



Empowering Village Economies: Strategies for Leading Product-Based Development in Kudus Regency

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Abstract

The development of villages based on leading product potential is crucial for optimizing local resources and fostering sustainable economic growth, particularly in Kudus Regency, which is a prominent manufacturing industry agglomeration in Indonesia. This study aims to map regional leading products at the village level and formulate development strategies based on empirical commodity clustering approaches. The study employs a qualitative research design incorporating focus group discussions (FGD), questionnaires, with participatory approach, conducted in stages with 200 key informants, including government officials, community leaders, and business actors. The findings reveal that phased strategies and product clustering are effective in enhancing village competitiveness and addressing socio-economic disparities. Specifically, the identification of leading products and their integration into development plans, supported by diversified processing and integrated marketing strategies, significantly improve economic resilience. The study recommends that policymakers facilitate participatory planning, invest in infrastructure and market access, and promote technological innovation to maximize the impact of village development initiatives. These findings underline the importance of aligning village potentials with regional and national strategies to achieve holistic and sustainable growth.

Abstrak

Pengembangan desa berbasis potensi produk unggulan sangat penting untuk mengoptimalkan sumber daya lokal dan mendorong pertumbuhan ekonomi yang berkelanjutan, khususnya di Kabupaten Kudus yang merupakan salah satu pusat aglomerasi industri manufaktur di Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memetakan produk unggulan regional di tingkat desa dan merumuskan strategi pengembangan berbasis pendekatan kluster komoditas secara empiris. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan *focus group discussion* (FGD) yang dilakukan secara bertahap dengan melibatkan 200 informan kunci, termasuk pejabat pemerintah, tokoh masyarakat, dan pelaku usaha. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi bertahap dan kluster produk efektif dalam meningkatkan daya saing desa serta mengatasi kesenjangan sosial dan ekonomi. Secara khusus, identifikasi produk unggulan dan integrasinya ke dalam rencana pengembangan dipandang telah dapat meningkatkan ketahanan ekonomi. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan kepada pembuat kebijakan untuk memfasilitasi perencanaan partisipatif, berinvestasi pada infrastruktur dan akses pasar, serta mendorong inovasi teknologi guna memaksimalkan dampak inisiatif pengembangan desa. Temuan ini menegaskan urgensi penyalarsan potensi desa dengan strategi pembangunan regional dan nasional untuk mencapai pertumbuhan yang holistik dan berkelanjutan

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INTRODUCTION

As a prominent manufacturing industry agglomeration in Indonesia, Kudus Regency plays a pivotal role in fostering regional economic growth. The manufacturing sector's contribution to the gross regional domestic product (GRDP) exceeds 80%, with the cigarette industry representing a dominant force in Kudus. In addition to the cigarette industry, the textile, food and beverage, and small and medium industries (IKM) also constitute the main pillars of the regional economic structure (BPS, 2024). The presence of these industries not only generates employment opportunities for the local population but also enhances the region's competitiveness at the national level (Muharrom et al., 2014). Conversely, rural areas in Kudus continue to adhere to an agrarian tradition, a characteristic that is prevalent across most regions in Central Java. The agricultural sector, which produces commodities such as rice, corn, and vegetables, plays an essential role in ensuring regional food security. In addition to this, the livestock and fisheries sectors provide further economic diversity and resilience to the local economy (Kultsum & Setyowati, 2022). Consequently, the Kudus District presents a distinctive economic profile, characterised by a robust industrial base in urban areas and a dominant agrarian sector in rural regions. This duality gives rise to a diverse yet complementary economic base.

