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Impact of Oil Palm Plantation on Economy and Environment in Bengkulu Province

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ABSTRACT

Oil palm, viewed from the economic aspect, can build a financial center to support regional economic growth. This study aims to determine the impact of oil palm plantations on the economy and the environment in Bengkulu Province. This study uses descriptive qualitative research using sources from various previous studies. It is equipped with multiple literature or literature reviews that will answer the research results on the impact of oil palm plantations on the economy and the environment. The study results reveal that oil palm plantations in Bengkulu Province improve people's welfare, create jobs, and contribute to regional development in Bengkulu Province. Extensive oil palm plantations hurt the environment, which results in regular flooding due to forest encroachment and large-scale opening of plantations so that forests and land cover are damaged; this results in significant surface runoff of rainwater and rainwater infiltration. Small scale causes an imbalance due to considerable runoff triggering erosion and land degradation. Facing this problem by maintaining forest and spatial planning by continuing reforestation, especially in the upstream area to keep it stable and handling the waste system and urban systems must be integrated, flood-prone points can be overcome.

Keywords: *Oil Palm Plantation, Economic Impact, Environmental Impact, Bengkulu Province*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic country that has potential in agriculture (Runtuboi et al., 2021). The primary commodity developed in Indonesia is oil palm (Mutiara et al., 2020). Palm oil has various advantages with its position as a national export commodity, and the demand continues to increase, which finally expands and develops the palm oil commodity (Akuntansi, 2020). Oil palm is growing in 22 of the 34 provinces in Indonesia; Sumatra and Kalimantan are the leading palm oil-producing islands in Indonesia (Runtuboi et al., 2021).

Palm oil is a leading commodity in Indonesia's export sector that has the potential and deserves to be developed (Dwi Hastuti, Arman Delis, 2018). Oil palm is an agricultural sector that occupies an important position in the plantation sector because oil palm produces the most significant economic value per hectare globally (Eresti & Walid, 2020). Oil palm plantations are divided into three, namely: large private plantations (PBS), community-owned plantations (PR), and large state plantations (PBN), which continue to increase (Reny, 2018). Palm oil is one of the plantation sub-sector commodities that

contributes significantly to foreign exchange earnings outside the oil and gas sector. This commodity also absorbs a large enough workforce and can provide prosperity for the people who cultivate it (Senawi et al., 2019).

Bengkulu Province is geographically suitable for oil palm plantations and is a province that contributes to oil palm production, which is spread across all districts in Bengkulu Province (Novalinda & Heryanti, 2018). Bengkulu is a palm oil-producing province that is a mainstay commodity and is widely cultivated by the community (Raisawati et al., 2019). This tropical plant in Bengkulu Province in 2019 has controlled up to 426,508 hectares of land or about 2.6 percent of the total area of Indonesian oil palm cover (Wartaekonomi, 2020).

Oil palm, viewed from the economic aspect, can build a financial center that will support regional economic growth (Iskandar et al., 2019). Palm oil plantations provide economic benefits and have significant environmental and social impacts such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, floods, forest fires, and droughts (Senawi et al., 2019) Ecological problems in Bengkulu Province, such as floods, have been considered severe disasters in recent years, triggered by land clearing for coal and oil palm plantations (David, 2019).

Results based on the research entitled Public Perceptions of the Impact of Oil Palm Plantations PT. Damai Jaya Lestari in Tanggetada District, Kolaka Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, shows PT's economic impact on the oil palm plantations. DLJ in Rahanggada Village and Popalia Village is categorized as very good and good (positive influence) (Kasmin et al., 2021). The environmental impacts caused by oil palm expansion are reducing the abundance of fruit, fish, vegetables, and game animals and decreasing the quantity of groundwater, especially during the dry season (Suryadi et al., 2020).

Based on the results of previous studies, it was shown that oil palm is very influential on environmental damage, so that research on the impact of oil palm plantations on the economy and the environment in Bengkulu Province is very important and interesting to study with novelty using Vosviwer to see studies obtained from the Scopus database from 2018 to 2022 related to research to balance the economy and environmental sustainability in Bengkulu Province.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative descriptive study using sources from various previous studies. It is equipped with several literature reviews that will answer the research results on the impact of oil palm plantations on the economy and the environment in Bengkulu Province (Suliyanto, 2018). This research focuses on the effects of oil palm plantations on the economy and the environment in Bengkulu Province, which is exciting and essential research to study so that from the research results obtained from various sources from literature studies, it can be seen the positive and negative impacts caused by oil palm plantations from the aspect of economy and environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results based on a review of previous studies taken from the Scopus database, we found 300 documents related to the Impact of Oil Palm Plantations on the Economy and the Environment by presenting the results and developments of science. Previous data research with analysis results using VOSviewer related to research on data from 2018 to 2022 is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1.
VOSviewer Oil Palm Plantation on the Economy and the Environment

