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Research Article

Optimizing Marketing Efficiency and Farmer's Share in the Oil Palm Industry: A Study of Marketing Channels and Margins in Pasar VII Namo Terasi Village, Sei Bingai District, Langkat Regency

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ABSTRACT

Oil palm farmers is act as producer and price takers and their bargaining position is often unequal, and farmers are disadvantaged by the condition. A large number of intermediaries involved in the marketing process indicates long marketing channel. Long marketing channel of a product results in greater marketing costs; such circumstances would lead to inefficient marketing channel. This research is purposed to analyze marketing channel, marketing margin, famer's share and marketing efficiency for oil palm in Pasar VII Namo Terasi Village. Result shows that there are 2 types of Marketing channels for Oil Palm in Pasar VIII Namo Terasi Village, Sei Bingai District, Langkat Regency which are Marketing Channel I (Farmers–Intermediaries–Oil Palm Factory) and Marketing Channel II (Farmers–Oil Palm Factory). Marketing Channel with the highest Farmer's Share is Marketing Channel II, with the share of farmer's value being about 100%. Either marketing channel 1 and marketing channel II are categorized as efficient.Result shows that marketing channel pattern II is the most efficient marketing channel.

INTRODUCTION

Oil palm has become a crucial commodity for many countries, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia, which export large quantities of its products such as oil, meal, and other derivatives (Murphy, 2019; Shodiq, 2021). Oil palm gave highest contribution to household income (Abdina, 2019). The cultivation and processing of oil palm plants have the potential to improve the welfare of 4.2 million oil palm farming families in Indonesia, as it can provide employment opportunities (Direktorat Jenderal Perkebunan, 2017). It is widely recognized that palm oil has brought economic benefits to both national economies and local communities.

North Sumatra Province is an area that has more oil palm development. Every year the size of smallholder oil palm plantations in North Sumatra increases significantly due to the land conversion of agriculture such as

rice fields to land for planting oil palm which often occurs in Langkat, Serdang Bedagai, Labuhan Batu. The land conversion that occurred in North Sumatra in 2019 is about 439.315 Ha and increased in 2020 to reach 441.399,52 Ha with the production of 7.199.750 tons of smallholder oil palm. Langkat Regency total area of smallholder oil palm plantations in 2021 is about 47.263 hectares with production about 168.176,16 ton of smallholder oil palm (Direktorat Jendral Perkebunan, 2020).

Pasar VIII Namo Terasi Village in Sei Bingai District, North Sumatra, is known for its significant oil palm production. Local smallholder farmers in this area rely heavily on marketing agencies and intermediary traders to market their products. However, farmers often face issues with unpredictable pricing that does not proportionally reflect the rising cost of inputs such as fertilizers. Furthermore, farmer groups in the area have not played a substantial role in supporting smallholder oil palm farmers, as government programs aimed at assisting these groups, such as providing support for superior seeds, have only been focused on other commodities such as rice.

The oil palm farmers of Pasar VIII Namo Terasi Village, located in Sei Bingai, Langkat regency, have a limited role as producers and are subject to the prices set by intermediaries. The unequal bargaining power of the farmers leaves them at a disadvantage, with intermediaries setting prices for their products. The purchase price of fresh fruit bunches paid to farmers fluctuated between IDR 2,800-2,900/kg, while the final consumer price was IDR 3,300/kg. The price disparity between the prices paid to farmers and the prices received by final consumers is significant.

In addition to the issue of low prices received by smallholder palm oil farmers, marketing their products also presents another challenge. The extensive involvement of intermediary traders in the marketing process results in high marketing margins, which leads to a significant disparity between the prices paid by the end consumer and received by the smallholders. Consequently, related marketing agencies may take a larger share of the profits (Girikerto et al., 2021; Ikhtiagung et al., 2022). The presence of numerous intermediaries indicates a lengthy marketing chain, leading to higher marketing costs and an inefficient marketing channel (Ardillah & Hasan, 2020; Riyadh, 2018; Saefudin, 1982; Sarkum et al., 2020).

Given the challenges faced by smallholder oil palm farmers in Pasar VIII Namo Terasi Village, it is essential to examine the marketing practices of oil palm in the area (Pinem et al., 2018). Specifically, an analysis of the various marketing channels employed and their relative efficiency is necessary to identify potential solutions that can enhance the profitability and sustainability of smallholder oil palm farming in Namo Terasi Village.

METHOD

A purposive sampling method was employed to select Pasar VIII Namo Terasi Village, Sei Bingai District, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province, as the research site due to its significant smallholder oil palm plantations. The research was conducted to achieve specific research objectives. The study sample comprised of 31 smallholder oil palm farmers, 3 collectors, and factories involved in the distribution of palm oil in Pasar VIII Namo Terasi Village.