In addition to the agrarian and industrial-based economic sectors, the Kudus Regency has a distinctive rural character, encompassing a rich local culture and traditions that present significant potential for the development of cultural and nature-based tourism. Kudus is one of the most significant religious pilgrimage centers in Indonesia, boasting a plethora of historical sites imbued with traditional and religious significance. Among these are the tombs of Sunan Kudus and Sunan Muria, which hold immense cultural and spiritual importance. These sites attract a considerable number of pilgrims on an annual basis, thereby exerting a notable influence on the local economy (Fadilasari & Ferdinand, 2023). The presence of historical edifices is contingent upon the historical context of a given urban area. It is therefore imperative that historical buildings are maintained, as they serve as tangible historical witnesses and can act as a catalyst for further developments (Anisa & Lissimia, 2020). Moreover, the local batik industry in Kudus has considerable potential for growth through a creative cluster approach that integrates social and spatial dimensions, with synergies between cultural traditions, local skills, and modern design innovations that support sustainability and global competitiveness (Nugroho, 2018). The potential of the religious tourism sector and the local batik industry makes a significant contribution to the local economy, creating employment opportunities for local people and stimulating the growth of the main tourism sector through the production of distinctive and high-quality batik products. It is imperative that the tourism sector in Kudus be developed to its fullest potential in order to drive the regional economy and improve overall welfare. Fafurida et al., (2020) states that the tourism sector can serve as a catalyst for capital investment activities, particularly in the expansion of infrastructure and the development of a tourism network that interlinks with other economic sectors, including transportation, retailing, manufacturing, and the distribution of other goods and services. Nevertheless, this potential has not been fully actualized due to a number of constraints, including restricted market access, inadequate promotion, and a lack of supporting infrastructure. Consequently, the mapping of the village's superior potential represents a pivotal stage in the process of identifying local assets that can be further developed, with the dual objective of enhancing community welfare and stimulating community-based economic growth.

Prior research has demonstrated the significance of human capital, infrastructure, and trade openness as pivotal elements in propelling regional economic growth. Kustanto, (2020) states that investment in education and health infrastructure has a considerable impact on increasing regional GRDP in Indonesia, particularly in regions that continue to experience deficiencies in infrastructure access. Meanwhile, Prima & Khoirunurrofik (2019) highlighted that, regional inequality in Indonesia influenced by differences in unemployment rates and the quality of human capital, demonstrates how regional disparities can affect overall economic growth. However, most existing studies have not specifically integrated a community-based approach in mapping the potential of village excellence, particularly those related to the sustainable management of local resources. This

is a pertinent issue given the growing emphasis on village development as a primary strategy for poverty alleviation and equitable development.

The advancement of a village's potential necessitates not only the formulation of an economic strategy but also the incorporation of legal protection considerations. Intellectual property rights (IPRs), including patents, geographical indications, and brand protection, play a significant role in enhancing the value of local products. Intellectual property rights offer recognition and protection to community innovations, which are frequently subject to exploitation by external parties. However, previous research has demonstrated that the lack of awareness among villagers regarding the significance of IPRs represents a significant impediment to the protection and optimization of the benefits derived from their superior products (Maemunah et al., 2024). Furthermore, the absence of coordination between local governments and communities in the process of legalizing and certifying superior products impedes the optimal development of the economic potential of villages (Wardhana et al., 2022). It is therefore necessary to implement structured and inclusive initiatives with the aim of fostering community awareness while simultaneously reinforcing the regulatory framework in order to safeguard local potential.

The mapping of regional potential is an essential element in the creation of inclusive economic growth. In accordance with this assertion, Yuliadi, (2020) posits that the process of regional economic development is contingent upon a number of factors, including regional economic potential, total population, infrastructure, the quality of human resources, and other macroeconomic variables, such as inflation level and exchange rate. The success of economic development can be demonstrated by three main values: the development of society's ability to meet their basic needs; an increase in people's sense of self-worth as human beings; and an increase in people's welfare. Accordingly, economic development models indicate that regional economic potential in developing areas is contingent upon specific drivers and growth rates, which in turn exert an influence on overall macroeconomic stability. Integrated regional economic development represents a fundamental pillar in the realization of national development (Murdi & Sahara, 2019). The failure to map regional potential can result in the creation of regional inequality, which has the potential to exert a significant long-term impact on the national economy. This is in accordance with the assertion made by development economists and policymakers that the widening of regional inequality during the early stages of economic growth represents a particular concern.