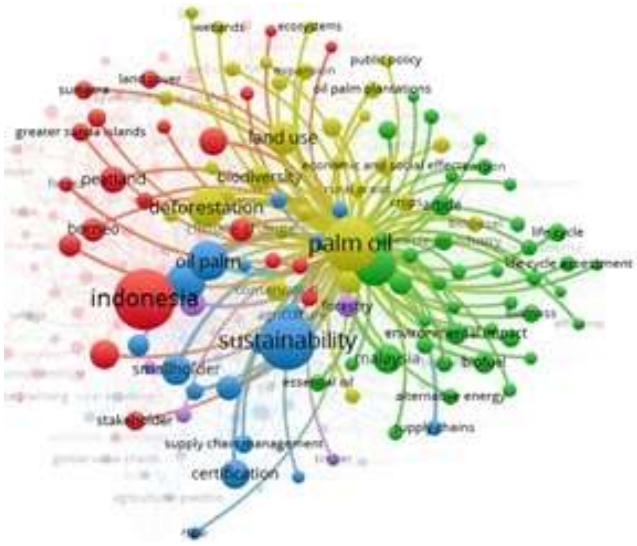


Table 1. Cluster VOSviewer

Cluster	Konsep	Total
Cluster 1	Economic development, economic growth, environmental policy, and local government.	4
Cluster 2	Carbon, emission control, environment impact, and agriculture development.	4
Cluster 3	Oil palm, sustainability, and agriculture production.	3

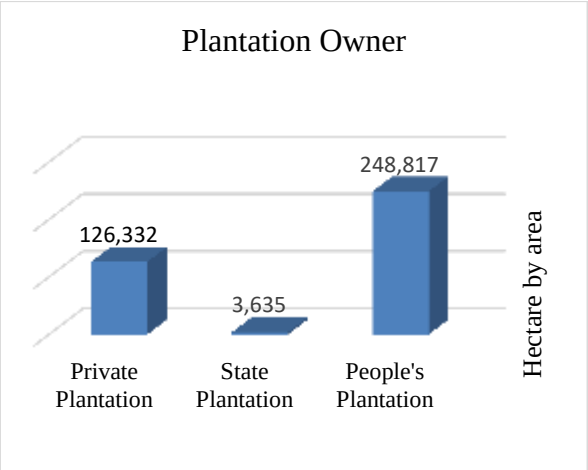
Source: Vosviewer analysis (2022).

The results of Vosviewer's analysis show that oil palm plantations can increase economic growth and have negative impacts if not supported by government policies to overcome the adverse effects. The display of Vosviewer results shows several clusters, namely: In cluster 1, it discusses oil palm plantations that can increase economic growth supported by local government environmental policies. Cluster 2 relates to the environmental impact, and Cluster 3 relates to the environment and agricultural coconut production.

Oil Palm Plantation on the Economy

Oil palm plantations impact economic development that can improve people's welfare, create jobs, and contribute to regional development (Febrianti, 2019). Production of oil palm plantations in Bengkulu in 2017 has produced Crude Palm Oil (CPO) which reached 984,340 tons with a plantation area of 379,084, which is divided into private plantations, state plantations, and people's plantations, and almost 66% of oil palm plantations are managed by farmers (Amri, 2018). Data based on oil palm plantation ownership can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.
Oil Palm Plantation Owners in Bengkulu Province



Source: (Amri, 2018).

The data above shows that the oil palm plantations in Bengkulu Province are dominated by smallholder plantations, followed by private and state-owned plantations. The plantation area offers the amount of oil palm produced, which will undoubtedly increase the economy (Febrianti, 2019). The palm oil industry business is running normally. Even productivity in Bengkulu Province continues to grow, which can be seen in April 2020 increasing by 55% to 50,481 tons, which was previously 32,605 tons in 2019 (Kunjana, 2020). The Bengkulu Provincial Government in February 2020 has increased the price of fresh fruit bunches (FFB) at the factory level to a cost of Rp. 1,126/kg from the previous Rp. 1,080/kg, and in 2019, the Bengkulu Provincial Government has increased the price of the first FFB in early January to the cost of FFB. The price of FFB was increased from Rp 800/kg to Rp 1,080/kg and secondly in February from Rp 1,080 to Rp 1,126/kg (SPKS, 2020).