The primary data for this research was collected through interviews with every actor involved in the oil palm marketing chain. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from several related agencies, including the Central Bureau of Statistics North Sumatra, the Central Bureau of Statistics Langkat, and the District Plantation and Forestry Service of Langkat.

The marketing channels of smallholder oil palm plantations were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The marketing margin and share of oil palm smallholders at the research location were analyzed using the calculations outlined in Baroh et al. (2021).

The study employs the following calculations (Baroh et al., 2021) to analyze the marketing margin and share of smallholder oil palm farmers in Pasar VIII Namo Terasi Village: Marketing Margin (MP) is computed as the difference between the price paid by the producer (Pf) and the price received by the consumer (Pr); Marketing Profit (KP) is determined using the following formula: Pj – Pb – Bp, where Pj is the Selling Price of the Marketing Institution, Pb is the Purchase Price of the Marketing Institution, and Bp is the Marketing fee; Profit Margin (MK) is calculated as MP divided by Pr multiplied by 100, and Marketing Cost (BP) is MP plus Bp. The farmer's share (SP) is expressed as a percentage of the price received by farmers from the price at the consumer level (Umar et al., 2020; Wahyuni et al., 2021). Descriptive analysis is utilized to analyze the marketing channels for smallholder oil palm plantations.

$$MP = Pr - Pf \quad (1)$$

$$KP = Pj - Pb - \Sigma Bp \quad (2)$$

$$MK = Mp - Bp \quad (3)$$

$$SF = \frac{Pf}{Pr}\ x\ 100\% \quad (4)$$

To evaluate the marketing efficiency of palm oil in the research area, the following formula can be employed:

$$Ep = \frac{Marketing\ Cost}{Product\ value}\ x\ 100\% \quad (5)$$

The level of marketing efficiency of palm oil in the research area was evaluated using the following criterion: if the EP value is ≤ 50%, it indicates that the marketing channel utilization in the research area has reached an efficient level; conversely, if the EP value is ≥ 50%, the marketing channel in the research area has not yet achieved an efficient level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pattern of Marketing Channel

Marketing is a fundamental process whereby organizations interact with their customers, cultivate positive relationships, and generate value for these customers in order to receive favorable feedback and generate profits, thus increasing customer assets (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Essentially, marketing is the process of moving products from producers to consumers. It is a crucial activity in the production cycle, as good production can be wasted if market prices are low. Consequently, high production levels without effective marketing may not translate into high profits.

The marketing channel for palm oil refers to the process of marketing the fruit bunches from the producers, namely the palm oil farmers, to the consumers, namely the palm oil mills. The marketing agency, which is an intermediary involved in the marketing activities of fruit bunches from the farmers to the mills, plays a crucial role in these activities. The distribution of production results in marketing activities necessitates an important role from intermediaries or marketing agencies. The volume of production per unit area, calculated per year or per harvest, is a factor that influences the selection of marketing channels (Mawardarti, 2018).

The results of the study on the marketing channel of smallholder oil palm in Pasar VIII Namo Terasi Village suggest the existence of two types of marketing channels that involve marketing agents. The participation of marketing agents is a significant factor in determining the magnitude of marketing margins, marketing costs, and profits.

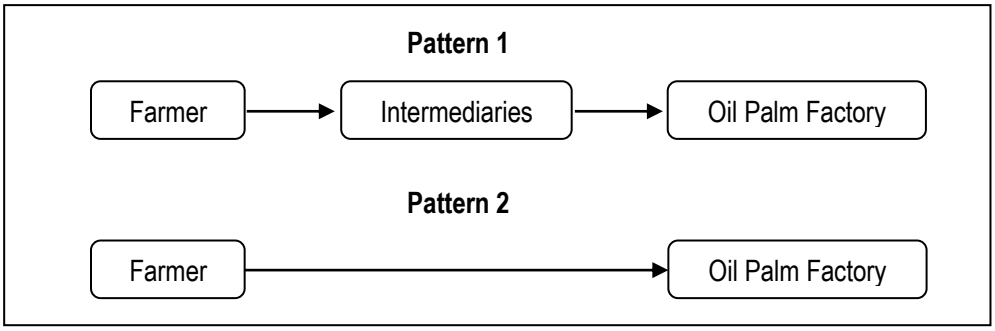

Figure 1. Fresh Fruit Bunch Marketing Channel in Smallholder Farmer in Pasar VIII Namo Terasi

The study revealed that out of the 31 smallholder oil palm farmers sampled, 27 farmers utilized marketing channels to sell their fresh fruit bunch (FFB) produce to collectors, who acted as intermediaries. The quantity of FFB sold to collectors by farmers varied depending on their land size and harvest yields. Incurring only harvesting and transportation expenses, the farmers were charged a minimal fee. The farmers opted to sell to collectors as they lacked adequate yields and transportation means to sell directly to the oil palm factory (Noor, 2013; Kana et al., 2022).