This research presents a novel approach that emphasises the use of participatory methods to identify the superior potential of villages in Kudus Regency. This research offers a novelty approach, whereby the sectoral potential of each village will be mapped using an explanatory research approach. This will be conducted through a research framework from method, which will involve questionnaire distribution to all village governments. This will be followed by a focus group discussion stage, which will include quadruple-helix synergy, representing all relevant policymakers from the village government and the Kudus district government. Furthermore, this research addresses a gap in the existing literature on rural economic development studies by proposing a framework for mapping village flagship potential with legal protection. Furthermore, this research introduces the use of participatory methods as a solution to overcome challenges in local potential management, thereby making a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on rural development in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a case study design. Qualitative methods were chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding, description and detailed explanation of social phenomena (Sekaran, 2007). To explore the problems and to develop practical policies for government, the focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted. This research uses qualitative descriptive analysis techniques using focus group discussions. According to Susanto et al., (2024) Focus Group discussion (FGD) is a qualitative method that uses structured group conversations to gather the perspectives and experiences of several people at the same time. FGDs are designed for open discussion between researchers and selected participants (Akyildiz & Ahmed, 2021). The purpose of FGD is to provide input to proposals, and to provide information related to data collection

and information on the results of data processing based on personal perceptions (Stephen, 2022). The method is based on structured, semi-structured, or unstructured interviews. It allows the researcher/interviewer to question several individuals systematically and simultaneously (Lanshima & Abdulkarim, 2021).

This research also distributed questionnaires to obtain a general description and perception from key informants on the landscape of potential products and leading sectors in villages in Kudus Regency. To directly distribute the questionnaires, enumerators were deployed to selected locations in Kudus Regency. Respondents were asked to answer questions regarding the profile and potential of leading sectors and products for each village in Kudus Regency. Furthermore, this study incorporates a participatory approach to ensure that stakeholders are actively involved in the research process. Participatory methods emphasize collaboration between researchers and participants, where respondents are not only data sources but also contributors to knowledge production (Bergold & Thomas, 2012; Jewkes, 1995). In this study, participatory elements were embedded within the focus group discussions, where local stakeholders, business owners, academics and policymakers were encouraged to contribute insights that informed the research findings and policy recommendations. The active involvement of these key actors ensures that the conclusions drawn from this study remain contextually relevant and practically applicable (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). Moreover, the use of participatory questionnaires provided respondents with the opportunity to offer feedback beyond structured responses, allowing the data collected to reflect their lived experiences and contextual perspectives (Duea et al., 2022).

This study used purposive and proportional sampling techniques by taking into account the characteristics and potential of the village's sectoral and leading products. Purposively, the respondents in this study were specifically intended to be managerial representatives from the government offices of each village. The respondents were not only limited to business owners but also included managers with central or strategic decision-making authority. This study specifically adopted the quadruple-helix model, which facilitates collaboration among academics, business practitioners, government representatives, and community leaders. To get diverse views of participants from different institutions, the FGD was divided into three batches and it is important to have several sessions to get cross-sectional views of diverse populations (Nyumba et al., 2018). Proportionally, this study used 200 key informants to conduct focus group discussions, which were divided into four different stages with different objectives to gain more empirical insight into the potential of leading products and development strategies for each village with its diverse characteristics.

This research combined the distribution of questionnaires to 141 respondents representing all villages in Kudus Regency, and 59 respondents from a combination of academics, community leaders, and business people. The objective of utilising all villages is to gain a more profound insight into the conditions and potential of each village. By comprehensively understanding the characteristics of each village, it is expected that a comprehensive picture of the superior potential in the village can be obtained. Specifically, Figure 1 shows the systematic approach to focus group discussions used in this research.

Validity, accuracy and credibility of FGD consists of strategies to identify and eliminate the existing possible threats (William, 2012). Bias was a serious concern in conducting FGD which involved content, process or participation and interpretation of research result. According to Basnet, (2018), the question was arranged from general to specific to trigger openness and avoid bias. Moderators in FGD should understand the research topics discussed Nyumba et al., (2018) because they already had an experience in the field of village and regional economic planning.

This research employs a triangulation approach as part of its methodology, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. Triangulation is defined as the use of multiple methods, sources, or perspectives to study a phenomenon, thereby enabling researchers to corroborate findings and gain deeper insights (Denzin, 1978). To analyze data from various angles and develop comprehensive strategies, this research incorporates methodological triangulation by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. As stated by Campbell et al., (2020), triangulation is a mixed-method strategy that allows researchers to identify both convergent and divergent data, thereby fostering a richer understanding of the phenomenon under study. The objective of applying

triangulation in this research is to ensure that the results are robust and actionable, particularly when addressing complex social issues. Furthermore, triangulation facilitates the integration of diverse perspectives, thereby enhancing the validity of the conclusions drawn and the recommendations proposed.