The agreement between the Bengkulu Province price formulating team and the palm oil plantation company stated that the lowest price for FFB was IDR 1,330 per kilogram, and the highest cost was IDR 1,785 per kilogram (Dendi, 2020). This tropical plant in Bengkulu Province in 2019 has controlled up to 426,508 hectares of land or about 2.6 percent of the total area of Indonesian palm oil cover; even Bengkulu Province can produce crude oil or Crude Palm Oil (CPO) of around 1,073,531 tons. The palm oil tax is a tax that can increase regional income; in Bengkulu Province, palm oil in Semester I-2020 contributed up to Rp. 187.6 billion (Wartaekonomi, 2020). Other commodity tax contributors that can increase regional revenue can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2.
Commodities Contributing to the highest tax

No	Commodity	Tax Contributor
1	Palm oil	187,6 billion
2	Rubber	7 billion
3	Coffee	18,3 billion
4	coal	10 billion

Source: (Wartaekonomi, 2020).

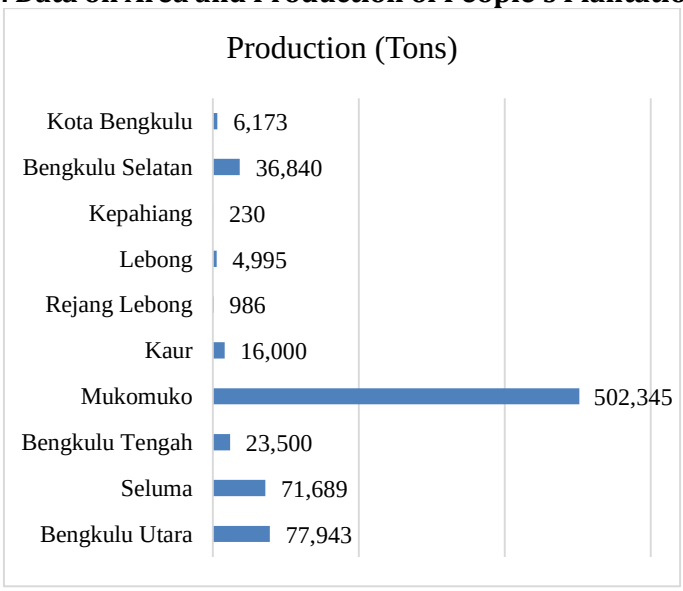
Oil palm plantations have contributed significantly to regional income in Bengkulu Province; the existence of oil palm plantations provides very high revenue for owners, namely private, state, and individual owners (Amri, 2018). The position of the palm oil industry is the primary commodity in Bengkulu Province which has a vital role in economic growth in Bengkulu Province (Mersyah, 2019). The palm oil industry affects state income because when the country's trade balance runs a deficit, the

palm oil industry can cover it (Koran Bengkulu, 2019).

Maintaining stability and increasing the price of plantation commodities, which is one of the 100-day work programs of Bengkulu Governor Rohidin Mersyah and Bengkulu Deputy Governor Rosjonsyah, is currently being pursued by the Bengkulu Provincial Government together with related ranks, such as through the Bengkulu Province Food Crops, Horticulture and Plantation Service (TPHP). with the Indonesian Palm Oil Association (GAPKI) Bengkulu (Anugra Pelangi Sawit, 2021). Assistant II of the Bengkulu Province Secretariat, Yuliswani, said, to maintain the price stabilization of Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB) for Palm Oil, the synergy with the TPHP Office at the district level will also continue so that the farming community can get information more quickly if there is a spike or even a decrease in the price of the FFB (Mukomuko, 2021).

The price of Fresh Palm Fruit Bunches, which is currently starting to increase, is expected to provide a jump on the welfare of farming communities spread across most districts throughout Bengkulu Province (Wartaekonomi, 2021). Ricki Gunarwan, Head of the Horticultural Food Crops and Plantation Office of Bengkulu Province, explained that in Bengkulu Province there are 30 CPO companies spread from Mukomuko to Kaur (Mukomuko, 2021). Farmers benefit from the significant demand, especially now that palm CPO processing in Indonesia is widely used for government programs for B20 and B30 bio-diesel materials. The price will remain stable in the range of Rp. 1,800 to Rp. 2,000 per kg, even though the price of palm oil is international. decreased (Anugra Pelangi Sawit, 2021). The replanting program and the provision of quality oil palm seeds are currently being carried out by his party so that the quality and quantity of Bengkulu palm oil in the future can be even better (Anugra Pelangi Sawit, 2021). The area and production yield of oil palm plantations by smallholders can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Data on Area and Production of People's Plantations 2019



