The Sweet and Sustainable Business of Honey Production
by Aliansi Petani Indonesia (API)

Background
The members of Ujung Kulon Peasants’ Union (STUK), numbering 154 households, are spread over four villages, namely, Tunggal Jaya, Cigorondong, Taman Jaya, and Ujung Jaya, all in the subdistrict of Sumur, Banten Province in Indonesia. Sumur is about 210 kilometers by land route from Jakarta. The four villages are adjacent to the Ujung Kulon National Park (TNUK), which spans 121,000 hectares. The TNUK has been declared by the Indonesian government as a forest conservation area as it is home to several protected species of animals and plants.

People living in the forests surrounding the TNUK are mostly peasant farmers who own an average of 0.5 hectares of land, while some others are fisherfolk and coffee and coconut growers. Peasant farmers grow rice and they depend a lot on rain to irrigate their farms. Thus, in the dry season, they sell off-farm produce like wild (forest) honey.

Forest Conservation and Conflict with Farmers
The forest areas of Indonesia are generally managed by Perum Perhutani (State Forest Corporation), a government-owned company tasked with the planning, maintenance, management and protection of forests under its jurisdiction, including the forests in Ujung Kulon. In 1992, some parts of Ujung Kulon became conservation areas under the TNUK. This diminished the areas that could be accessed by farmers, and the latter usually came into conflict with government park authorities for violating park boundaries.

In 2006, a variety of potential conflicts came to a head with the non-fatal shooting by TNUK officers of a farmer from Cikaung, a village in Banten province. The farmer was charged with...
illegal logging, but he denied the claim and said he was merely looking for jenkol fruit to use for household cooking.

The episode triggered wide public outrage which spread to seven villages near the site of the shooting. Riots lasting seven days resulted in guard posts, police cars and a boat belonging to the TNUK being burned by the rioters. At least 10 peasants were arrested and convicted for vandalism, while the park officer who shot the farmer was sentenced to one year in prison on charges of negligence.

After the riots, farmers in the forests around the TNUK united more and more. They agreed to avoid untoward incidents and to strengthen solidarity among farmers by forming the STUK. Through STUK, the farmers’ advocacy efforts intensified and mutual support among members increased. One of the group’s efforts was to deepen understanding about the status of the land, involving various agencies and national networks such as the Indonesian Peasants’ Alliance, Sayogyo Institute, Jaringan Kerja Pemetaan Partisipatif, Front Perjuangan Pemuda Indonesia, and others. With regard to the issue of boundaries, STUK conducted training activities and participatory mapping by farmers, in line with other efforts such as mobilization of farmers and lobbying with the Indonesian National Land Agency and other stakeholders.

Local governments also initiated various meetings with residents to create a conducive atmosphere for the agreement and reconciliation of the farmers represented by STUK and the TNUK.

One of the major agreements in the mediation meetings among STUK, the police, the local parliament, and other farmers was to avoid similar unrest, as well as the arrest of farmers in the future.

One of the proposals by STUK in the meetings was the establishment of an area called Legon Pakis in Ujung Jaya village which farmers could access and use. This zone was previously declared

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1 Jenkol is a species of a flowering tree in the pea family, Fabaceae. It is native to Southeast Asia, where the seeds are a popular dish. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archidendron_pauciflorum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archidendron_pauciflorum)
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a Wilderness Zone which could not be exploited. The proposal was accepted by government authorities and an order was issued in 2011 to establish the special zone.

STUK and Harvesting of Forest Honey in Ujung Kulon
Farmers collect honey from TNUK to supplement their income. However, farmers collect wild honey intermittently, without concerted efforts, and without regard to quality control or marketing. The farmers usually sell the honey directly to individual buyers with varying volumes and irregular frequency. But this was about to change with the efforts of STUK.

In the course of its advocacy efforts, STUK came into contact with a variety of institutions at local and national levels, one of which was the Jakarta-based Aliansi Petani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasants’ Alliance; API), a national farmers organization with 265,000 member households from 65 peasant unions in 55 districts and 14 provinces of Indonesia.

In 2009, API conducted training on making coconut charcoal. The training was facilitated by Mr. Jhony Utama of the Dian Niaga Foundation. Among the participants in this training was Mr. Eman Sulaiman and other members of STUK. During this activity, the STUK participants informed API and Dian Niaga Foundation about the honey products from Ujung Kulon. Dian Niaga, a member of the Jaringan Madu Hutan Indonesia (Indonesia Forest Honey Network; JMHI) relayed this information and provided a sample of Ujung Kulon honey to JMHI.

Further coordination with JMHI led to the latter surveying the potential for honey production in Ujung Kulon. After reviewing the nests of wild honey in Ujung Kulon and discussing institutional requirements with STUK, JMHI admitted as one of its members the Kelompok Tani Madu Hutan Ujung Kulon (Forest Honey Farmers’ Group of Ujung Kulon; KTMHUK). KTMHUK is an organization of honey gatherers and is a member of STUK. In interacting with JMHI, KTMHUK has been joined by STUK’s youth organization, Perhimpunan Hanjuang Mahardika Nusantara (Association of Hanjuang Mahardika Nusantara; PHMN) whose officers include Mr. Sulaiman.