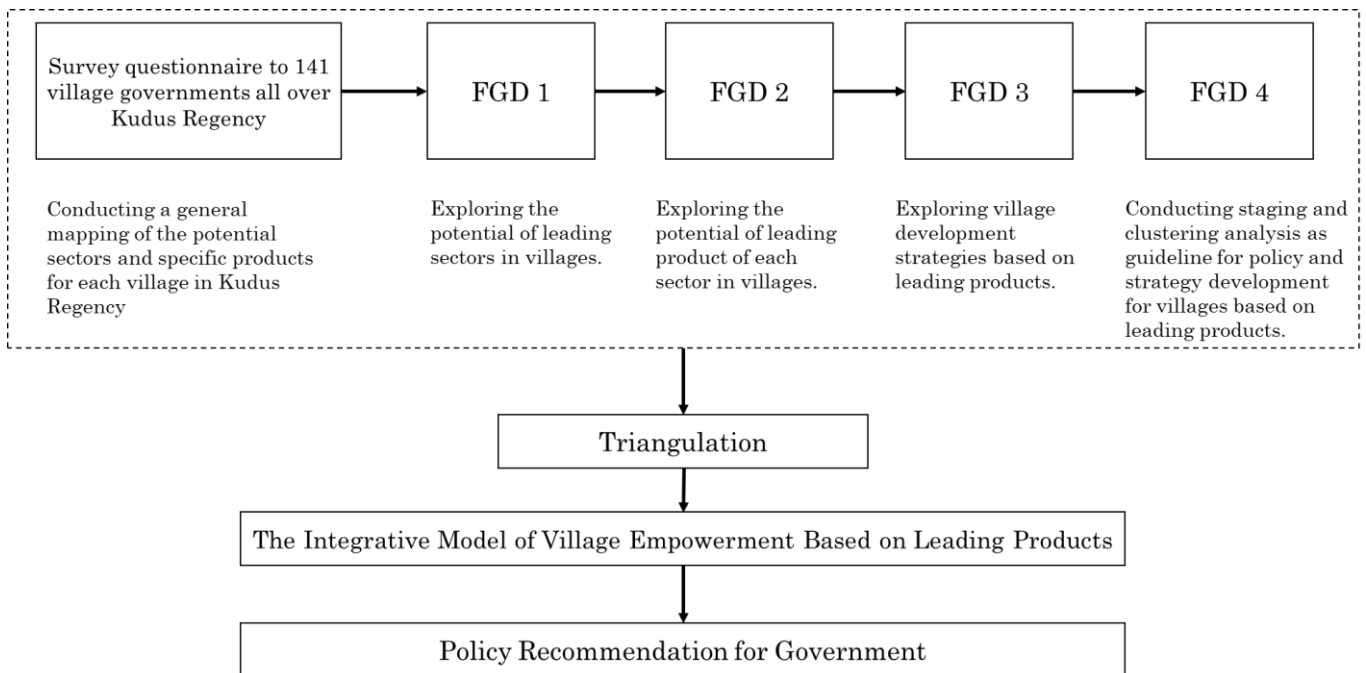


Figure 1. Research Framework

The data analysis in this study was conducted using the interactive model developed by Miles & Huberman, (2014), which provides a systematic and iterative framework for qualitative data analysis to ensure comprehensive and valid results. This analytical technique proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), comprises three distinct yet interconnected stages: *First*, data condensation. Data condensation is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data into a manageable form. This stage begins at the outset of data collection and continues throughout the analysis. Activities in this stage include summarizing, coding, creating categories, and writing analytic memos. The goal is to refine the data so that it becomes more focused and aligned with the research objectives. *Second*, data display. Data display involves organizing information into visual representations, such as matrices, graphs, charts, or networks. These formats allow researchers to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within the data. By visualizing the data, this stage enables a more effective and efficient analysis process, facilitating insights that may not be evident through narrative text alone. *Third*, conclusion drawing and verification. The final stage involves interpreting the data by identifying meaningful patterns, themes, and causal relationships. Conclusions are drawn based on these interpretations and are continuously verified to ensure their validity and reliability. Verification can include cross-checking data, seeking feedback from participants, or triangulating with other sources.