Source: (Jdih, 2021) jdih@bengkuluprov.go.id

People's plantations in Bengkulu Province are spread across all regencies in Bengkulu Province, the area of oil palm plantations with a production level of up to 502,345 tons located in Mukomuko, 77,943 productions in North Bengkulu, Seluma 71,689, 36,840 in South Bengkulu, Central Bengkulu 23,500, Kaur with a production output of 16,000, Bengkulu City 6,173, Lebong 4,995, Rejang Lebong 986, and Kepahiang with a production output of 230 tons (Jdih, 2021). The oil palm plantation industry contributes significantly to regional economic growth, Bengkulu Province (Bpdr,

2020). The Ministry of Agriculture noted that the area of oil palm plantations in Bengkulu Province in 2019 was 426,508 hectares, or 2.6 percent of the total national oil palm plantation area (Jdih, 2021).

Interestingly, it was found that smallholder oil palm farmers are the main actors in Bengkulu by controlling 67 percent of the size of oil palm plantations and producing 735.77 thousand tons of crude palm oil (CPO). Other actors in oil palm plantations in Bengkulu Province are private companies (32 8 percent) and state enterprises (0.02 percent). In addition to oil palm plantations, there are also 30 PKS (with plantations and without plantations) with a capacity of 1280,7 tons/hour (Mukomuko, 2021).

It is estimated that as many as 500 thousand people, or more than a quarter of Bengkulu's population, depend directly on oil palm plantations (Roki, 2021). This shows that the palm oil economy also has a role in the economy of Bengkulu Province (Radar Bengkulu, 2021). Oil palm plantations have also been empirically proven to contribute to the Bengkulu economy through their role as an economic locomotive, which has implications for developing a new financial center (Wartaekonomi, 2021). The economic center in question is the Benteng Regency which is growing due to four palm oil processing factories (PCS) (Roki, 2021).

Other empirical evidence of the contribution of the palm oil industry to the economy and society of Bengkulu people is shown by the construction of public facilities that are enjoyed by the community, such as provincial roads and mosques in Muko-Muko Regency, as well as the provision of business in the livestock sector as an implication of using cattle as a means of transporting FFB used by farmers. one of the oil palm plantation companies (Mukomuko, 2021). According to Sudiyanto, the current high price of palm oil will undoubtedly positively impact the community's economy, the overall effect on the people in Mukomuko Regency. "The term is that, according to economic people, people's purchasing power increases. So that person who sells fried foods also sells, those who sell clothes also sell. So not only oil palm farmers enjoy this high price but also have a positive impact on the economy as a whole" (Mukomuko, 2021).

Oil palm plantations can absorb workers in Bengkulu province to reach 65,281 workers in 2018 (Kementerian Pertanian, 2020). The palm oil industry is a solution to the unemployment problem because, indirectly, the palm oil industry is labor-intensive, accommodating a lot of workers, especially workers from the local area (Roki, 2021). The palm oil industry can prosper the surrounding residents if 1 hectare (ha) of oil palm plantations employs five people so that with 150 thousand ha of land spread across West Kalimantan, Bengkulu, and Riau, around 750 thousand people, can be used, including those who work in plantations, manufacturing, transportation, distribution, breeding, fertilization, and so on. “If one employee takes care of two people, there are 2 million people that can be supported (Investor, 2019).

Impact of Palm Oil Plantations on the Environment in Bengkulu Province

Heavy rains that flushed Bengkulu Province resulted in thousands of residents and hundreds of hectares of rice fields ready to harvest being hit by floods since Wednesday, September 7, 2020 (Kompas.com, 2020a). Floods hit at least in Semidang Alas, Talo, Ulu Talo and Ilir Talo sub-districts in Seluma Regency, Bengkulu Province (Antara, 2020). The Head of Semidang Sub-district, Alas Zaidi, said that regular flooding had occurred several years ago. According to him, the cause of the flooding was the damage to the Upper Alas River area due to plantations owned by the community and companies. Anyway, every year when the season is heavy, there will be floods. The reason is apparent because the absorption capacity in the upstream has lacked, so it is easy to get ample water; in the upstream of the river, there are many plantations owned by residents and companies (Antaranews.com, 2021).

