

Youth Empowerment of St. Stefanus Holima (OMK) Catholic Church Through the Processing and Packaging of Sweet Potato Chips

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Abstract

Sweet potatoes in the Papuan Mountains region are very abundant and are sold without any processed variations. It is not uncommon for sweet potatoes to not sell even though the price is relatively cheap and affordable for all levels of society. For this reason, community service activities are carried out through community empowerment in implementing technology for processing and packaging sweet potato chips. The aim of this activity is to provide education to church youth (OMK) in Isakusa village to support increasing the income of church youth, and to support government programs in the agricultural sector. The method of implementing activities starts from determining the location, scheduling, socialization, making chips, and packaging the chips. The results of the training on processing and packaging sweet potato chips received a good response from the young people of St. Catholic Church (OMK). Stefanus Holima Wamena because during training it is not uncommon for the youth involved to show facial expressions that are curious, interested, happy and full of enthusiasm. Some of them said that they were very happy and satisfied with the products they had made and felt motivated to make them independently to sell to local people and local and foreign tourists as a form of home business that could increase their income. They also said that if possible, this kind of activity would be carried out sustainably by processing various types of basic materials which are superior in Wamena in particular and Mountain Papua in general.

Keywords: Sweet Potato, Green Economy, Papua, Entrepreneurship, Innovation

INTRODUCTION

One of the food crop commodities with an important role in the people life of the Baliem valley is the sweet potato commodity that is known by the Dani tribe as Hipere and by the Walak tribe as Erom. Sweet potatoe is the main food for the people of the Baliem valley in Jayawijaya because they are a staple food substitute for rice and corn and are a food that is often used in traditional ceremonies for the people of the Baliem valley or other areas in the Papua Mountains. Sweet potato contains carbohydrates with potential as an effort to diversify food and agro-industry. Apart from that, hypere also contains vitamins A and C and the mineral Ca. Hipere has the potential t as a raw material for the food industry and can be processed into flour and starch,

it is possible to store it for longer (Sumarno and Zuraida, 2008). One agricultural food commodity that has prospects for development in order to meet domestic and international market needs is sweet potato (Arwati and Syarif, 2016).

The sweet potato plant is one of the staple foods that has been cultivated culturally for generations by the people of Papua Mountain. Almost of all the lives of the people of Papua in the Mountains are connected with the sweet potato plant. It is because sweet potato plants are always used in various activities such as traditional events, the main ingredient for pig feed (Wam), the daily food of local people. Based on this, the public knowledge of sweet potato cultivation is adequate, obtained from generation to generation and personal experience. Thus, it only requires a little touch from the government and competent institutions in the agricultural sector to improve community farming techniques to produce good sweet potato tubers. Mountainous Papua has a climate and soil structure that can support the growth of sweet potato plants in this area. This condition ensures good growth of sweet potato plants thereby minimizing harvest failure of sweet potato tubers and even sweet potato leaves (Yusiana, 2018).

Sweet potato tubers have a price that can be reached by all levels of society in the Papua Mountains province. The affordability of sweet potato tubers is one of the main factors in the emergence of businesses diversifying staple foods other than rice and corn. It is known that sweet potato tubers contain high levels of carbohydrates. Several types of sweet potato tubers that can be used are white, yellow, red/orange and purple sweet potato tubers. Sweet potato tubers can be processed into various processed food products with great potential for use as raw materials for small, medium and large-scale industries. Various food preparations made from sweet potato include; instant rice, bakpia, donuts, chips, noodles and pearl rice, candy, ice cream, bread, cakes and several syrup drinks. Processing sweet potato tubers into processed food products is certainly nothing new in Indonesia. Therefore, the creation of added value of sweet potato products provides an overview of the economic potential of sweet potato at the national level (Agricultural Research and Development, 2010).

Planning and implementing agricultural development in the food crop and horticulture sub-sector can be implemented in a real and responsible manner in improving the welfare of the Papuan people as a whole. The challenge of agricultural development in meeting food needs and maintaining family nutritional balance can be done by diversifying local food into products with greater value so as to support the economy of rural communities and strengthen farmer institutions and extension systems that have not yet been optimal (Department of Food Crops and Horticulture, 2014).