This study employs a descriptive statistical analysis approach to map regional superior products at the village level. The data was obtained through the administration of questionnaires to each village. A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted in order to provide a measure of central tendency, which will prove useful for the process of mapping the leading sector per region. The mapping of all villages is intended to facilitate the identification of local potentials that can be further developed, as well as challenges that need to be overcome in order to improve community welfare in Kudus Regency. The data and findings obtained will serve as the basis for more targeted development planning and facilitate collaboration between the local government and the community in an effort to achieve sustainable progress.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The leading sectors have the potential to significantly contribute to economic development, and are therefore of paramount importance to the regional economy. These sectors are of great importance for the planning of economic development, as they possess a wealth of resources and can serve as the focal point for investment, with the objective of optimizing economic growth and community welfare. In Kudus Regency, a number of leading sectors have been identified, including agriculture, livestock, and forestry; the processing industry; and trade, tourism, and the creative economy.

The agricultural, livestock, and forestry sectors have significant potential to provide raw materials for the processing industry, while also offering employment opportunities for the local community. By enhancing the productivity and efficiency of these sectors, the Kudus District can guarantee a sufficient food supply and reinforce regional food security. Furthermore, diversification of agricultural and livestock products can facilitate broader export opportunities, thereby enhancing regional income.

The processing industry in Kudus Regency has become a primary driver of the regional economy, providing employment opportunities and contributing significantly to GRDP (gross regional domestic product). Nevertheless, with full employment already achieved in this sector, it is crucial to identify new economic opportunities that can propel further growth. One potential avenue for advancement is to enhance the added value of products through innovation and technology, in addition to pursuing opportunities for expansion in export markets. Therefore, the manufacturing sector will not only continue to expand but will also have a positive multiplier effect on other sectors, such as transportation and logistics.

Additionally, trade, tourism, and the creative economy are significant contributors to the economic development of Kudus Regency. The development of a robust trade sector can facilitate the increased flow of goods and services, generate employment opportunities, and enhance community income. Concurrently, the tourism sector has the potential to attract both domestic and international tourists, thereby increasing regional revenue and providing business opportunities for local communities. The creative economy, comprising a multitude of industries such as crafts, design, and art, has the potential to serve as a source of innovation and attraction for Kudus.

Additionally, tourism and the creative economy have been identified as primary drivers of economic growth in Kudus District. The tourism sector has significant potential to attract both domestic and international visitors, offering a range of appealing attractions, including historical sites, cultural experiences, and natural beauty. The development of tourism in Kudus has the potential to exert a significant multiplier effect, creating new employment opportunities and stimulating the growth of associated sectors such as transportation, accommodation, and food and beverage services.

The creative economy, which encompasses a multitude of industries, including handicrafts, design, and the performing arts, plays a pivotal role in the regional economy. The creativity and innovation generated from this sector not only enriches local culture but also creates new business opportunities that can improve regional competitiveness. In sum, the identification of leading sectors in the nine sub-districts of Kudus District offers a clear picture of the region's economic potential. By concentrating on the advancement of these sectors, the Kudus District can maintain its role as a driver of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, enhance community well-being, and reinforce its position as a robust economic region within Central Java Province. Table 3.1 depicts the leading sectors per sub-district in Kudus Regency, based on the findings of field identification.

The industrial sector in Kudus Regency has undergone a significant transformation, evolving from its origins as a collection of small businesses to a well-established and expansive industrial ecosystem. One of the most illustrative examples is the cigarette industry. The cigarette industry in Kudus initially comprised small home-based businesses that relied on manual skills and local raw materials. These small entrepreneurs subsequently expanded their operations through innovations in production techniques, including the introduction of cigarette rolling machines, which markedly enhanced production capacity and efficiency.

