairer prices (Stanton, 2017). Digital infrastructure is the most influential variable in the digital transformation of MSMEs. The most dependent variables are technological proficiency and the innovation climate (Suasih, Wijaya, and Yudha, 2022). Digital marketing also provides direct access to the household chip-making industry outside the district.

CONCLUSION

In Based on the results of the data analysis and discussion outlined in the previous chapter regarding marketing strategies to enhance the competitiveness of cassava farmers in Mulya Jaya Village, it can be concluded that the internal factors serving as the farmers' main strengths are the high-starch content of their cassava products and the strong community bonds fostered through the Wahyu Dewata Farmers' Group. On the other hand, the weaknesses they still face include limited business capital and high dependence on middlemen in the marketing of their harvest. From an external perspective, the greatest opportunities stem from government assistance programs and demand from the food industry, particularly the relatively stable tapioca factories in Lampung. However, farmers also face various threats, particularly high market price fluctuations and rising costs of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides.

The results of the mapping using the Internal-External Matrix (IE) indicate that with an IFE score of 2.54 and an EFE score of 2.40, the cassava marketing position in Mulya Jaya Village falls into Cell V, namely the "Hold and Maintain" category. This position indicates that the most appropriate strategy is to ensure business sustainability through improved operational efficiency and the strengthening of existing markets, without engaging in high-risk expansion.

Marketing strategies that can be implemented to enhance the competitiveness of cassava farmers focus on four key aspects: market penetration through the strengthening of cooperation agreements with the processing industry to ensure the absorption of harvests; product development through simple downstream processing activities to increase value added; institutional strengthening by optimizing the role of the Merah Putih Mulya Jaya Cooperative as a provider of capital and a price stabilizer, and the utilization of digital technology in marketing activities to expand market access and shorten the distribution chain.

The implementation of these strategies is expected to enhance cassava farmers' competitiveness in a sustainable manner. Through the strengthening of

cooperative institutions, farmers' bargaining power against middlemen can increase, enabling farmers to secure more favorable prices. Additionally, this strategy has the potential to improve the efficiency of marketing and distribution costs, expand market access, and strengthen farmers' economic resilience in facing the dynamics and price fluctuations of cassava commodities in the future.

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