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ENHANCING OIL PALM YIELDS THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF SHARIA ECONOMICS AND AGROECOLOGY: A CASE STUDY OF MEKAR INDAH JAYA FARMER GROUP

Sarif Hidayat[1], A. Muslimin[2], M. Agus Mushodiq[3], Finny Ligery[4], M. Yusuf[5]

[1] Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, Indonesia
[2] Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, Indonesia
[3,4,5] Universitas Ma'arif Lampung, Indonesia

E-mail: sarifhidayat5612@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT:
This study aims to analyze strategies for improving oil palm agricultural yields based on the perspective of Sharia economics and agroecology within the Mekar Indah Jaya Farmer Group. The method used is a qualitative approach through case studies, observation, interviews, and documentation. The results show that the application of the principles of tawhid and khilafah, along with agroecological practices, can enhance harvest yields, environmental sustainability, and social welfare. Strategies such as the use of organic fertilizers, muzara'ah contracts, and spiritual activities like communal prayers and harvest almsgiving are key determining factors. This model demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating Sharia values and environmental preservation in sustainable oil palm farming.

Keywords*: Strategy for Increasing Agricultural Yields; Sharia Economics; Muzaraah contract*

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a sector that plays an essential role in supporting food security, increasing community income, and driving economic growth, especially in rural areas. One of the leading commodities relied upon by farmers in Mekar Indah Jaya Village, Banjar Baru Subdistrict, Tulang Bawang Regency, is oil palm. This commodity makes a significant contribution to farmers' welfare and serves as the primary source of livelihood for the local community.

However, field conditions show that oil palm yields are still not optimal. Several problems, such as low productivity, underutilization of natural resources, limited access to business capital, and weak farmer group management, are among the factors that hinder agricultural improvement.

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In addition, spiritual and ethical aspects in agricultural practices are often neglected, even though Sharia economic values such as honesty (*ṣidq*), justice (*'adl*), cooperation (*ta'āwun*), and blessings (*barakah*) can positively contribute to farm management.

Based on observations in Mekar Indah Jaya Village, oil palm land productivity only reaches 10–12 tons per hectare per year, which is still below the national productivity standard of 20–25 tons per hectare per year. Several issues identified in the field include: limited use of fertilizers due to capital constraints, low utilization of modern agricultural technology such as solid organic fertilizer from palm waste, lack of technical training for farmers, and weak management and coordination within farmer groups. In addition, some farmers still engage in harvest sales without transparency in weighing or pricing, which shows that the values of honesty (*ṣidq*) and justice (*'adl*) have not been fully implemented. In fact, Sharia economic principles that emphasize cooperation (*ta'āwun*) and blessings in business (*barakah*) can be solutions to strengthen farmer institutions and improve agricultural yields sustainably.

From the perspective of Sharia economics, efforts to improve agricultural output are not solely oriented toward increasing production and profits but also consider aspects of blessings, justice, and sustainability. As stated by Chapra (2020), economic activities in Islam—including agriculture—must integrate Islamic moral and ethical values to achieve *falah* (prosperity in this world and the hereafter). In line with this, Arif (2018) states that implementing Sharia economic principles in agriculture can encourage the creation of a productive, fair, and sustainable agricultural system. The application of Sharia principles such as justice (*'adalah*), cooperation (*ta'āwun*), mutual benefit (*maṣlaḥah*), and blessings (*barakah*) can serve as solutions to strengthen farmer institutions and improve sustainable agricultural outcomes. The concept of *barakah* in economic activity is not only material but also spiritual, encouraging entrepreneurs to conduct business with honesty, fairness, and consideration for social and environmental impacts. This is in line with the goal of increasing agricultural production that focuses not only on quantity but also on quality and sustainability.

Based on the explanation above, research on strategies to increase agricultural yields from a Sharia economic perspective in the oil palm farmer group of Mekar Indah Jaya Village is expected to identify the potentials and constraints faced, as well as formulate appropriate strategies to enhance agriculture based on sustainable economic principles, including the application of Sharia economic values that *emphasize* the balance between economic, social, and ecological benefits.

