



CAMPAGA FARMERS REAPING PROGRESS

A group of farmers in Campaga, South Sulawesi, are producing high-quality seedlings and learning proper farming techniques. Harvests have doubled.

SUPRIYADI'S clove plantation appears as well-kept as the yard of a British nobleman's summer palace. Clove trees with their inverted umbrella shape stand in rows upon a lush lawn, placed at well-measured intervals. When *Tempo* met the owner last month, he was busy painstakingly pruning leaves and branches.

This clove plantation—located in Campaga village in South Sulawesi's Bantaeng regency—used to belong to Supriyadi's parents. For the past two years, this 30-year-old man has worked the land himself. His production rates have jumped. Over the past year his clove harvest has doubled to 800 kilograms, worth Rp32 million.

His secret is pruning the leaves twice a year and planting the trees seven meters apart. "In the past, my father was only concerned with planting as many trees as possible. The distance between

FARMERS' DISCUSSION IN CAMPAGA, SOUTH SULAWESI.

them varied. Some were a meter apart, some two meters. The leaves and branches were allowed to grow freely," he said. However, in his opinion clove trees must be given space so sunlight can shine on the lower branches. "That way more flowers can grow," he explained.

Supriyadi's friend Hamsir, 24, has also deviated from his parents. In the past, Hamsir's father usually planted cocoa and clove trees. But Hamsir plants pepper and nutmeg, too. "The price of those two spices is higher than cocoa and cloves," he said.

Supriyadi and Hamsir have improved at plantation management since joining the Campaga I Farmers Group, established in 2012 and with 12 members between the ages of 20 and 30. Most are university graduates and students. Each works 10 to 80 ares of plantation land (one are is 100 square meters). They group also has a garden full of high

quality seedlings. There are 7,000 seedlings for plants such as cocoa, clove, nutmeg and white teak.

Their interest in farming generally arose from realizing that other lines of work would not necessarily pay better. Supriyadi told how his friends had worked at private companies in Makassar or Malaysia but earned low salaries. Those seeking civil servant positions rarely passed the exam. "You have to pay extra if you want to pass," he said.

Burhanuddin, 52, a public figure in Campaga, said he was grateful there was a group of young people who preferred farming over looking for work in other places. "They are university and college graduates, but are not ashamed of working with hatchets and shovels. They are even developing new farming techniques," he said.



DRIVING to Campaga from Makassar, the provincial capital, takes six hours. Abdul Rahman, 47, a social figure, said the community had traditionally made its living through farming. Most planted cocoa and small amounts of pepper and cloves.

That was the case up until four years ago, when a major borer pest attack occurred. The cocoa stalks and fruit rotted. With no idea about how to cope with the situation, the farmers opted to cut down all the trees. They started planting clove trees instead, as it had a high market price at the time. Supriyadi was one of those who joined the trend.

This lasted until 2012. At the time, Sulawesi Agroforestry and Forestry (AgFor Sulawesi) came to Bantaeng, which popped up on the institutions radar after it noticed that farmers there were having a hard time improving their economic situation. "The size and quality of their harvest was below average," said Enggar Paramita, a public relations officer for AgFor Sulawesi. "They incorrectly managed the land. They also tended to plant commodities when its price was high."

AgFor formed 11 farmer groups and trained them in more profitable farming methods. One of those was the Campaga I Farmers Group. Supriyadi became one of its 25 members. "I was interested in learning how to produce high quality seedlings," he said. Every Thursday, they gather at the local subdistrict office, where they are free to raise any questions about plantation work.

These sessions have led to a number of solutions. AgFor field staffer Iskak Nugky Ismawan, 34, taught them how to employ pesticides to protect cocoa from pests and disease. High-quality seedlings

MEMBERS
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I FARMERS
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AT THEIR
NURSERY
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also help stave off those pests.

Cloves haven't solved all their problems. In the long term they still could lose money, just like with cocoa. "Sometimes the price of cloves goes down," Supriyadi said. To ensure their incomes, the only solution is to diversify. They must also plant correctly. Clove and cocoa trees must be planted three meters apart, for example.