Farmers choose to sell to collectors due to transportation constraint. Farmers do not have means of transportation to transport FFB to oil palm factory. The distance between farmer's land and the factory become

one of the reason farmers sell their FFB to collector. This is in accordance with previous research which explains that distance is one of factor that affect farmer decision to sell their product using intermediaries (Ananda, 2017). In addition, the small area of farmer land is one of the obstacles for farmers. Factories usually ask for FFB in large quantities, which is making it difficult for smallholder farmers to fulfill the requirement (Mawardati, 2018).in addition research by (Noor, 2013) explained that farmers who sell their crops through this channel will be directly paid in cash by the collecting traders. This is what makes farmers choose this marketing channel.

The fresh fruit bunches produced by smallholder oil palm farmers in Pasar VIII Namo Terasi were sold to collectors at a price range of IDR 2,800 to 2,900 per kilogram, while collectors sold them to an oil palm factory at IDR 3,300 per kilogram. The PT Serdang Hulu Factory in Sei Bingai sub-district was the destination for these fruits. The average costs incurred by farmers for harvesting and transporting the fresh fruit bunches amounted to IDR 226 per kilogram. All the costs associated with the marketing process were borne by the collectors (Kana et al., 2022; Noor, 2013).

It must be recognized that the existence of collectors cannot be separated from the lives of farmers in the oil palm marketing system, especially in oil palm plantations that are self-supporting. Cooperation between farmers and collectors generally has been established for a long time and it is difficult for farmers to break away from their existence. Apart from marketing their crops, collectors also play a major role in helping farmers, especially in procuring production inputs such as fertilizers and seeds (Sumartono et al., 2018).

The second marketing chain (MC II) in the fresh fruit bunch (FFB) distribution of smallholder oil palm farmers involves a simpler channel pattern, where the farmers directly sell their FFB to the processing factory without the involvement of intermediaries. This channel is less commonly utilized, as it requires larger quantities of FFB, with a minimum purchase requirement of 4,000 kg, which not all farmers can meet. Among the sample farmers, only four were found to use MC II. These farmers opt to sell their FFB directly to the oil palm factory due to their larger land holdings, higher yields, and private transportation capabilities.

MC II involves several costs, including harvesting, transportation, and loading/unloading costs. Smallholder farmers in this channel sell their palm oil directly to the PT Serdang Hulu Factory located in the Sei Bingai sub-district. The selling price for farmers' palm oil to the factory is IDR 3,300 per kilogram. This price is determined per day by the factory based on calculations and uses world CPO prices. The world price of CPO fluctuates very actively, causing the price of FFB to fluctuate every day (Ananda, 2017).

Margin Analysis

The market margin analysis is employed to measure the discrepancy between the purchase price paid by collectors and the selling price of FFB received by smallholder farmers at different stages of the marketing channel, culminating in the final marketing agency, i.e., the factory (Baroh et al., 2021). The marketing channel of palm oil becomes longer as more marketing agencies get involved, resulting in higher marketing margins.

Table 1. Marketing Margins and Profits in the Oil Palm Marketing Channel for Smallholder Farmers in Pasar VIII Namo Terasi

No	Marketing Agencies	Price (IDR/Kg)
Marketing Channel Patern 1		
I	Farmer	
	1. Selling Price	2850
	2. Harvesting Cost	226
II	Collectors (Intermediaries)	
	1. Buying Price	2850
	2. Selling Price	3300
	3. Marketing Price	304
	- Labor	250
	- Transportation	27
	- Loading/Unloading	28
	4. Profit Marketing Channel 1	146
III	Oil Palm Factory	
	1. Buying Price	3300
IV	Marketing Margin	450
Marketing Channel Patern 2		
I	Farmer	
	1. Selling Price	3300
	2. Marketing Price	276
	- Labor	225
	- Transportation	24
	- Loading/Unloading	27

No	Marketing Agencies	Price (IDR/Kg)
	3. Profit Marketing Channel 2	146
II	Oil Palm Factory	
	1. Buying Price	3300
III	Marketing Margin	0

Marketing channel 1 involves smallholder farmers distributing their palm bunches to collectors for a price of Rp. 2850/kg, who in turn distribute the FFB to PT. Serdang Hulu Factory for Rp. 3.300/kg. The marketing margin for marketing channel 1 is IDR 450/kg, while the marketing costs such as labor costs for vehicle drivers, transportation costs, and loading and unloading costs amount to Rp. 305/kg and are borne by the collectors. The profit earned by collectors in the marketing process is IDR 146/kg. On the other hand, farmers in marketing channel 1 incur harvesting and transportation costs of Rp. 226/kg.