The same thing was said by the farmers of Semidang Alas and Ulu Talo Subdistricts, Iksan and Risdianto, in unison that the cause of flooding in their area was the opening of water buffer forest areas upstream of the river (Ahmad, 2020). In Semidang Alas Subdistrict, there is the Alas River, Upstream of Alas River there are two palm oil companies that have cleared large areas of land, so far flooding has never occurred, but due to upstream oil palm plantations being opened, the river overflowed and hit the rice fields(Bengkuluprov, 2019). Radiant, a farmer from Ulu Talo Sub-district, also said that upstream in his area, two oil palm companies had opened plantations, resulting in frequent flooding in the last two years (Ahmad, 2020).

Meanwhile, the Bengkulu University spatial planning expert, Khairul Amri, emphasized that what the government must do is to maintain the stability of the existing forest and spatial planning so that land-use changes do not occur and continue to do reforestation, especially the upstream area to keep it stable (Kompas.com, 2020). On the other hand, the handling of the waste system and urban drainage system must be integrated so that flood-prone points can be overcome because to cover significant runoff; an integrated drainage system must also be used (Bengkuluprov, 2019).

On average, the upstream part of the flooded area has damaged forest due to forest encroachment and large-scale opening of plantations so that the forest and land cover are damaged, this results in significant surface runoff of rainwater, and slight rainwater infiltration causing occurs unbalanced, due to considerable runoff triggers erosion and land degradation (Kompas.com, 2020). This also causes sedimentation in the river channel, which makes the river shallow so that the river's capacity decreases (Amalia et al., 2019). "All of them trigger flooding, especially downstream areas or areas in the watershed (DAS) area and areas that have low topography; this happens a lot in several Bengkulu areas, including Bengkulu City (Kompas.com, 2020).

Floods and landslides in Bengkulu that occurred recently claimed many victims, minor and severe injuries, and victims disappeared to death. The situation is now much worse. Almost all areas in Bengkulu were affected by floods (Beni, 2019). Damage to watersheds (DAS) also significantly affects existing watersheds; there are seven large companies (Kompas.com, 2020). The damage that occurs makes the highwater discharge unable to be adequately absorbed, resulting in excess supply and making the Bengkulu River unable to accommodate all the incoming water. That is the typology of floods and landslides in Bengkulu (Amalia et al., 2019).

The situation is a record for all parties in eight districts and one city in Bengkulu Province; the left and right watersheds must be clean as far as 100 meters. There should be no activities, let alone destructive mining (Kompas.com, 2020). In the long term, structuring is needed until the watershed is integrated upstream and downstream related to the recovery process (Bengkuluprov, 2019). In a short time, there must be quick steps to neutralize the depth of the river, and normalization to overcome the problem of river silting must be carried out; it is also important to educate the public about mitigation (Beni, 2019).

Sustainable planning is required in accordance with the plans and programs that have been prepared to optimize the potential of natural resources, human resources, and science (Ramadhan & Daniel, 2021). Provincial Governments and District Governments play an important role in environmental policy management and regulation (Marbun, 2020). Environmental management on social and economic conditions from the perspective of regional autonomy (Amin & Samputra, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Oil palm plantations impact economic development that can improve people's welfare, create jobs, and contribute to regional development in Bengkulu Province.

This tropical plant in Bengkulu Province in 2019 has controlled up to 426,508 hectares of land or around 2.6 percent of the total area of Indonesian palm oil cover even Bengkulu Province can produce crude oil or Crude Palm Oil (CPO) of approximately 1,073,531 tons, which provides progress and the importance of the economy for the community and government in Bengkulu Province. The price of Palm Fresh Fruit Bunches, which is currently starting to increase, is expected to provide a leap for the welfare of the farming community spread across most districts throughout Bengkulu Province.

Extensive oil palm plantations have resulted in frequent flooding, forests have been damaged due to forest encroachment and large-scale opening of plantations so that forests and land cover are damaged, this results in significant surface runoff of rainwater, and rainwater infiltration becomes small causes an imbalance, due to substantial runoff also triggers erosion and land degradation. Facing this problem while maintaining the stability of the forest and spatial planning by continuing to do reforestation, especially the upstream area to keep it stable as well as handling the waste system and urban drainage system must be integrated so that flood-prone points can be overcome because to cover significant runoff must also be with an integrated drainage system. These findings only explain the economic and environmental impacts of oil palm plantations, and further research can analyze efforts to prevent damage and ecological effects of oil palm plantations.

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