Several studies have discussed the application of Sharia economic principles in agriculture, such as the study by Rahmawati entitled *"The Application of Sharia Economic Principles in Farmer Groups in Lampung Province."* The study revealed that the application of Sharia principles in farmer *groups* increased productivity by up to 25% and farmers' income by up to 30%. This indicates that the Sharia economic approach has the potential to be applied as a strategy to improve agricultural yields in Mekar Indah Jaya Village.

Another study by Ferdi Hamzah, Muhamad Arif Mustofa, and Nurjali, titled *"Efforts of Oil Palm Farmers to Improve the Economy Based on the Islamic Economic Perspective in Sungai Sayang Village,"* found that oil palm farmers in Sungai Sayang had implemented Islamic economic principles in their efforts to improve their economy. Through agricultural practices aligned with Sharia values, the farmers successfully increased their income and family welfare.

A further study by Melin Cahyani, titled *"Analysis of Agricultural Sector Development Strategies from the Perspective of Islamic Economics (A Study at the Agriculture Office of Central Lampung Regency),"* revealed that monthly training programs conducted by the agriculture office improved farmers' knowledge of post-harvest technology and long-term agricultural efficiency. However, the biggest challenge was the continued dependence on chemical fertilizers.

Based on the background described above, the novelty of this article lies in its analysis of strategies to increase agricultural yields from the perspective of Sharia economics, specifically in the oil palm farmer group of Mekar Indah Jaya Village, Banjar Baru Subdistrict, Tulang Bawang Regency.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach by analyzing real-life events and conditions to gain a deeper understanding. Qualitative research is a method used to examine and comprehend individual or group behavior as well as natural social phenomena, from which data is obtained and then interpreted descriptively.

The research was conducted through a literature study, including books, journals, and other documented sources related to the focus of this research. This refers to the analytical framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1984), which involves three key techniques: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

The focus of this study is to reveal and analyze strategies for increasing agricultural yields from the perspective of Sharia economics, with a specific emphasis on the oil palm farmer group in Mekar Indah Jaya Village, Banjar Baru Subdistrict, Tulang Bawang Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Legal Foundation of Sharia Economics

Sharia economics, which serves as the foundation for analyzing strategies to improve agricultural yields in the oil palm farmer group of Mekar Indah Jaya Village, Banjar Baru Subdistrict, Tulang Bawang Regency, is based on the Qur'an, Hadith, *ijma'*, *qiyas*, and relevant Indonesian legislation. The Qur'an affirms the permissibility of trade and the prohibition of *riba* (usury) (QS. Al-Baqarah: 275), emphasizes the importance of equitable wealth distribution (QS. Al-Hasyr: 7), and mandates the fulfillment of agricultural obligations such as *zakat* (QS. Al-An'am: 141). The Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) reinforce the practice of fair agricultural partnerships, such as *muzara'ah* and *musaqah*, as mutually beneficial contractual arrangements.

Ijma' (scholarly consensus) and *qiyas* (analogical reasoning) legitimize the development of Sharia contracts within the modern agribusiness sector. In addition, positive law in Indonesia, such as Law No. 21 of 2008 concerning Sharia Banking and Law No. 19 of 2013 on the Protection and Empowerment of Farmers, along with fatwas issued by the National Sharia Council of the Indonesian Ulema Council (DSN-MUI) regarding principles of Sharia business cooperation, all demonstrate that enhancing agricultural productivity from a Sharia economic perspective must be grounded in the principles of justice, blessings (*barakah*), transparency, and sustainability in accordance with Islamic values. Monzer Kahf also emphasizes that efficiency in resource utilization is part of the trust (*amanah*) in managing the environment.

2. Strategies to Increase Oil Palm Agricultural Yields Implemented by the Farmer Group in Mekar Indah Jaya Village

The oil palm farmer group in Mekar Indah Jaya Village applies two main strategies: worldly (dunyawiyah) and spiritual (ukhrawiyah) strategies. The worldly strategies focus on the technical and managerial aspects of agriculture, including.