Table 1. Leading Sector per Sub-district Based on Field Identification

District	Leading Sector	Specific Leading Product
Dawe	Horticulture, plantation crops, wood, food & beverages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Horticulture: ginger, galangal, pamelorange, avocado 2. Plantation: coffee 3. Wood products: furniture, decorative items 4. Food & beverages: processed snacks
Bae	Horticulture, livestock, food & beverages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Horticulture: galangal, mango 2. Livestock: cattle, buffalo, small livestock (goats, sheep) 3. Food & beverages: tofu and tempeh processing
Gebog	Horticulture, food crops, fisheries, wood, textiles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Horticulture: galangal, ginger, mango, coffee, water guava, sugarcane 2. Food crops: rice 3. Wood products: furniture, decorative items 4. Textiles and embroidery
Jati	Manufacturing, trade	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Food industry 2. Handicrafts and MSME products
Jekulo	Horticulture, agricultural services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Horticulture: ginger, galangal 2. Agriculture: rice, corn
Kaliwungu	Food crops, food & beverage industry, other services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Food crops: rice 2. Food industry 3. Food & beverages
Kota	Food & beverage processing, trade, accommodation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Processing industry: textiles and embroidery 2. Food & beverages 3. Services: education, health 4. Accommodation and dining
Mejobo	Food crops, livestock	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Livestock: beef cattle, goats, sheep, fisheries (catfish) 2. Food crops: rice, corn
Undaan	Food crops, horticulture, livestock	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Food crops: rice, legumes 2. Horticulture: water guava, mango, banana 3. Livestock: poultry

Source: Data Processed, 2024

The transition from small businesses to large industries is inextricably linked to the presence of enabling factors, including robust entrepreneurship, technological innovation, and a skilled and capable workforce. Furthermore, government policies that facilitate industrialization, such as tax incentives, adequate infrastructure development, and access to wider markets, also play a significant role. The formation of collaborative relationships between industry stakeholders and the establishment of partnerships with educational institutions to facilitate the training of a skilled workforce have also contributed to the strengthening of the industrial ecosystem in Kudus.

Presently, the principal industrial sectors in Kudus, including cigarettes, textiles, and other manufacturing, have attained a state of maturity with regard to employment, having reached full capacity for the absorption of labor. In light of this situation, it is of paramount importance to identify and develop new potential sectors that have the potential to become the pillars of future economic growth. One sector that has significant potential for growth is the food processing industry. Kudus Regency, with its substantial agricultural output, is well-positioned to develop a food processing industry capable of transforming local agricultural commodities into high-value added products.

The identification of leading sectors represents a key strategy for fostering economic growth. Subsequently, these sectors may inform governmental policy decisions regarding future development priorities. By examining the leading sectors at the subdistrict level in Kudus District,

it is anticipated that the local government will be able to allocate resources in an optimal manner, thereby fostering economic growth and enhancing the district's competitiveness relative to other regions. This classification is expected to facilitate the improvement of the specific development of certain commodities, thereby enabling the region to make more precise decisions regarding opportunities, risks, and other pertinent factors.

Table 2. Leading Products by Village in Kudus Regency

Subdistrict (<i>Kecamatan</i>)	Village (<i>Desa</i>)	Leading Product	
Mejobo	Jojo	Food crops (corn), plantation (clove), fisheries (catfish)	
	Kesambi	Livestock (sheep)	
	Gulang	Livestock (sheep)	
	Payaman	Food crops (rice, soybean), livestock (sheep)	
	Temulus	Livestock (goat)	
	Hadiwarno	Food crops (rice)	
	Mejobo	Food crops (rice)	
	Jepang	Livestock (goat)	
	Tenggeles	Food crops (rice, corn), plantation (coconut), fisheries (catfish)	
	Kirig	Livestock (goat)	
	Golantepus	Food crops (corn), plantation (coconut), fisheries (catfish), horticulture (duku fruit)	
	Undaan	Wonosoco	Food crops (corn)
		Berugenjang	Food crops (rice)
		Kalirejo	Food crops (corn, cassava)
Karangrowo		Food crops (rice), livestock (free-range chicken), crafts (woven products)	
Wates		Food crops (rice, corn)	
Larikrejo		Food crops (mung beans)	
Lambangan		Food crops (mung beans)	
Kutuk		Food crops (rice)	
Medini		Livestock (beef cattle)	
Glagahwaru		Livestock (buffalo)	
Undaan Kidul		Food crops (rice, corn)	
Sambung		Food crops (corn)	
Ngemplak		Fisheries (tilapia)	
Terangmas		Food crops (corn)	
Bae	Undaan Lor	Fisheries (tilapia)	
	Undaan Tengah	Food crops (rice), livestock (broiler chicken)	
	Pedawang	Horticulture (cassava)	
	Peganjaran	Horticulture (corn), livestock (sheep, broiler chicken)	
	Bacin	Livestock (beef cattle)	
	Ngembalrejo	Food crops (rice, corn), horticulture (mango), livestock (cattle)	
	Gondangmanis	Food crops (cassava), livestock (goat)	
	Bae	Food crops (corn), plantation (sugarcane), horticulture (avocado)	
	Karangbener	Livestock (free-range chicken)	
	Dersalam	Fisheries (catfish)	
	Purworejo	Food crops (rice, cassava)	
	Panjang	Food crops (corn), plantation (coconut), fisheries (catfish), horticulture (mango)	
	Kaliwungu	Karangampel	Crafts (birdcages, decorative lamps)
		Prambatan Kidul	Livestock (broiler chicken)
Prambatan Lor		Fisheries (catfish)	
Papringan		Fisheries (catfish)	
Sidorekso		Livestock (broiler chicken)	