To upgrade their knowledge, commodities experts have been brought in, such as a clove and pepper expert from the Bogor Agricultural Institute (ITB), a coffee and cocoa expert from the Coffee Research Center and an Indonesian cocoa expert from Jember regency, East Java. Hamsir, one member of the group, said the meetings had taught him a lot. "Pepper farmers in Campaga generally use wooden poles as a propagation media. The expert informed us that these poles can be replaced with tree branches, like those from the mother cocoa tree, whose leaves can be used as animal feed," he said.

To put this new knowledge into practice, after the training was completed the group made its own training and nursery garden. They borrowed 60 ares of land from Supriyadi's mother. Based on the farmers' request, Agfor Sulawesi pitched in 3,000 cocoa seedlings, 1,000 durian seedlings and 600 nutmeg seedlings. "At that time, the price of cocoa had improved. It was felt that nutmeg and durian were suitable for a mixed crop on account of their stable prices," Iskak said. Every Thursday after discussion, all group members are required to take care of the seedling nursery.

The group did not stay together for long. After Ag-



For stopped reimbursing their transportation expenses, 13 members resigned. Some said they were busy taking care of their plantations. Others felt it was pointless to be active in the group if there was no money in it. According to Supriyadi, it was the older farmers who resigned. "The only ones left are us, who are inexperienced," he said with a laugh. Because the group's older chairman resigned, Supriyadi replaced him.

Those remaining continue to run it. The 3,000 cocoa seedlings they planted in the garden will soon grow into full-sized trees. They are also cultivating high-quality plants by using healthy local cocoa stems. They studied side and bud grafting techniques. The bud grafting technique is a method for splicing stems onto tree buds. Meanwhile, side splicing is done on the tree's lower branches.

They also studied how to increase the number of plants by planting cut sections of branches. They no longer need to wait for seedlings to grow from fruit seeds.

After producing superior-grade cocoa seedlings, Supriyadi and friends distributed them to the members. On average one member received about 100 seedlings. Some were also given to about 10 low-income farmers.

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It turns out that some local farmers were paying special attention to the group's activities. They were interested in the seedlings Supriyadi and friends were distributing. One of them is Riri, 40. "I buy from them because I know their seedlings are

good," he said. Many seedlings that have already sprouted usually can only last about four months in polythene bags. "But their seedlings last for seven or eight months," he said.

Abdul Rahman, a community figure, is also a customer. "The quality is clear. Each seedling comes from a healthy specimen and has had its quality improved by grafting," he said.

The group has been able to sell more than 1,000 seedlings. The price ranges from Rp3,000-5,000. "It's not bad. We took in about Rp3 million and got a grass cutter," Supriyadi said.

After this success, members were motivated to produce more quality seedlings. They are processing the other seedlings which are not up for sale. In addition to cocoa seedlings, they also produce coffee and clove seedlings and even cultivate larger trees such as white teak and mahogany via the cut branch method.

They collect seeds from their plantations and from the surrounding forest. There are 500 to 600 seedlings of each type. News of the quality of their seedlings reached the Bantaeng Agricultural Office. "They challenged us to produce 10,000 cocoa seedlings. The grafting process is still underway," Supriyadi said.

The seedling business, Ishak said, had drawn other farmers in Campaga to their seed nursery, and farmers on such visits often joined their Thursday discussions. One of these is Burhanuddin, a Campaga social figure.

Supriyadi and friends always try to share their knowledge with farmers outside the group. However, not every farmer wants to listen. "They feel that we are newcomers," Supriyadi said. Because of this, he often works with community figures such as Burhanuddin and Rahman in order to reach senior farmers.

Outside Campaga, Supriyadi and friends are highly sought after as public speakers. Iskak said Agfor Sulawesi often asked them to share their experiences with farmers in Bantaeng or elsewhere in South Sulawesi. In 2013, they held three training sessions on plant cultivation techniques in Bulukumba regency.

Their aim now is to bring more young people into the group. For the past year, they have promoted a Farming Community group in Tepian Hutan Campaga over social media. Hamsir, the group's manager, said there were 250 members. "There was a university student who recently registered to become a group member," Supriyadi said. ■