FARMERS' DECISION TO JOIN THE INDEPENDENT FARMERS COOPERATIVE

KEPUTUSAN PETANI UNTUK BERGABUNG DALAM KOPERASI TANI MANDIRI

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Abstract

This study explores the internal and external factors that influence farmers' decisions regarding cooperative membership. Conducted at the Mandiri Sejahtera Farmers Cooperative in Selaawi Village, Sukabumi, the research employs a quantitative survey method involving all 23 cooperative members. Internal factors include knowledge of cooperatives and economic motivation, while external factors include social support, perceived benefits, and trust in cooperative management. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression via SPSS. The findings reveal that both internal and external factors significantly affect farmers' membership decisions, with external factors showing a more dominant influence. An R² value of 0.944 indicates that these factors explain 94.4% of the variation in farmers' decisions. These results underscore the importance of fostering tangible cooperative benefits and building trust to enhance farmer participation.

Keywords: *agricultural cooperative, decision-making, external factors, internal factors, regression*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengaruh faktor internal dan eksternal terhadap keputusan petani dalam keanggotaan koperasi. Studi dilakukan di Koperasi Tani Mandiri Sejahtera, Desa Selaawi, Sukabumi, dengan pendekatan kuantitatif melalui survei terhadap seluruh anggota koperasi sebanyak 23 orang. Faktor internal mencakup pengetahuan tentang koperasi dan motivasi ekonomi, sedangkan faktor eksternal meliputi dukungan sosial, manfaat koperasi yang dirasakan, dan kepercayaan terhadap pengurus. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan regresi linier berganda melalui SPSS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa baik faktor internal maupun eksternal berpengaruh signifikan terhadap keputusan petani. Nilai R² sebesar 0,944 menunjukkan bahwa kedua faktor tersebut menjelaskan 94,4% variasi keputusan petani. Hasil penelitian menegaskan pentingnya membangun manfaat koperasi yang nyata serta kepercayaan untuk meningkatkan partisipasi petani.

Kata Kunci: faktor eksternal, faktor internal, keputusan petani, koperasi tani, regresi liner

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector plays a strategic role in national economic development, particularly in providing employment, ensuring food security, and increasing rural incomes. In Indonesia, most farmers are still considered smallholders who face various structural constraints,

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including limited capital, limited access to markets, and inadequate production facilities. One form of economic institution expected to address this issue is agricultural cooperatives.

Agricultural cooperatives play an important role in helping farmers gain access to financing, training, agricultural inputs, and market information, thereby improving the efficiency and competitiveness of farming businesses. In addition, cooperatives can strengthen farmers' bargaining power in the agribusiness value chain and improve their welfare through a collective approach grounded in economic solidarity (Kristiana *et al.*, 2024).

However, the reality on the ground shows that not all farmers choose to join cooperatives, even though the cooperatives are actively operating. The low level of farmer participation indicates that the decision to join is not automatic but rather influenced by various factors. Internal factors, such as knowledge about cooperatives and economic motivation, play an important role in farmers' decision-making, as do external factors, such as social support, cooperative benefits, and trust in management.

The Mandiri Sejahtera Farmers Cooperative in Selaawi Village, Sukaraja District, Sukabumi Regency, is active in supporting agricultural activities. However, the level of farmer participation in this cooperative still varies. Therefore, it is important to identify the factors influencing farmers' decisions to join in order to formulate strategies for increasing participation based on empirical data.

The purpose of this study is to determine farmers' decisions to join agricultural cooperatives using a quantitative case study at the Mandiri Sejahtera Farmers Cooperative. The results of this research are expected to provide practical contributions to cooperative managers, agricultural extension workers, and policymakers in designing more effective approaches to encourage farmer participation through cooperatives.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted in March 2025 using a quantitative survey approach to determine the influence of internal and external factors on farmers' decisions to join cooperatives. The survey approach was chosen because it enables researchers to obtain direct data from respondents via a structured questionnaire.

Sampling Technique

This research uses a census technique, where all 23 members of the population (farmers) are used as respondents. This technique was chosen because the population size is relatively small and allows for comprehensive observation (Sugiyono, 2020). The population in this study consists of all active members of the cooperative, totaling 23 people. Because the population size is relatively small and can be fully enumerated, a census technique is used (Sugiyono, 2020), in which all cooperative members are used as respondents.

