

## LOCAL WISDOM OF FARMERS IN MEETING OF LOCAL FOOD

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**Abstract.** The objective of this study were to describe types and form of local wisdom in meeting of local food and its implementation compare with the condition of 30 years ago. Populations of this study were farmers who have farming experience more than 30 years. Qualitative analysis was be used in this study. The study results showed that there were some types of farmer's local wisdoms, consist of land opening, land preparing, cultivation, harvesting, and processing of farm products. Types of local wisdom such as agriculture systems, and ritual ceremonies. An agriculture system in land preparing was slash and burn system, in the procedure of planting and maintenance of plants in the form of a system of rotation and intercropping, while the processing of agricultural product is done by prescription obtained hereditary. Ritual ceremonial among others; *Kasalasa*, *Kaago-ago*, and *Kasambuwite*. Local wisdom that are still maintained in land preparing by slash and burn system, in cultivation with rotation and intercropping system, and in processing of agricultural product into comestible durable. Traditional rituals began experiencing fading due to the times and increased demands of life.

Keyword: local wisdom, farmers, local food

## INTRODUCTION

Local wisdom also becomes a determinant element of successful development of community and natural resources around that. It is caused by two points, firstly, because the concern over the intensity increase of natural resource damage, particularly due to various factors of human behavior and then secondly, economic pressure which progressively extends and influences dominantly the society's lives so that gradually or rapidly replace the local wisdom into economical approach.

Goerjestani (2000) observed that local wisdom is used in the local society as a basis for making a decision for food safety, humanity, animal health, education, natural resource management, and other important activities. The local wisdom is the social principal key word from the paupers and their main rules to gain control of their lives. This matter gives the potential contribution of local wisdom for local management, sustainability and survival strategies.

However, the existence of local wisdom become fading to various group societies. One of the groups who becomes the most susceptible of the local wisdom fading is the farmer community, particularly for those who live at edge forest, should be as a social buffer for the forest conservation effort and forest resource continuity, as well to the retention of agricultural tradition and the compliance of local food from natural resources in the surrounding. It is important to assess the kinds of local wisdoms and their existences. One of the areas that becomes a research area is Muna Regency. The theme becomes significant interesting with the development effort of human resource quality in continuous development of the environment concept.

## METHODS

This research used qualitative methods, taking the facts based on the research subject comprehension, and put the observation results quite detailed (Agusta, 1998).

The study was conducted in the western Muna and its surrounding as a central location of traditional food production. The researchers used the triangulation method to collect the data concerning about the description of the local wisdom. Triangulation method used is a combination of data collection techniques by using the deep interview, the restricted play observation and the secondary data analysis.

## RESULTS

Agricultural activity is the principal activity of the West Muna society. The agricultural activities were mainly performed on crops and livestock. Therefore, community in the West Muna can be referred as farming communities.

Farming communities in the West Muna run all of their farming activities based on the local wisdom. It is the main capital of the communities in establishing themselves without destroying the adaptive social order and the surrounding natural environment. It is established from the social values bought up in the social structure society and plays as guidance, controller, and pillars to behave in various dimensions of life both in relationship with other people and nature. Now the existence of local wisdom seems to fade in the various group societies. One of the groups who becomes the most susceptible of the local wisdom fading is the farmer community, which should be as a social buffer for the forest conservation effort and forest resource continuity.

A specific characteristic of the local wisdom characterizing the edged-forest farming community group that there was

a close relationship between the process of survival and the use of forests. In other words, the forest was a guarantee for food also defined as *food insecurity*. One of the local wisdom of farming communities in the West Muna in this case was *kaindea*. *Kaindea* was a forest intentionally planted by the indigenous people as a place for the fulfillment of food needs society, strengthening the social relationships and protective functioning. *Kaindea* refers to the lush forest surrounded by garden. The term *Kaindea* was found in indigenous forest on the island of Muna, regency of Muna, South-east Sulawesi which managed as belongs to a certain family, but does not belongs to the indigenous. The *kaindea* was performed hereditarily so that became a tradition.

Plants in *Kaindea* are the forestry plants that have a significant value for necessity of life society and the conservation. The position of *Kaindea* is in the middle or surrounded by society gardens, so that the ecological function of *Kaindea* allow it to be used in the context of soil fertility, water availability and climate creation. In *Kaindea* it is not allowed to cut the timber but take the non-timber forest products such as water, sugarpalm, fruits, tubers, bamboo shoots or for food needs.

Farming community in West Muna does not adopt a lot of modern cultivation techniques in farming with the *Kaindea* system, therefore, the level of agricultural technology applied by farmers is relatively simple and be observed leading to organic agriculture pattern by keep consistently maintaining old heritage farming practices. They also do not cultivate the plants in a particular field of land but on the same land area. Usually the farming communities make the cultivation of various crops, as well maintain their livestock animals at the same land area.

