

STRATEGY FOR STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTION OF WOMEN'S FARMING GROUPS IN AN EFFORT TO SUPPORT FAMILY FOOD INDEPENDENCE IN KALIMANAH DISTRICT PURBALINGGA REGENCY

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Received : 01 November 2025

Published : 13 January 2026

Revised : 15 November 2025

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.54443/ijebas.v5i6.4838>

Accepted : 16 December 2025

Link Publish : <https://radjapublika.com/index.php/IJEVAS>

Abstract

The Women Farmers Group (KWT) is a forum for women to participate in advancing the agricultural sector, encouraging innovation, economic independence, and improving the welfare of families and communities. KWT plays a strategic role in supporting family food independence while strengthening national food security. However, not all KWTs have strong and sustainable institutions. This study aims to map the institutional conditions of KWT and formulate institutional strengthening strategies in an effort to support family food independence in Kalimanah District, Purbalingga Regency. The study uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, direct observation, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and document study. Informants were determined using purposive sampling by selecting three KWTs that represent different institutional conditions, namely KWT Aglonema (advanced), KWT Sri Lestari (developing), and KWT Melati (declining). Data analysis was conducted using a SWOT approach combined with Richard Scott's institutional theory, which includes regulatory, normative, and cognitive pillars. The results showed that the institutional conditions of KWTs in Kalimanah Subdistrict varied, influenced by leadership, member participation, internal rules, and external support. Institutional strengthening strategies were directed at increasing human resource capacity, strengthening organizational systems, partnerships, diversifying yard-based food activities, and optimizing the role of agricultural extension workers. Sustainable institutional strengthening of KWT is expected to increase the role of women farmers in achieving family food self-sufficiency.

Keywords: *Women Farmers Group; institutional; strengthening strategy; family food self-sufficiency*

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector plays a strategic role in supporting national food security, with women playing a significant role in food management to achieve family food self-sufficiency. In practice, women's empowerment in the agricultural sector does not occur individually, but rather through organized collective organizations. Women's Farmers' Groups (KWT) serve as a strategic platform for women's empowerment in the agricultural sector. They serve as a platform for women's empowerment in the agricultural sector, encouraging innovation, economic independence, and improving family and community welfare. The existence of KWT is expected to promote family food self-sufficiency while improving the welfare of farming households. However, the institutional conditions of KWTs in various regions show varying levels of development. KWTs in Kalimanah District, Purbalingga Regency, still face challenges such as limited managerial capacity, urbanization pressures, and reduced productive land at the household level. Kalimanah District is also home to a significant number of KWTs, characterized by semi-urban areas and diverse social conditions. Strengthening KWT institutions is crucial for maintaining the sustainability of family food security. Therefore, an institutional strengthening strategy based on the local context, with an applicable and innovative approach, is needed so that the Women's Farmers Group (KWT) can play an optimal role in supporting family food self-sufficiency. This study aims to map the institutional conditions of Women Farmers Groups and formulate institutional strengthening strategies to support family food self-sufficiency in Kalimanah District. The research results are expected to provide practical contributions to the institutional development of KWTs and serve

as a consideration for agricultural extension workers and local governments in designing women's empowerment programs in the agricultural sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research focuses on institutional aspects, so a theory is needed that can explain the role of institutions in supporting family food security. Richard Scott, suggests that institutions are formed through three main pillars, namely regulatory, normative, and cognitive (Scott, 2014). These pillars are the basis for understanding how institutions function and develop within a system. Women's farmer groups are farmer groups managed by women, with women as members. Women's farmer groups have remaining rice fields or yards for their farming activities or at least the land around their homes can be used for their activities (Nataliningsih, 2020) . The same thing was also conveyed by Achmad et al. that the Women's Farmer Group, is a collection of women farmers that is informal, grown from and for women farmers based on mutual agreement and harmony among its members to achieve common goals. Group members number 15-25 people (Achmad et al., 2011) .

Women Farmers Groups (KWT) play a strategic role. They not only empower women in the agricultural sector but also contribute directly to food self-sufficiency at the family level. Utilizing home gardens can be an alternative way to achieve household food self-sufficiency and meet household nutritional needs, leading to the development of quality human resources. Each home has a large or small plot of vacant land, either at the side, back, or front of the house, that can be managed to grow edible crops, such as secondary crops, fruit, or vegetables, among others (Azharudin et al., 2022). Families that are independent in food management can be more resilient in the face of economic fluctuations, unstable staple food prices, and dependence on external supplies (Widiastuti, Tri Marhaeni, 2024) . Sefrina (2022) echoed this sentiment, stating that improving food access and healthy behavior requires efforts at the household level. Providing resources to meet food needs can be addressed through food self-sufficiency. Food self-sufficiency at the family level is necessary to improve the nutritional and health status of all family members (Sefrina, 2022) . Therefore, strengthening family capacity, particularly through the active role of Women Farmers Groups (KWT), is key to promoting locally based and sustainable family food self-sufficiency.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews with KWT administrators and members, agricultural extension workers, and related stakeholders, direct observation, *Focus Group Discussions* (FGD), and document studies. Sampling was carried out using *purposive sampling* , by selecting three KWTs representing different conditions: KWT Aglonema (successful category), KWT Sri Lestari (developing category), and KWT Melati (declining category). Data analysis uses a SWOT framework combined with Richard Scott's institutional theory, covering regulatory, normative, and cognitive pillars. Informants were selected purposively *based* on their involvement and knowledge of KWT activities and institutions. Data analysis was carried out descriptively qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. To strengthen the analysis, KWT institutional mapping and SWOT analysis (*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats*) were used as a basis for formulating institutional strengthening strategies combined with Richard Scott's institutional theory, covering regulatory, normative, and cognitive pillars. Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that the institutional conditions of Women Farmers Groups (KWT) in Kalimanah District are at varying levels of development. In general, KWTs have established organizational structures and institutional recognition at the village or sub-district level. However, their institutional effectiveness is not yet optimal.