Based on field observations, the oil palm harvesting process involves the use of traditional tools such as dodos and egrek to cut palm bunches. After the fruits have been cut, they are collected in wheelbarrows or on motorbikes using a tajok. The loose fruits and harvested palm bunches are then gathered at a collection point beside the road. Typically, a dump truck is used to transport the FFB. However, care must be taken during transportation to ensure that the number of bundles being transported does not exceed the vehicle's capacity (Kana et al., 2022).

The second marketing channel involves direct distribution of fresh fruit bunches (FFB) from farmers to PT Serdang Hulu Factory at a selling price of Rp. 3300/kg. As a result, this channel has no marketing margin, and the farmers receive a profit of Rp. 3024/kg. However, they do incur marketing costs, including labor costs for harvesting and transportation (Rp. 225/kg), transportation costs (Rp. 24/kg) and loading and unloading fees (IDR 27/kg). The total marketing cost borne by the farmers is IDR 276/kg. It is important to note that the price variation across different marketing agencies is substantial and depends on the level of profits taken by each entity involved in the marketing process.

Margins in each marketing channel are different due to differences in marketing costs incurred and profits earned for each trading level. A small margin value indicates that the channel is efficient because the difference in selling prices at the farm level and the buying price at the final level is small, this will benefit farmers (Ananda, 2017). Marketing channel efficiency can be seen from the marketing margin value. The lower the margin indicate the more efficient the channel. It is accordance with (Kusworo & Iswarini, 2021) that longest marketing channel, the higher marketing margin.

Farmer's Share

The farmer's share refers to the proportion of the final consumer price that farmers receive. It is measured by calculating the percentage of the price received by farmers compared to the final consumer price (Yunita & Noviar, 2020). The size of the farmer's share is impacted by the marketing channels used and the selling price at the retail level. The farmer's share indicates whether the distribution of profits between collectors, wholesalers, retailers, and farmers is equitable.

Table 2. Farmer's Share and Marketing Efficiency in the Oil Palm Marketing Channel among Smallholder Farmers in Pasar VIII Namo Terasi

Marketing Channel	Price in Farmer Level (IDR/Kg)	Price in Consumer Level (IDR/Kg)	Farmer's Share (%)	Marketing Efficiency (%)
I	2903	3300	86,36	10,68
II	3300	3300	100	8,36

Based on Table 2, it is explained that the Farmer's Share in marketing channel I (farmers-collectors-factories) is 86.36%. It is accordance with study by (Sarkum et al., 2020) that farmer share in Labuhan Batu Regency, North Sumatra is 62%, study by (Lifianthi et al., 2022) shows that farmer's share in Banyuasin South Sumatera is 61,11 % and study by (Hasanuddin, 2021) show that farmer's share in Tomo District, Mamuju is 59,79%.

The highest farmer's share is in marketing channel II (farmers - factories). In Pasar VIII Namo Terasi Village, Sei Bingai District, Langkat Regency, there are 4 smallholder oil palm farmers who are able to distribute their FFB Straight to Oil Palm factory so that the price share received by farmers is 100%. Previous research by (Alham et al., 2020) also showed that farmer's shares who sell directly to factory is 100%. Thus, marketing channel II is the most profitable marketing channel for farmers in marketing palm oil. This is in

accordance previous research (Kana et al., 2022) that explained marketing channel which farmer sell directly to factory is the most efficient channel.

Based on Table 2, it shows that the efficiency value of marketing channel 1 is 10.68% < 50%, it means that the marketing channel 1 is efficient. The efficiency value of marketing channel 2 is 8.36% < 50%, it means that the marketing channel 1 is also efficient. From the results obtained, it can be concluded that marketing channel 2 is the most efficient channel, because farmers sell their palm oil not through marketing agencies, so the marketing costs in channel 2 are lower than channel 1 (Fatmawati & Zulham, 2019).

The finding is consistent with Anindita's (2017) explanation that marketing inefficiency can be attributed to three causes, namely lengthy marketing channels, high marketing costs, and market failures. Long marketing channels typically result in high marketing costs from producers to final consumers, such as the palm oil mill in this case. Additionally, the perishable nature of agricultural commodities is a significant factor contributing to the inefficiency of marketing agricultural products when compared to industrial goods (Anindita, 2017).

CONCLUSION

There are 2 types of Marketing channels for Oil Palm in Pasar VIII Namo Terasi Village, Sei Bingai District, Langkat Regency, Marketing Channel 1 (Farmers–Intermediaries–Oil Palm Factory) and Marketing Channel 2 (Farmers–Oil Palm Factory). Marketing Channel with the highest Farmer's Share is Marketing Channel 2, with the share of farmer's value being about 100%. Either marketing Channel 1 and marketing channel 2 are categorized as efficient.

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