Research Location and Subjects

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This research was conducted in March 2025 at the Mandiri Sejahtera Farmers Cooperative, located in Selaawi Village, Sukaraja District, Sukabumi Regency. The population in this study consists of all active members of the cooperative, totaling 23 people. The research instrument is a closed questionnaire compiled based on the indicators of each variable. The measurement scale used is a five-point Likert scale to assess respondents' level of agreement with each statement, ranging from strongly disagree to agree (Ghozali, 2018) strongly. The following is the Likert scale measurement Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement in Likert Scale

Score	Description
5	Strongly Agree
4	Agree
3	Neutral
2	Disagree
1	Strongly Disagree

Source: Sugiono (2025)

The collected data will be analyzed using SPSS software to obtain mean values and frequency distributions. The results of this processing aim to descriptively illustrate farmers' knowledge levels, the price guarantees they receive, the social support they perceive, the level of trust in cooperative managers, and the benefits the cooperative provides to its members (Ghozali, 2018).

The independent variables in this study consist of internal factors, including knowledge about cooperatives and economic motivation, and external factors, including social support, cooperative benefits, and trust in the management. The dependent variable in this study is farmers' decision to join cooperatives.

Hypothesis: The hypotheses of this study are: Internal Factors (X1) H0: Internal factors (X1) do not significantly influence farmers' decisions to join cooperatives. H1: Internal factors (X1) significantly influence farmers' decisions to join cooperatives. External Factors (X2) H0: External factors (X2) do not significantly influence farmers' decisions to join cooperatives. H1: External factors (X2) significantly influence farmers' decisions to join cooperatives.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. The t-test is used to assess the partial effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. In contrast, the F-test is used to assess the simultaneous effect of both variables. The value of the coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to measure the extent to which internal and external factors contribute to explaining the variation in farmers' decisions. Here is the formula for multiple linear regression analysis: $Y = a + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \epsilon$ Where: Y = Farmer's Decision X1 = Internal Factor X2 = External Factor a = Constant b1 and b2 = Regression Coefficients e = Error Term

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Overview

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Table 2. Number and percentage of respondents by age

Age (Year)	Number (people)	Percentage (%)
25-35	7	30,4
36-45	5	21,7
46-55	5	21,7
56-65	6	26,1

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on age data, the majority of members of the Mandiri Sejahtera Farmers Cooperative are in the productive age range of 25–65 years. The 25–35 age group dominates with 7 people (30.4%), followed by the 36–45 and 46–55 age groups, each with 5 people (21.7%), and the 56–65 age group with 6 people (26.1%). The 15–64 age range is generally categorized as the productive age group with high potential for work and innovation (Rahmattullah, 2015).

Table 3. Number and Percentage of Respondents by Education Level

Education Level	Number (People)	Percentage (%)
SD	9	39,1
SMP	3	13
SMA	6	26,1
S1/Pasca Sarjana	5	21,7

Source: Primary Data (2025)

The educational level of most members of the Mandiri Sejahtera Farmers Cooperative is dominated by elementary school graduates, totaling 9 people (39.1%). Meanwhile, there are 3 middle school graduates (13%), 6 high school graduates (26.1%), and 5 people with higher education (Bachelor's/Master's) (21.7%). This low level of formal education indicates that the majority of members have not received a comprehensive higher education, which could potentially affect their understanding of the cooperative's institutional structure, managerial functions, and the long-term prospects of participating in the cooperative (Musfiroh, 2016). Nevertheless, these limitations in formal education did not completely hinder farmers' active participation, as cooperatives also serve as platforms for informal collective learning.

Table 4. Number and Percentage of Respondents by Land Area

Land Area	Number (people)	Percentage (%)
<5000 M^2	4	17,4
5000-10.000 M^2	12	52,2
>10.000 M^2	7	30,4

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Based on the data obtained, the majority of respondents have more than 10 years of farming experience, totaling 12 people (52.2%). Eight people (34.8%) have 5-10 years of experience, while only 3 people (13.0%) have less than 5 years of experience. This finding indicates that most cooperative members are farmers with considerable experience, potentially

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leading to a better understanding of the challenges and dynamics within the agricultural sector (Bachri *et al.*, 2019).

Table 5. Number and Percentage of Respondents by Farming Experience

Farming Experience	Number (people)	Percentage (%)
<5 tahun	3	13
5-10 tahun	8	34,8
>10 tahun	12	52,2

Primary Data (2025)

Based on the area of cultivated land, the majority have land between 0.5–1 hectare (60.9%), while 26.1% have land less than 0.5 hectare, and only 13% cultivate land over 1 hectare. This composition depicts the character of small-scale farmers, which is highly relevant to the function of cooperatives as a vehicle for strengthening the collective economy.