First, the selection of superior seeds: This strategy aims to increase land productivity potential by selecting plant varieties that are resilient and highly productive. Based on research data obtained from interviews with the head of the farmer group, the use of superior seeds has had a very positive

impact on the farmers. Through proper seed selection, crop yields per hectare have increased, the harvesting process has become more efficient, and the plants are more resistant to extreme weather and disease. All these factors contribute to higher profits for the farmers, which in turn improves their overall welfare. In general, the use of superior seeds has proven to be an effective step in improving productivity and crop resilience in the face of environmental challenges.

Second, the use of organic fertilizers: The group promotes the use of organic fertilizers as an environmentally friendly alternative to maintain soil fertility and reduce the negative impacts of chemical inputs.

Precise fertilization techniques are also implemented—tailoring fertilization methods to the specific needs of the plants increases the efficiency of fertilizer usage and minimizes waste. Based on field studies conducted with members of the Mekar Indah Jaya farmer group, solid organic fertilizers have helped oil palm plants grow better, greener, and stronger. Moreover, the soil has become more fertile, and the plants have shown increased resistance to various types of diseases. Farmers also reported noticeable improvements in harvest yields as a direct result of using this fertilizer.

The benefits of using solid fertilizers are evident in the growth and health of the oil palm trees. The fertilizers contribute to stronger, more vigorous plants and improved soil conditions. Most significantly, there has been a notable increase in crop yields, which directly benefits farmers economically.

Next, routine monitoring and evaluation Continuous monitoring of plant growth and conditions enables farmers to quickly adjust strategies when deviations or problems occur. This worldly strategy serves as a crucial technical foundation for directly enhancing crop yields through innovation and the appropriate application of technology.

3. Strategies to Increase Oil Palm Agricultural Yields from the Perspective of Sharia

Economic Principles

The *ukhrawi* (spiritual) strategy for increasing agricultural yields emphasizes spiritual and social values aligned with the principles of Sharia economics, including:

- Intention to seek blessings (*barakah*):
  Focusing agricultural business goals on spiritual dimensions with the hope that the outcomes will be blessed by God, rather than merely pursuing material gain.
- Honesty in transactions:

Prioritizing integrity and transparency in all economic dealings to foster trust among farmers, buyers, and other stakeholders.

- Sharing through *zakat* and *sadaqah*:
  Redistributing harvests to those in need, which helps promote equitable welfare and reduce social inequality.
- Environmental preservation:
  Applying agricultural practices that avoid harming the environment to ensure long-term ecological sustainability.
- Strengthening social ties among farmers (*silaturahmi*):
  Building strong social relationships among farmer group members to support collaboration and the exchange of information in facing agricultural challenges.

In implementing Sharia economic principles in agricultural management, the Mekar Indah Jaya Farmer Group has emphasized several key concepts, particularly Tauhid (the Oneness of God), Khilafah (stewardship), and Justice (*'adl*) as foundational values in managing agricultural yields.

a. The Principle of Divinity (Tauhid)

Farmers in Mekar Indah Jaya Village hold a strong belief that Allah SWT is the Creator of all things and the One who governs everything that happens on Earth. In Sharia economics, this belief is referred to as the principle of *tauhid*, which acknowledges the Creator's role in managing life. This conviction motivates the farmers to work harder and approach their efforts with a sense of spiritual devotion.

Most farmers in Mekar Indah Jaya cultivate their own oil palm lands—whether as landowners or land managers. Traditional rural communities believe in divine protection over their livelihoods. For generations, farmers in the village have practiced communal prayer (*do'a bersama*) at the beginning of each planting season. This ritual aims to strengthen their spiritual connection to Allah SWT and ask for smoothness and success throughout the planting to harvesting period.