In order to strengthen the KTMHUK’s organizational base and improve the ability of its members to manage the production of wild honey, the cooperative conducted forest honey management
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training activities facilitated by JMHI. With the training, KTMHUK members were expected to increase their income through sustainable harvesting processes, quality assurance and well-organized marketing. In the early stages of its operations, KTMHUK sold most of its products to Dian Niaga, while it practiced direct selling to consumers.

The officers and members of KTMHUK were determined to boost the productivity of the organization and to strengthen its access to networks. Among other activities to realize these targets, KTMHUK proposed for and obtained training from the Japan Environmental Education Forum (JEEF). Under a one-year cooperation agreement with KTMHUK, between 2010 and 2011, JEEF organized various training activities related to the business and production aspects of sustainable harvesting of honey.

Through trainings, members of KTMHUK got a variety of materials related to sustainable harvesting techniques and hygienic post-harvest processing to ensure that the quality of the group’s honey products would meet JMHI standards.

Meanwhile, in order to sustain the bee population in TNUK, KTMHUK planted trees from which bees gathered nectar. This was done in areas of the forest where KTMHUK tapped honey.

In addition to developing models of sustainable and hygienic harvesting, KTMHUK’s officers also initiated various marketing measures. One of these was the opening in 2012 of a honey cafe’ in Pandeglang City in Banten. KTMHUK also developed honey-based food and drinks to expand its market. KTMHUK likewise maintained its direct selling activities. Thanks to these efforts, the public gained a variety of information about KTMHUK’s sustainable and hygienic harvesting of honey.

Meanwhile, the opening of the honey cafe’ led to the initiative to establish the Hanjuang honey cooperative. Cooperative Hanjuang met some organizational difficulties soon after its establishment, but it continued to strengthen its relationship with networks and to consult with those networks.
With KTMHUK’s passion for sustainable honey production, it was chosen by JMHI to host the 2011 Madhu Duniya or World Honey Festival, the largest gathering of Asian forest honey stakeholders. The event affirmed the position of KTMHUK and Cooperative Hanjuang as major forest honey producers in Indonesia.

Subsequently, incessant marketing efforts by the Cooperative Hanjuang for forest honey labeled as “Odeng” necessitated the expansion of KTMHUK’s honey harvesting areas. KTMHUK, with its base at the time of one village, expanded its membership to include three villages in the forest area around the TNUK. The expansion of KTMHUK’s production base was done with support from the Dompet Dhuafa Foundation, the largest philanthropic organization in Indonesia and a Ramon Magsaysay Awardee. The foundation provided assistance to the Cooperative Hanjuang for the development of forest honey amounting to IDR 100 million (around US$7,575).

With the expansion of KTMHUK’s harvesting activities, TNUK administrators worried that KTMHUK would encroach on special protected zones and conservation areas. However, through dialogue, KTMHUK and government representatives agreed to survey and map the distribution of honey nests in the restricted zones. It was found that only a few honey nests were located in restricted zones. Thus, KTMHUK was allowed to expand its harvesting activities. KTMHUK also agreed to maintain its coordination with government agencies for the conservation and protection of the TNUK.

**Marketing development**

The development and strengthening of KTMHUK had a significant impact in introducing Odeng honey to the public. Various inputs in terms of capability-building of KTMHUK members helped Odeng honey gain a reputation for quality in terms of water content as well as hygienic post-harvest processing. The sustainable harvest practices of KTMHUK members were also recognized by TNUK administrators as the farmers’ contribution to the conservation of the forest.
KTMHUK has also emerged as a reliable partner of JMHI. When a JMHI member, the Tesso Nilo Honey Farmers Association, was understocked to supply honey to Swedish company Oriflame, KTMHUK was tapped to provide the shortage. Shortly after that, in October 2015, KTMHUK contracted with Oriflame for the supply of honey with an initial volume of 10,000 bottles of 150 ml each for three months. Oriflame’s demand for honey has increased over time.

KTMHUK continued to improve itself both institutionally and in terms of production organization. To sustain the quality of its produce, KTMHUK bought various production equipment. Additionally, with the support of API and loans from the Dompet Dhuafa Foundation, the cooperative improved its warehousing technologies. Consistent compliance with quality standards and a stable volume of supply resulted in Oriflame extending its contract with KTMHUK for one year until the end of December 2016.

In October 2016, KTMHUK signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Park Authority regarding access to areas of TNUK. The MOU expands the areas available to KTMHUK for the harvest of honey but still ensures that KTMHUK’s activities do not harm the national conservation areas. The parties also agreed that harvest activities will be performed under forest conservation and sustainability principles. The MOU provides KTMHUK members with legal certainty that their economic activities within TNUK are free from conflict with national park officers.

The MOU is seen to increase forest honey production of the Hanjuang Cooperative, and to provide better income for KTMHUK honey farmers. To increase stock and keep it sustainable, aside from using sustainable forest honey harvest methods, KTMHUK will also start growing *apis trigona* bees. By cultivating *apis trigona* bees, Hanjuang Cooperative expects to solve problems related to instability in the supply of honey.