Analysis of Internal and External Factors. This study aims to analyze the influence of internal and external factors on farmers' decisions to join the Mandiri Sejahtera Farmers Cooperative. The analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression on data collected from all cooperative members (n=23) through questionnaires. The data processing results are presented in Table 6, which shows the regression coefficient values, t-statistics, and their significance levels.

Table 6. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	t-statistic	Sig.
(Constant)	0.223	0.950	0.353
Internal Factor	0.317	2.476	0.022
Eksternal Factor	0.638	4.731	0.000

Based on calculations from SPSS, the following regression model was obtained: Y = 0.223 + 0.317(X1) + 0.638(X2) + ϵ Where: Y: Farmer's decision X1: Internal factor X2: External factor In the regression model, the constant is 0.223, indicating that if the values of the internal and external factors are considered zero, the farmer's decision score remains at 0.223. The coefficient of X1 is 0.317, meaning that for every 1-unit increase, the farmers' decision will increase by 0.316 units, assuming other factors remain constant. The coefficient of X2 is 0.638 units, meaning that for every 1-unit increase, the decision will increase by 0.638 units.

The regression results indicate that both internal and external factors have a positive and significant influence on farmers' decisions to join cooperatives. The significance value for internal factors is 0.022 (<0.05) and for external factors is 0.000 (<0.05), indicating that both independent variables contribute partially to the dependent variable. The higher regression coefficient value for external factors (0.638) compared to internal factors (0.317) indicates that external factors have a stronger influence on farmers' decisions.

The significant influence of external factors aligns with the findings of Assefa Gashaw and Mebratu Kibret (2018), who stated that trust in cooperative managers and the tangible

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benefits perceived by members are key factors in increasing participation. Additionally, social support from farmer groups, friends, or family has also proven effective in encouraging farmers to join, as demonstrated by Faedlulloh (2015) and Msimango & Oladele (2013). This finding indicates that cooperatives are not only seen as economic institutions but also as social spaces shaped by trust and solidarity.

Internal factors also exert a significant influence, though less than external factors. Farmers' knowledge of cooperatives and economic motivation play a role in shaping positive perceptions toward cooperatives. This finding is supported by the research of Rombeallo *et al*. (2024), which shows that social support and trust in managers are key determinants of farmers' decisions to join coffee cooperatives. Similar results were also found by Rokhani *et al*. (2021), who emphasized the importance of access to extension services and the benefits of cooperatives as drivers of participation. In this research, the majority of respondents have basic and secondary education, but their long farming experience enables them to develop a practical understanding of the role of cooperatives.

An R-squared value of 0.944 indicates that the combination of internal and external factors explains 94.4% of the variation in farmers' decisions to join cooperatives. This indicates that the regression model has very strong predictive power. The remaining 5.6% probability is likely influenced by other factors such as the quality of cooperative services or specific economic incentives, which were not examined in this study.

The uniqueness of this finding lies in the cooperative's local context, where all members are male, predominantly of productive age, and have over 10 years of farming experience. The strength of social networks and the more pragmatic economic orientation of farmers seem to be the main drivers of their decision to join. This distinguishes this research from previous studies, which were often conducted on broader and more heterogeneous commodities or regions (Hariance *et al*., 2023; Mawarni & Feryanto, 2023). Overall, these results confirm that strategies to increase farmer participation in cooperatives should not only focus on disseminating knowledge about cooperatives, but also on increasing the tangible benefits farmers experience and strengthening trust in cooperative management. This approach, which combines social and economic aspects, can serve as the basis for more contextually and sustainably informed policy interventions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted at the Mandiri Sejahtera Farmers Cooperative, it can be concluded that a combination of internal and external factors influences farmers' decisions to join the cooperative. External factors, such as social support, the tangible benefits offered by the cooperative, and the level of trust in the management, were proven to play a dominant role in encouraging farmer participation. Meanwhile, internal factors, such as knowledge of the cooperative and economic motivations, also contributed significantly, though to a lesser extent. This indicates that farmers' decisions are not solely the result of personal considerations, but are also strongly influenced by their social environment and their experiences interacting with

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cooperatives. Therefore, building trust, strengthening the direct benefits of cooperatives, and increasing cooperative literacy among farmers are crucial for enhancing member engagement.

Based on the results of this research, suggestions for further research include expanding the scope of variables to include the quality of cooperative services, involvement in decision-making, and the influence of farmers' income on participation. This is important to provide a more comprehensive picture of the factors that can sustainably increase farmer engagement. Additionally, a mixed-methods approach that incorporates qualitative methods can be used to delve deeper into social dynamics and personal motivations not covered by quantitative methods alone.

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