The Land used in all agricultural activities of farming communities in the area of West Muna are the forest and around it. They grew various types of crops on the sidelines of woody plants. The food crops included : forest potato (kolope), tatas potato (ghofa), cassava, sweet potato, taro, rice, corn, beans, ghofu, konduru, gourd, squash, papaya, moringa, jackfruit, artocarpus camansi, breadfruit, rattan, coconut, sugar palm. Other crops also cultivating were the medicinal plants.

Cultivation of plants in the gap of wood plant was performed due to the maintenance of soil fertility and soil water availability which very needed for the plants survival naturally. Moreover, the intensification of land was also a reason for cultivating various of crops on the gap of wood plant (long-term plant). This is the wisdom of farming communities in utilization of the forest potency as soil fertility supporting and water providers. However, farming communities often do a marketing for timber plants to increase the acceptance of sunlight which also needed in the photosynthesis process of plants and minimize the occurrence of pests and diseases on plants cultivated.

Various plants in the *Kaindea* system were not planted at one time, but were conducted by the plant rotate system. Plant rotation was the planting of some types of crops on the same land area and at the different times. The cultivation was conducted to utilize the vacant land, improve the soil fertility, reduce pests and diseases, and reduce risk of crops failure as well as increase the crops production. The meant vacant land is an empty expanse on the gap of plant. In addition, the crops production can be increased due to the addition of soil fertility resulted from nitrogen because of green fertilizers in the leaves before. In addition, cultivation by rotate system can also reduce the risk

of crop failure because there are still plant reserves. It also reduces the disease because there is an interval of seed time that can eliminate it to another place in the land.

Plant rotation is also a form of local wisdom of farming community. The use of the same plant in the long term can increase the potency of pest and disease disturbances and shrinkage of certain nutrients for be used continuously by the same plant. Another reason is to variation in food consumption (food diversification). Food diversification were not originally a government program, it has become an actual tradition of farming community unconsciously the rotation of crops refers to food diversification.

Currently (the last 20 years), the duration of plant rotation is between 3 and 5 years and be performed on the more limited land. Before the 1980's, a new farming community did a plant rotation about 7 to 10 years and was performed on the quite broad land. Currently, they are trying to farm intensively that no matter the time of fallow whether sufficient or not so that causing an erosion and a decline of land productivity. This happens because of the excelsior of life demands. Exactly, more the needs that must be met materially. It has the impact to farming community who is no longer farmed only for their daily food needs themselves and their families but also for sale with the aim of getting the money to meet the needs of outside food for themselves and their families. Therefore, farming activities be performed more intensively and even have begun to organize the plant according to the market needs in order as a source of livelihood.

Another thing that also causes a plant rotation more rapidly is the increasing of number of people so that causing a pressure (competition) in land

uses. This particularly occurs to the farmers who are work on the land not their own, so that they must compete with other farmers who also do not have it if they want to farm in a new land. Leave the fallow land can be considered by other farmers that the land has no owner so that enable to transfer the land utilization. This shows the condition where the ownership of land is not only primarily due to the ownership of land certificates but also shown by land conditions which be well taken care of and contain plants that are being cultivated. In the farming communities in the West Muna, land ownership is also indicated by the presence of long-term plants, fences as a hedge land, or the presence of native graves on the land.

The procedure for engage in farming of farming communities in West Muna still tend to be conventional and has been done hereditary. It can be seen on the step of land preparation, plant maintenance, and control of pest and plant diseases.

*Preparation of the field* was performed by slash and burn system. The field applied to the production, after the harvest time, was cleared up from the rest of the harvest such as leaves, branches of the corn and grain plains and the vegetation which there are on the field. It is slashed/cleared and then it is burnt. The slash and burn field has been the tradition passed down from previous generation to the next generation. As a tradition, the same as other traditions, The slash and burn field is not certainly easy to be leaved. The slash and burn method is the most affordable means to expose the field rapidly and we can obtain the ash needed to fertilize the plants and the efficient means to navigate the weeds and other pests.

This method is believed that can stimulate the light grass growth so that

the stock of wool for the cattle is still available. The burning also ease the farmer to inhibit the plant seeds so that the farmers does not need to perform the field management any more.

Another reason that affects the slash and burn system plays as the tradition of the farmer society in western Muna is the fire which flares high and has spark in the night dark which provides the entertainment as firework party for the society who seldom connects with entertainment. The field burning performed in order to prepare the field to the next planting provides the advantage to obtain several wild quails which trapped in the smoke and fire as the extra food.

The field which is ready for planting is planted simultaneously several kinds of foodstuffs on the fields which have the same width. It is so called as breahes system, a combined cultivation methods in planting several suitable types of crops at the same field. It also plays as a tradition for farmer society in western Muna which becomes the foodstuff cultivation for their and their family daily food consumptions.

This system is performed by the farmer society categorized as a form of the simple *agro-forestry*. It constitutes the local wisdom of the farmer society in applying the field more efficient in the middle of the pressure in field utilization as the impact of the inhabitant increase.