The farmers also believe that *barakah* (divine blessing) can be attained through collective prayer and regular charitable giving. During each harvest season, they perform *sadaqah* (almsgiving) as an expression of gratitude to Allah SWT for His blessings. These practices not only reflect individual piety but also foster a spirit of thankfulness and community welfare in the village.

b. The Principle of Khilafah (Stewardship/Representation)

Sharia economics views agriculture as a strategic sector that must be managed according to its foundational principles. These include:

1. Balance Between Economic Interests and Environmental Sustainability

   The concept of *wasathiyah* (moderation/balance) in Islam allows for the pursuit of profit, but not at the expense of environmental preservation. In the context of oil palm plantations, this is implemented by using intercropping systems that are both economically and ecologically beneficial, applying water-saving irrigation methods, and utilizing organic fertilizers to reduce the use of harmful pesticides.

2. Equitable Benefit Distribution for All Stakeholders

   In line with the principle of *'adalah* (justice) in Islamic economics, profits should not be concentrated in the hands of only a few. Application in the palm oil industry includes: fair profit-sharing with plasma farmers, community empowerment programs, prioritizing employment for local residents, and implementing a transparent and accountable profit-sharing system.

c. The Principle of Justice

Islam is a perfect religion that provides solutions to various problems, including those related to the economy. Justice (*'adalah*) is one of the universal principles that plays a crucial role in economic development. In philosophy, justice is viewed from two perspectives:

First, as a harmony between the exercise of rights and the fulfillment of obligations, in accordance with the essence of law, which binds individuals together through a balanced measure of rights and responsibilities. Second, legal scholars generally define justice as a harmony between legal certainty and legal proportionality.

The essence of justice originates from Allah SWT, the Most Just, who establishes justice and does not act unjustly toward His servants. Justice evolves along with the development of social morality. The application of the principle of justice fosters harmony among the farmers in Mekar Indah Jaya Village. The farmers care for one another and do not act selfishly during the oil palm planting process on shared lands. Justice is implemented in various matters, including the fair distribution of harvest yields and the equitable sharing of solid fertilizers used for palm tree cultivation. The principle of justice within the Mekar Indah Jaya farmer group is clearly reflected in multiple aspects, such as the distribution of harvests,

fertilizer allocation, and interpersonal relationships among farmers. The following are several implementations of justice carried out by the farmer group:

1) Justice in Harvest Distribution

   A fair division of harvest yields between landowners and cultivators exemplifies the principle of justice. Farmers and landowners agree on proportions that reflect each party's contributions—both in labor and land use. This arrangement embodies equality of rights and duties, ensuring that every stakeholder receives a share commensurate with their role in the agricultural process.

2) Justice in Resource Allocation

   Each farmer has an equal right to access available resources, such as fertilizers, operating capital, and harvest products. Under this equitable system, no one feels disadvantaged or treated unfairly. All farmers are granted the same opportunity to obtain what is rightfully theirs, in accordance with their contributions to the farmer group.

3) Justice through Mutual Cooperation (Gotong Royong)

   Farmers in Mekar Indah Jaya implement the principle of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) as a form of social justice. They assist one another from planting through to harvesting. Justice is realized here because each farmer contributes fairly to help others, without prioritizing personal interests. This collaboration not only strengthens interpersonal bonds among farmers but also ensures equitable benefits for the entire community.

Justice in Islam is a fundamental factor in community life. It is implemented to ensure that every individual has the freedom to obtain what is rightfully theirs. Justice applies to personal interests, interactions with others, and legal matters—each aspect being interrelated. The principle of justice is the core of Islamic economic discipline, as it aims to achieve societal prosperity and well-being.

In the context of the Mekar Indah farmer group in Banjar Baru, Tulang Bawang Regency, the implementation of the *Muzara'ah* contract is highly relevant to their agricultural practices. *Muzara'ah* is a form of agricultural partnership contract between a landowner (*muzhir*) and a cultivator (*muzara'i*), based on a pre-agreed profit-sharing arrangement. The application of this principle includes transparency in the distribution of yields, ensuring fairness in accordance with each party's contribution

In practice, the distribution of yields in the field is often set with a clear ratio, such as 60:40, typically referring to the share between the landowner and the cultivator. If the cultivator manages the land, they usually receive a larger portion of the harvest due to their greater labor contribution. Conversely, the landowner still receives their portion even if they are not directly involved in the farming process.

