

4th Edition - April 2023

## Sustainability Stories of the Lives We Touched

# Trailblazers of Traceability

Koperasi Usaha Bersama  
Kendawangan, Ketapang



Management of Koperasi Usaha Bersama with Bumitama's CSR team

Two hundred kilometres to the south, in Selimatan Jaya Village in Kendawangan, a group of farmers gather inside a house while the rain beats hard outside. They take turn to talk. The rest listens, sipping their coffee alternatingly. Their cooperative, *Koperasi Usaha Bersama* (“Collective Effort”), has reached a mature phase. Over the past few years, Bumitama has been working together with KUB and is championing it to apply for the RSPO smallholder certification. We speak with Jejen (Head of KUB) and Efendi (Selimatan Jaya Village Chief and KUB member) to track their progress.

### **What advantages do farmers enjoy from joining KUB?**

**Jejen** : As a cooperative, we uphold the principle of working together. Our members help each other in moments when there's a need for vehicles, resources, workers. We currently have about 500 members, and they are grouped into units. KUB helps these units to improve their plantation practices. Then, on behalf of the members, KUB makes business dealings with the mills around here.

*“In total, our monthly FFB (fresh fruit bunch) output can reach 3,000 tons. Together, we have a stronger bargaining power.”*

### **Now with Bumitama's support, how have things changed for the cooperative?**

**Jejen** : Through the IGA Sawit programme Bumitama has pledged to assist us in many ways. Firstly, the compost made from empty fruit bunches Bumitama gives to us has been very useful, even more so now that fertiliser prices are through the roof. There are many other benefits. Bumitama helps us with the mapping and data updating of our members' plantation areas using satellite imagery and drones.

**Efendi** : We also receive expert technical support in agronomic practices and fertiliser usage recommendations. Then, together with BPDPKS [Indonesian Palm Oil Fund Management Agency], Bumitama has brought our members to participate in competence development trainings held by the local Plantation Office.



*KUB members attending RSPO & ISPO briefing*



*Bumitama's certification team at KUB member's land*

### **How do all these figure in your cooperative's goal of obtaining RSPO smallholder certification?**

**Jejen** : The certification is what we aim to achieve in the medium term. All of us are very excited with the prospect of applying. To get certified, all of those things—best practices in agronomy, work safety, fertiliser supply security—are essential. Also, some of our areas need to be replanted. Instead of obtaining the seeds from a random source, we are happy to have Bumitama willing to help us obtain certified superior seeds for the replanting,

which we can pay back in installments. With superior seeds, in the future we can aim for our FFB’s oil extraction rate to match those sourced from Bumitama’s own estates. Eventually, we will be able to ensure full traceability of our FFB. Traceability is key if we want to stay in the palm oil business nowadays.

*“With superior seeds, in the future we can aim for our FFB’s oil extraction rate to match those sourced from Bumitama’s own estates.”*



*Trainings about Bumitama’s external FFB quality (left) & Good Agricultural Practices (right)*

**What do you see as the biggest obstacle to becoming RSPO-certified?**

**Jejen** : Lack of security in fertiliser supply—the very thing that we are working with Bumitama to address. Only about 30 percent of our farmers can afford to apply the right fertilisers on time. I say “right” because there can be many different types and brands of fertilisers out there, and we often get confused as to which ones to purchase. We have tried many and they were far less effective, let alone less beneficial, than promised.

**Efendi** : Infrastructure. When we are finally certified I reckon there’ll be opportunities abound, to open up new businesses, to find employment. But before that happens we need to ensure and expand access to our village. We are far from the town, it can take half a day to get there. And now many areas are flooded. We need to fix the roads for the long term, and construct more. We need to build public facilities with what we make from our plantations. That’s why our farmers and villagers are solidly backing KUB’s engagement with Bumitama. At the end of the day, we all want to see our region develop and prosper.



*Daily transportation from Selimatan Jaya to the central district*