

Conference Paper

Challenge of Sago (*Metroxylon Sp*) as Papua Food Identity

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Abstract

People of Papua have many kinds of staple foods, such as sago and tubers which are consumed based on area of living. Sago is a staple food for People in coastal and swampy areas, otherwise mostly people in mountainous area consume tubers. Local foods become seldom and expensive. This study was done by field study and reference study at August to September 2013 to collect information about sago and its existence in local people's life in Teluk Wondama Regency and Jayapura Regency. The study found that there were changing on local people's diet pattern including changing of position in market place from producer to consumer, and changing of sago forest to other functions.

Keywords: sago, food, changing, Papua Identity

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1. Introduction

Stretched widely Papua's forests store a great potential of natural resources. Not only it riches in mine but also wood and non-wood. One of non-wood forest product is sago that spread out in the swampy and coastal area of Papua. More than 50 % of world sago spread out in Indonesia, and 90% of it stretch in eastern Indonesia from Mollucas to West Papua.

Unfortunately, a large sago forest is not fully utilized. From one sago clump, just one or two will be consumed but other will be left without harvesting. Laws Number 7, 1996 and Government Regulation Number 68/2002 mentioned that households food have been fulfilled reflected by enough food both amount and quality, equitable and affordable. Development of sago is useful both to support food diversification and to improve the local economy. Sago is still limited used as traditionally food and need modification and enrichment to reach widely marketable food and able to compete with other food types.

2. Method

Studies were conducted in Teluk Wondama regency and Jayapura regency. The locations are chosen purposely based on sago potency and sago consumer, whereas, interviewed household were taken randomly. Collected data consisted of sago utilization in

Consumption/month

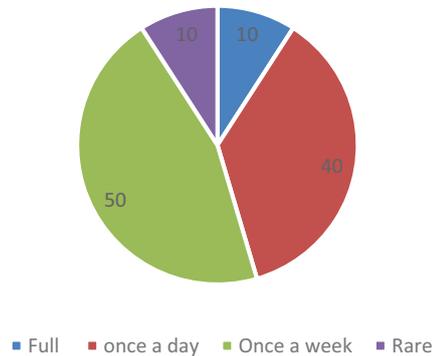


Figure 1: Three kinds of sago consumer in Papua

No	Reason	
1.	Price	Sago price is expensive compared to rice. Sago price is Rp. 10.000 – Rp 20.000 per kg, but rice is cheaper.
2.	Hard and limited labour	Sago needs hard work to produce the starch, but people can buy rice in the market.
3.	Availability	Rice is available everywhere, but sago only in special place, not all places sell sago starch.
4.	Storage	Rice can be kept for long periode but sago will decay soon without treatment.

TABLE 1: Reasons of diet changing

local community’s life and its continuitas. Data were collected on July-December 2013. Furthermore, Data was analized descriptively.

3. Result

Sago consumers consist of 1) full meals, 2) Once a day, 3) Once a week and 4) Rare can be seen at Figure 1.

4. Discussion

In Papua, about 50 varieties of sago have been identified that stretced out all over Papua from birdhead of Papua going down to the low land area of Merauke in the southern of Papua province (Djoefrie, 2013). Sago useful as raw material of food such as noodle and flavoring and bioethanol (Rostiwati et al, 2008). Moreover, other parts of the tree can be used as construction materials.

Papuan and Moluccan use sago as staple food, especially the people who live in coastal areas and marshes but people in mountainous areas consume planting tubers, gathering edible leaves and hunting animal in forest. There are four ecology zones (Mansoben, 1995) such as first, *swampy areas, coastal and riverine areas*, secondly,

coastal lowland areas, the third is foothills and small valleys and the fourth is highlands. Papua lives according to the existing ecology zones, adjusting to their surroundings natural resources.

The processing of sago in order to get sago starch is started by harvesting sago which growing naturally at the aged of 7-10 years in the forest and planted by people aged between 7-10 years. From every cluster of sago, people just harvest one or two trees and sometimes the remain trees are left until it has flower and can not produce starch anymore. This condition happen because of limited labour and time consume of every harvesting activity.

Sago in traditional community of Papua experiences challenges in the development of sago as sources of food and income. In Teluk Wondama, Sago's hamlets are still left and not well-manage. People in Tandia village of Teluk Wondama Regency argued that the locations are very remote and isolated while the results are not appropriate either for food or for income. Wild sago can not produce enough starch because just grow wildly without silviculture treatments such as clearing, pruning and maintainance. To Protect Sago forest in Jayapura, local government of Jayapura district restrictly prohibits changing of sago hamlet function by Regulations number 3/2000 about Sustainability of Sago Forest Area and number 21/2009 about Regional Planning.

In Tandia village, People combine cultivated sago with other plants like cassava, banana trees, many kinds of ginger and fruit plants or about 30% of all plants in the garden. So, sago is just developed in the limited number. The market oriented is very low because people just use sago for their own household food and sell seasonaly. Mostly woman involves in sago processing to get starch, so very limited in labour.

Consumption of sago depend on the sago stocks in the garden. People seldom come to their sago hamlet. In contrast, one family can have more than one hamlet. This is local people great potency for income and food security. When people of Papua can utilize all the natural resources of sago, they will have enough food for their family and can be sold for cash. In one area of wild sago can consist of 300-500 trees per ha. Generally, consumers of sago for full meals are elders and people who lives in the remoted area. Mostly people combine with other kind of food like rice and edible tubers. More over, the diet pattern of people in urban area is also change, they eat more rice than sago.

Nowadays, most people of Papua consumed sago less than 50% of their daily meal. Tabisu (2011) said that eventhough people change their diet but they can turn back to their local food to fulfill their needs of their main original food.

Sago scattered from Sorong-Bintuni about 75.845 ha, Nabire about 446.596 ha, Sarmi about 41.293 ha, Jayapura about 21.145 ha and Timika 626.279 ha. Others spread in groups in the area of waterfronts, swamps and lowlands of Wondama, Yapen etc. (Numberi, 2011). In contrast, sago's demand in Papua is fulfilled by sago from ambon. Everytime whenever ships from Ambon visit Papua, it will drop \pm 1.000 pcs of sago to each visited district. Irony because people with high potency of sago but sago was imported from outside. Estimated potential of sago starch was 4.75 million tons annually, but the actual production was only 200 thousand tons, so about 4.5 million ton was wasted (Kurniawan et al, 2012).

Sago through right management could provide food security and cash. For example in rough count, if one sago tree produces minimal 100-200 kg starch and harvested 100 trees/ha in a year, so people will get 10-20 tons of starch. If 1 kg is Rp. 10.000 x 10.000 starch/ha, they will get Rp. 100.000.000, so by minimal production, people will receive ±Rp. 100-200 millions. If half is used for household consumption: the income still around Rp. 50-100 millions.

5. Conclusion

This research found that:

1. There is gradual diminishing of Sago's role as main food in Papua. People of Papua choose to consume rice and other kinds of food because many reasons such as price is affordable.
2. By well management, sago can support food security and financial. High potency of sago give an opportunity to get better life.

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