One of the village areas in Wamena is the Isakusa village with large number of young people. Generally, the people in this village are sweet potato farmers. Sweet potato in this area is very abundant and is sold without any processed creations. When the harvest is abundant, many sweet potato are sold for long time and are not even sold. In this village, there are no household or large scale industries for processing sweet potato that are running well. The results of initial observations and brief interviews with church youth (OMK) before carrying out the service showed that the people in Isakusa village still had no experience processing sweet potato and were afraid to start a business processing sweet potato because they were afraid the product cannot be sold. Skills in processing sweet potato have never been obtained in training conducted by universities in Wamena city.

The community in Isakusa village really needs training in processing and packaging sweet potato chips. According to Sulaeman (2018), training is a learning activity carried out outside

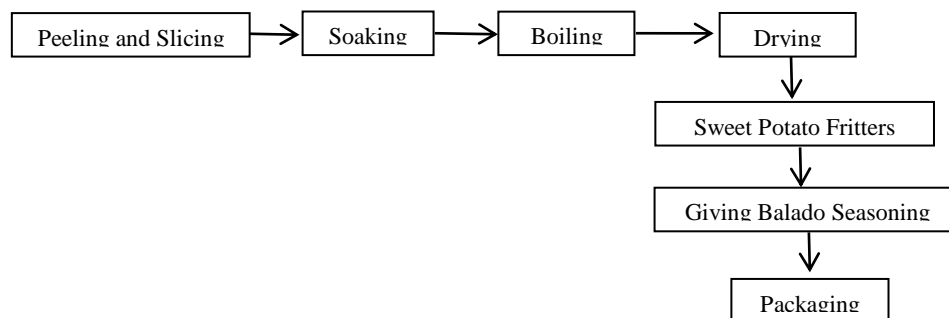
formal education that is designed in such a way using practical methods over a short period of time. The training provided is to improve a person or community skill according to their needs (Surani, et al., 2020).

The empowerment activities carried out by the service team are an important focus to be carried out to change farmer behavioral patterns in the process of processing sweet potato that have never been processed into regional superior product in the Papua Mountains, especially the Isakusa community, it is to increase the income of sweet potato farmers and as an effort to diversify food crops into superior products with greater selling value.

METHOD

This Community Service activity was carried out in Isakusa village in August 2023. The targets of this Community Service was the young people of St. Stephen Holima (OMK) Catholic Church. Implementation of Community Service activities carried out by Petra Baliem Wamena College of Agricultural Sciences (STIPER) Service Team and STKIP Kristen Wamena used several tools and materials as follows; medium baking pan, knife, sweet potato chopper, stove, frying pan, spatula/stirrer, drainer, press tool (sealer), plastic packaging, product sticker, clean water, kerosene, cooking oil, lime solution, 500 ppm sodium bisulfite solution, spices balado, and salt. Community Service Activities carried out by the STIPER Petra Baliem Service Team and STKIP Kristen Wamena used following stages:

Soaking



RESULTS

The results of service activities carried out by the PkM Team of the Petra Baliem Wamena College of Agricultural Sciences (STIPER) and STKIP Kristen Wamena include:

Socialization of Making Sweet Potato Chips

The first thing to do before producing sweet potato chips was to conduct socialization to young people from the St. Stefanus Holima (OMK) Catholic Church in Isakusa village, Hubikosi district. The socialization carried out took the form of introducing several types of quality sweet potato to be made into chips, techniques for making chips, packaging techniques and even marketing methods. This socialization was carried out by the STIPER Petra Baliem Wamena Service Team and STKIP Kristen Wamena who were accompanied by the chairman of LPPM STIPER Petra Baliem Wamena. Socialization was carried out on the same day before making and packaging the chips.

Implementation

The implementation of making sweet potato chips was attended by more than 20 young people from the St. Stefanus Holima (OMK) Catholic Church, Isakusa village, Hubikosi district. The service team gave directions to the manufacturing stages while the young people carried them out. It means that the process of making chips is carried out using a systematic demonstration method based on a sequence or sequence of making chips. Starting from the stages of cleaning the sweet potato tubers, chopping, soaking the sweet potato in a solution of lime and sodium bisulfite, boiling and drying the sweet potato, frying, adding ballad seasoning, and packaging the sweet potato chips.

DISCUSSION

The socialization was carried out to broaden the knowledge of the young people of St. Stefanus Holima (OMK) Catholic Church, Isakusa village, Hubikosi district. In the socialization activities, the service team provided some important information in producing new innovations in processing sweet potato into products with added value to be marketed to public. The added value consists of different and attractive appearance and can be consumed directly by all levels of society.