The Mekar Indah farmer group ensures that the agreed-upon yield distribution is reflected in the transparent and fair management of resources. Each party clearly understands their rights and responsibilities, fostering trust between landowners and cultivators. Moreover, with clear agreements—whether related to yield sharing, harvest timing, or capital distribution—the group is able to maintain harmonious relationships and ensure the sustainability of their cooperation. Through this just approach, the Mekar Indah farmer group has also been able to increase agricultural productivity, reduce potential conflicts, and ensure mutual benefit for both parties. This system reflects the concept of justice from the perspective of Islamic economics.

4.The Impact of Strategies to Increase Oil Palm Agricultural Yields on the Economic Improvement of the Farmer Group

a. Economic Improvement

Before implementing the strategies to increase agricultural yields based on the perspective of Sharia economics and agroecology, farmers faced a high dependency on expensive chemical inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. This resulted in high production costs and unstable, generally low, farmer incomes. In addition, there was no structured and transparent profit-sharing system, leading to unfair distribution of harvest yields.

b. Sustainability

From an environmental aspect, prior to the implementation of these strategies, excessive use of chemical substances had caused degradation of soil quality and environmental pollution due to pesticide residues. The reduction of biodiversity in plantation areas and the disruption of the natural ecosystem balance also became significant issues. Furthermore, soil fertility experienced long-term decline, which negatively impacted overall agricultural productivity.

The strategy of increasing agricultural yields through the perspective of Sharia economics and agroecology in this farmer group has had a direct impact, including the preservation of

natural resources, minimization of the negative impacts of agriculture, adaptation to climate change, and overall improvement.

The findings of this research indicate that the analysis of strategies to enhance agricultural yields based on Sharia economics and agroecology perspectives can effectively improve palm oil production for the Mekar Indah Jaya farmer group while fostering a sustainable farming system that offers long-term benefits. The Mekar Indah Jaya farmer group has adopted the principles of Sharia economics as an effort to achieve maximum yields accompanied by divine blessings.

The group implements the principle of *tawhid* by conducting communal prayers before entering the planting season and donating a portion of the harvest as alms. In addition to the *tawhid* principle, they also apply the *khilafah* principle in Islamic economics, which emphasizes responsibility toward nature. This is reflected in the use of environmentally friendly solid fertilizers, aligning closely with the concept of agroecology, which stresses environmental sustainability and ecosystem balance.

In Sharia economics, the emphasis on *barakah* (blessing) promotes an agricultural model that not only seeks financial profit but also social and environmental sustainability. This is evident in the use of organic inputs and eco-friendly soil management practices, which enhance soil health and reduce production costs. The integration of the *Muzara'ah* contract into this farming model underscores the importance of transparency and justice in the collaboration between landowners and cultivators. The implementation of a clear and proportional profit-sharing system (e.g., 60:40) ensures each party receives a return that reflects their respective contributions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the strategy of increasing agricultural yields based on agroecological principles within the framework of Sharia economics, as implemented by the Palm Oil Farmer Group of Mekar Indah Jaya Village in Banjar Baru District, Tulang Bawang Regency, has made a significant contribution to improving both productivity and farmer welfare.

This strategy encompasses *worldly* approaches such as the selection of superior seeds, the use of organic fertilizers, and intensive agricultural monitoring, as well as *spiritual* strategies involving sincere intentions (*niyyah*), honesty, almsgiving (*zakat*), and environmental preservation. These practices are aligned with the fundamental principles of Islamic economics, including *tawhid* (belief

in the Oneness of God), *khilafah* (human responsibility as stewards of the Earth), and *justice* (*'adl*), which are realized through systems of profit-sharing, equitable access to resources, and mutual cooperation among farmers.

The application of these principles not only increases crop yields but also promotes equitable prosperity, maintains social harmony, and ensures environmental sustainability—thereby fostering a palm oil farming system that is more blessed (*barakah*), competitive, and sustainable within the values and ethics of Islam.

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