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Sustainability Stories of the Lives We Touched

Poultry Farming for Steadier Livelihoods

Joni & Kelompok Mandiri Dusun Jati
Kendawangan, Ketapang

The eggs rest along the walled edges of the ramps, waiting to be picked up. Their brown shells are flaked with feed dust and feathers. Rahmat bends down. He picks an egg from the ramp with his right hand, and places it on the cardboard tray balanced on his left forearm. As he shuffles from one end of the coop to the other, his arm's repetitive movements become almost rhythmical, as if following a beat set by the cacophonous clucking of hens. They surround us, reddish wattles and beaks peeking out from their living quarters neatly configured into two layers, like stadium seating, each to our left and right. In total, there are about four hundred of these egg-laying hens, Rahmat says. On a good day, that's about as many eggs that he and his colleagues can harvest.



Rahmat collecting fresh eggs



Rahmat has known, fed, and taken care of these hens since they were day-old chicks (known as DOC in the poultry industry). It was late 2020, at the height of the pandemic, when his father, Joni, decided to set up a small-scale poultry farm. Joni proposed this idea to some of his neighbours and friends. Among those, three joined him. With financial assistance from Bumitama, the group ordered a few hundred DOCs from a supplier in Pangkalanbun, roughly 250 km to the east of their hamlet in Kendawangan Kiri, Ketapang Regency. When the chicks arrived, Joni brought Rahmat, his firstborn, into the fold, giving him the primary responsibility for ensuring the chicks' health. He was to be in charge of giving them feed and vitamins and, whenever necessary, medication. Together, they called their collective *Kelompok Mandiri Dusun Jati*.



Prior to becoming a poultry farmer, Joni had put his hand to a variety of farm jobs to make ends meet. He had been dabbling in agricultural work since arriving from East Java decades ago. On the piece of land on which his chicken coops now stand, he had cultivated vegetables and some cash crops. Though Joni could always provide food on the table, his income fluctuated greatly from one month to the next. Thankfully, all these years his household's finances had been

propped up by his wife. The small grocery shop she runs at the village's morning market generates a rather stable cash flow for the family.



Vegetables and poultry farming

Now, with his poultry business entering its third year, Joni teams up with his wife to market his farm's products at her shop.

The freshly-laid eggs—his group can harvest at least 1,200 each week—already have their stand-by buyers

Bumitama, who fostered the project from the start is also the largest of Joni's customers. The eggs are distributed by crates to Bumitama employees through Unit Pelayanan Sembako (UPS, or basic goods distribution points) as well as to its mess and guesthouse facilities in adjacent areas to provide food for staff and company guests alike. But apart from the egg-laying hens, Joni's collective also rears broiler chicken. He sells these to the same institutional buyers and other chicken-rearing cooperatives from neighbouring villages. The rest his wife puts up for sale at the wet market

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Motivated by the success of his egg-laying hens, in 2021 Joni started sourcing a few hundred broiler DOCs of the Joper variant (a cross between free-range, native Javanese “Jowo” male with a brown “Super” female)

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In two months' time, Joper DOCs can reach a bulky mature weight of 2 to 3 kg. Joni keeps them for up to 40 days, when their weight is at around 2 kg, before selling the meat.

The collective's broiler chicken occupy two stilt wooden houses only a few metres apart. There are around seven hundred of them, in two distinct stages of growth. Entering the stilt house where the broiler chicks are kept, one cannot help noticing the considerable drop in noise level among them compared to the egg-laying kind. While most chicks continue sitting and pecking from the hanging feed baskets, some rise to their feet and start to walk around in our presence. Joni admits that the young ones may get startled more easily, and thus more prone to stress.

In humans as in chicken, stress is best avoided. It may result in the hens ceasing to lay eggs and the broilers dying. As the collective's chief chicken-wellness officer, Rahmat is keenly aware of the many signs and symptoms of stressed

chicken. So he lists them by heart: from something as telling as feather-shedding, to one far less discernible like “aimless pacing”. To reduce stress, Rahmat maintains an arsenal of vitamins and herbal supplements, which he readily mixes into their feed. Every day, in their front yard he and his father prepare the mixture: shovelfuls of milled corn, pulverised rice husk, and feed concentrate.



Formulating feed concentrate

Currently, he is experimenting with using protein-rich carcasses and bones of fish as a substitute for the feed concentrate. He regularly buys the concentrate from suppliers outside of his region, but recently the prices have been rising. He feels upbeat that his fishmeal formula will

deliver a good result, and with it, he can improve cost efficiency. Meanwhile, Rahmat is overseeing the growing of black soldier fly maggots taking place in a brick house behind theirs. They plan to harvest the maggots—high in amino acids and fat—and feed them to their chicken



Nutritious maggots for chicken feed

“ Every month, Joni’s collective earns on average **Rp 85 million** from the sales of its chicken meat and eggs ”

For Bumitama alone, they supply more than 700 kg of meat and 5,300 eggs per month, making Bumitama their largest buyer today. Beyond such purchases, Bumitama also continues to provide Joni and his partners technical support for the rearing. This initiative is aligned with Bumitama’s aim to empower the locals surrounding its concessions to secure steadier sources of income. Soon, Joni’s collective will purchase a thousand more DOCs for both egg and meat. They will occupy the two stilt coops erected not long ago, which are now empty.



Left to right : Joni & Rahmat

As the father-and-son duo are innovating and enlarging their poultry farm, they also aim to upgrade their bookkeeping. Up to now, Joni has entrusted his wife to take care of the accounts, and she does this manually on paper. But the records are only daily cumulatives; they lack granular detail. In the future, to “correctly read the market”, Joni believes, data is key. Sitting on his sofa, with Rahmat on his side, he extends his arm and taps Rahmat on his shoulder. “*This is your generation’s thing*” says Joni, hopeful that his son will take on the mantle.