There was enthusiastic expression of young people response during the socialization and it was not uncommon for them to ask questions about making sweet potato chips. The enthusiasm of the church youth in fulfilling their curiosity was proved by the large number of young people who took part in the socialization on the processing of sweet potato chips. Processing sweet potato into products in the form of sweet potato chips used sweet potato tubers, both yellow and white. After the socialization was carried out, it continued with making and packaging sweet potato chips.

When cleaning sweet potato, the young people were very experienced that can be seen from the way they clean and peel the sweet potato tubers to be chips. The main obstacle experienced was slicing the cleaned sweet potato tubers. They still looked stiff even though they had used the slicer that had been prepared by the team. For this reason, people need skills in using appropriate technology in the form of sweet potato slicing or cutting tools as stated by Sugiyanto et al. (2017: 51-59). Another obstacle experienced by young people in processing sweet potato tubers was limited knowledge in diversifying processed sweet potato products into products with greater selling value. It is expected that the creativity of these young people may increase the competitiveness of local communities with more skilled people who come from various regions in Indonesia. Apart from that, when making sweet potato chips, several young people asked about the marketing strategy so that there was continuous product continuity in production. The Food Crops and Horticulture Service (2014) said that various things that the government can do to strengthen agricultural development include increasing the productivity of agricultural products and the added value of agricultural products with an impact on improving the economy of rural communities.

The service team provides answers based on experience and theories that have been studied, namely marketing can be done wholesale or retail. Wholesale marketing can be done by distributing chips with packaged and labeled to shops and stalls as well as stalls in Wamena and other cities in the Papua Mountain province. Apart from that, young people can also rent the stall to market directly and retail as souvenirs from the city of Wamena. Stall locations can

be positioned inside the airport or outside the airport or around outside the airport on main roads.

This thinking is part of the marketing strategy for sweet potato chip products that have been packaged neatly and attractively. Sofia *et al.* (2022:86-95) say that marketing strategy is an effort made by a person or group of people to disseminate their products so that they are known to the public. He continued that the marketing strategy carried out could be developed through online marketing. Online marketing does not require space and can be done in a relatively short time and quickly. Thus, this marketing activity can be carried out anywhere and anytime and increase family income (Dewi and Rahmat, 2022). Referring to these activities can increase the sales volume of production products so that small and medium business actors improve significant profits (Beu et al., 2021).

Based on this, it is necessary for the service team to develop empowerment through outreach in the form of seminars on strategies for developing production and marketing of sweet potato chip products in order to increase the sales volume of products developed by the community. As has been done by several service teams, one of which is from Sorong city by conducting production training and marketing strategies for sweet potato chips with the purpose of providing motivation for mothers to be creative in sweet potato products to improve the family economy (Sofia *et al.*, 2022:86-96). Another important thing to do in developing community skills is to conduct training in the use and manufacture of appropriate technology such as tools for cutting/slicing sweet potato tubers to make chips.

The results of the training on processing and packaging sweet potato chips received a good response from the young people of St. Stefanus Holima (OMK) Catholic Church Wamena because during training so it is not uncommon for the youth involved to show facial expressions that are curious, interested, happy and full of enthusiasm. Some of them said that they were very happy and satisfied with the products they had made and felt motivated to make them independently to sell to local people and local and foreign tourists as a form of home business that could increase their income. They also said that if possible, this kind of activity will be carried out sustainably by processing various types of basic materials that are superior in Wamena particularly and Mountain Papua generally.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Service activities carried out by the PKM Team consisting of lecturers and students from the Petra Baliem Wamena College of Agricultural Sciences in collaboration with STKIP Kristen Wamena lecturers. This activity took the form of empowering the youth of St. Stefanus Holima (OMK) Catholic Church, Isakusa village, Hubikosi district, processed sweet potato tubers into chips which was carried out in August 2023. This activity was carried out smoothly and well and was attended by more than 20 young people. The activities carried out include processing sweet potato tubers into balado flavored sweet potato chips and packaging the sweet potato chips for market. The implementation of this activity received good response from the young people of St. Stefanus Holima (OMK) Catholic Church and gave them motivation to process sweet potato tubers into products with added value. It is expected that after carrying out this activity, it may increase the sales volume of processed sweet potato products.

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APPENDIX



Figure 1. Socialization of Making Sweet Potato Chips



Figure 2. Process of Making Sweet Potato Chips



Figure 3. Packaging of Sweet Potato Chips