In this case, the farmer society integrates the annual plants (trees) and one or more season plant(s). the trees can be planted as the fence surrounding the foodstuff field at random in the field or other patterns, such as form a line so that forms a corridor or fence. the kinds of trees planted are also very various. We can plant the trees which have the high economy value such as coconut, coffee, cocoa, jackfruit, moringa, breadfruit, kluwih, rattan, teak, dan mahogany. The season plants is

foodstuff plant such as grain, corn, nuts, cassava, sweet potatoes, yams forest, taro, vegetable, and other grains or other plants such as banana.

According to the farmer society tradition in western Muna, not all plants can be combined. For example, corn with grain and sweet potatoes with taro. It is affected because after the sweet potatoes are lived, they can interrupt the grain because of speading everywhere. In another case, the *Konduru* plant can be planted in the interspace between the grain and the corn. It reveals that the *Konduru* planting which is planted at random can grow everywhere if there are woods as vine place. Therefore, this plant does not interrupt the grain and corn growth.

In the preparation step of the field, there is a ritual always performed by Muna society to start every farm activity. It is known-well as *Kasalasa*. The *Kasalasa tradition* is the local wisdom of Muna tribe to start his migratory farm activity. It is the cultural power which has been in every heart's farmer. This procession is performed by the farmer in early part at the opening of a new field. This ceremony is very crowded because almost all of the societies in the village attend, even though they do not plant in the area. The aim of this ceremony is thankfulness because the process of clearing up the field not obtain abstacles and over the planting, later, all plants will be spared from pest, and involves the mystic beings which not disturb the farmer society. After the *Kasalasa* process is finished, we continue to read the pray performed by Imam. Next, we continue to have the meal together, all of the food brought at there can not take away to home.

***The plant handling.*** The farmer society not usually apply the synthetic fertilizers (the chemical fertilizer). They more often let their plants because

believe that there are enough nutrient in the soil because of the advantage of the *Kaindea* which can assure the availability of nutrient and soil water. If there is a fertilizer utilization, the fertilizer provided is the ash of the residual burning of various vegetations or the rest of the plant found on the cultivation field carried out the next cultivation.

In the natural plant care, the farmer society in Western Muna Barat frequently performs the ritual tradition to look after in order the plant cultivated can succeed until the harvest time. The ritual also is conducted to anticipate the pest disruption, disease, and to prevent various probability of harvest failure. It is known as **the Kaago-ago ritual tradition**. This ritual is conducted to accept the arrival of *bhara* season (West), which is in the middle of November. The idea of this ritual implementation is believed by Muna society that the *bhara* season is the season which will show up the hazards, many kinds of various diseases, and the failure in harvesting particularly in the corn plants.

**The pest and disease handling** usually are conducted naturally without utilizing the chemical materials widely sold. The slash and burn system as has explained is one of the natural means to prevent the pest and disease aggression. This condition can occur because the field clearance can decrease the air humidity likened by both pests and diseases. Furthermore the ignition is believed that it can eradicate the pests and the diseases. The handling of pest and the other disease is to undertake the optimal light of sun accepted by the plants by performing the blocking of wooden plants surrounding the cultivated foodstuff plants. The rotation system is also the natural means to prevent the aggression of pest and disease because of the rotation of the

plants which have the different probability of the pest and disease source.

In order to preventing the pests and diseases in the plants, there is a ritual tradition called ***Kasambuwite Ceremony***. The mean of *Kasambu* is filling and *wite* is field. So that the meaning of *Kasambu wite* is field filling. In this case, The field filling is ordered to the field planted to fertile and shunt from the pests. The process of *Kasambu wite* is almost the same as *katalasa* and *ka ago-ago*, but the difference is the quantity of the participants in the ceremony. In *Kasambu wite* ceremony, we only need one participant whose the farm and a healer who runs the *Kasambu wite* process. The materials used are the same as those of in the *Katalasa* dan *Ka Ago-ago* ceremony. The ceremony is conducted in the diaphanous circumstance which is not the same as the *kasalasa* ceremony, in which the *kasalasa* ceremony is attended by many participants.

In the reality, recently, the tradition of *Kasalasa*, *Kaago-ago* and *Kasambuwite* is not conducted any more by half of the farmer society in Muna Regency. The youngster generation not appreciates about the function contained in these traditions. Therefore, the *Kasalasa* tradition will be leaved gradually and not known any more by Muna ethnic as the owner of the culture.

## CONCLUSION

The local wisdoms of farmer society in western Muna areas are the implementation form of the tradition rituals (*Kasalasa*, *Kaago-ago*, *Kasambuwite*), and visible on the field preparation means by the slash and burn system, the cultivated regulation with rotation system and **tumpang sari**, as well as the harvest management into food which has **daya simpan**.

The implication of this research is the policy formulation to protect the local wisdoms contributing to supplying the local food containing the cultural values that should be managed by the tourism department as the area's income.

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