Mapping of Women Farmers' Group Institutions

Based on the results of institutional mapping, KWT in Kalimanah District can be classified into three categories: successful KWT, developing KWT, and declining KWT. This classification is based on institutional indicators that include active management, member participation, sustainability of activities, organizational management capacity, and mentoring support. KWT Aglonema (successful KWT) is characterized by active management, high member participation, sustainability of yard utilization activities, and a good level of independence. KWT Sri Lestari, which is in the developing category, has a fairly good institution with an ongoing structure and activities, but still faces limitations in managerial capacity, thus requiring capacity building and ongoing mentoring. In contrast, KWT Melati shows a tendency for declining activity due to weak institutional functions,

minimal member participation and routine activities. These differences in institutional conditions indicate that the sustainability of KWT is not only determined by the availability of physical facilities, but also by the quality of leadership, social cohesion, and member commitment.

Analysis of Institutional Strengthening Strategy

The institutional strengthening strategy for the KWT was formulated based on a SWOT analysis that identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced by the KWT. Based on the SWOT analysis, the KWT's primary strength lies in the solidarity and togetherness of its members, while its primary weaknesses are limited managerial capacity and fluctuations in member participation. Externally, opportunities stem from government policy support and extension assistance, while threats include urbanization and dependence on aid programs. The institutional strengthening strategy is tailored to each KWT's institutional category: successful KWT, developing KWT, and declining KWT.

Successful KWT Strengthening Strategy

The Aglonema Women's Farmers Group (KWT) in Rabak Village, a successful KWT, has a relatively strong and sustainable institutional structure. Strategies include strengthening the capacity for innovative family food activities, providing an education center, developing technology-based farming (hydroponics), diversifying processed products, strengthening networks and partnerships, and utilizing social media to sell its products, aimed at supporting the development of household-scale food businesses and increasing the added value of the group's activities.

Developing KWT Strengthening Strategy

The Sri Lestari Women Farmers Group (KWT) of Karangmanyar Sub-district, as a developing KWT, has the potential to be upgraded to a successful KWT. Strengthening strategies in this category are focused on optimizing the nutritional garden program to become a flagship program of the Sri Lestari KWT, utilizing adequate leadership and organization, mobilizing member solidarity, developing cultivation with environmentally friendly technology to produce organic products according to market needs, using financial support to expand activities and increase productivity, utilizing activeness in promotions to strengthen marketing with the support of the local community and culture. In addition, agricultural extension assistance also plays a strategic role in encouraging the KWT to develop so that it is able to optimize local potential and utilize yards more effectively.

Strategy for Strengthening Declining KWT

The Melati Women's Farmers Group (KWT) in Sidakangen Village, which is classified as a declining KWT, requires a more intensive strengthening strategy and institutional revitalization. Strategies in this category are aimed at strengthening group leadership and leadership regeneration; improving internal coordination with simple, scheduled, and flexible task allocation; shifting cultivation activities to organic polybag/pot methods, vertical farming, or simple hydroponics; increasing member motivation and participation through basic training and hands-on practice in both cultivation and product processing; and maintaining solidarity by rebuilding member-binding mechanisms through collective economic activities such as group savings. More intensive mentoring from agricultural extension workers and support from the village government are also important factors in reactivating group activities. Furthermore, developing simple and easy-to-implement family food activities, tailored to conditions and land limitations, can be a first step in rebuilding the KWT's confidence and institutional sustainability.

Institutional Analysis Based on Richard Scott's Theory

perspective based on Richard Scott's theory includes a strategy for strengthening KWT that needs to be carried out in an integrated manner through:

1. **Strengthening the regulatory pillar**, through ongoing support of government policies and programs;
2. **Strengthening the normative pillar**, through increasing participation, solidarity and commitment of members;
3. **Strengthening the cognitive pillar**, by increasing the knowledge and managerial capacity of administrators and members

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussions that have been carried out, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Institutional mapping of Women Farmers Groups (KWT) in Kalimanah District reveals diverse institutional conditions, including successful, developing, and declining KWTs, as viewed from the aspects of organizational

- structure, group activities, member participation, managerial capacity, and external support. In general, KWTs have institutional recognition and a role in family food activities, but still face limitations in human resource capacity, activity sustainability, and dependence on external assistance programs.
2. The KWT institutional strengthening strategy to support family food self-sufficiency was formulated based on a SWOT analysis combined with Richard Scott's institutional approach, emphasizing strengthening the regulatory, normative, and cognitive pillars. This strategy is aimed at increasing human resource capacity, strengthening institutional mechanisms and partnerships, and diversifying and optimizing food activities based on sustainable yard utilization.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, technical recommendations include strengthening group planning and administration, increasing management capacity through managerial training, developing diversified family food activities, and strengthening partnerships and ongoing mentoring. These recommendations are expected to serve as a reference in efforts to strengthen KWT institutions as a strategy to support family food self-sufficiency.

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