Subdistrict (<i>Kecamatan</i>)	Village (<i>Desa</i>)	Leading Product
Gebog	Gamong	Food crops (rice, corn)
	Mijen	Food crops (rice, corn)
	Garung Kidul	Livestock (ducks)
	Setrokalangan	Livestock (sheep)
	Bakalan Krapyak	Food crops (rice, corn, sweet potato)
	Kedungdowo	Food crops (rice), livestock (goat)
	Kaliwungu	Livestock (beef cattle)
	Banget	Food crops (rice, corn, sweet potato)
	Garung Lor	Livestock (ducks)
	Blimbing Kidul	Food crops (corn)
	Kedungsari	Livestock (sheep)
	Klumpit	Food crops (corn), plantation (clove), fisheries (catfish)
	Gribig	Livestock (sheep)
	Padurenan	Livestock (sheep)
	Getassrabi	Food crops (rice, soybean), livestock (sheep)
	Gondosari	Livestock (goat)
	Menawan	Food crops (rice)
	Besito	Food crops (rice)
Jirang	Livestock (goat)	
Rahtawu	Food crops (rice, corn), plantation (coconut), fisheries (catfish)	
Jati	Karangmalang	Livestock (goat)
	Jati Kulon	Food crops (corn), plantation (coconut), fisheries (catfish), horticulture (duku fruit)
	Pasuruhan Lor	Food crops (corn)
	Jati Wetan	Food crops (rice)
	Tanjungkarang	Food crops (corn, cassava)
	Loram Wetan	Food crops (rice), livestock (free-range chicken), crafts (woven products)
	Ploso	Food crops (rice, corn)
	Getaspejaten	Food crops (mung beans)
	Jetiskapuan	Food crops (mung beans)
	Loram Kulon	Food crops (rice)
Kota	Megawon	Livestock (beef cattle)
	Ngembal Kulon	Livestock (buffalo)
	Pasuruhan Kidul	Food crops (rice, corn)
	Tumpangkrasak	Food crops (corn)
	Jepang Pakis	Fisheries (tilapia)
	Damaran	Food crops (corn)
	Purwosari	Fisheries (tilapia)
	Sunggingan	Food crops (rice), livestock (broiler chicken)
	Kauman	Horticulture (cassava)
	Demangan	Horticulture (corn), livestock (sheep, broiler chicken)
	Janggalan	Livestock (beef cattle)
	Kaliputu	Food crops (rice, corn), horticulture (mango), livestock (cattle)
	Rendeng	Food crops (cassava), livestock (goat)
	Wergu Wetan	Food crops (corn), plantation (sugarcane), horticulture (avocado)
	Singgocandi	Glantengan
Barongan		Fisheries (catfish)
Wergu Kulon		Food crops (rice, cassava)
Kerjasan		Food crops (corn), plantation (coconut), fisheries (catfish), horticulture (mango)
Demaan		Crafts (birdcages, decorative lamps)
Singgocandi		Livestock (broiler chicken)

Subdistrict (<i>Kecamatan</i>)	Village (<i>Desa</i>)	Leading Product
Dawe	Langgardalem	Fisheries (catfish)
	Krandon	Fisheries (catfish)
	Nganguk	Livestock (broiler chicken)
	Mlati Norowito	Food crops (rice, corn)
	Mlati Lor	Food crops (rice, corn)
	Mlati Kidul	Livestock (ducks)
	Kramat	Livestock (sheep)
	Kajeksan	Food crops (rice, corn, sweet potato)
	Panjunan	Food crops (rice), livestock (goat)
	Burikan	Livestock (beef cattle)
	Kajar	Food crops (rice, corn, sweet potato)
	Lau	Livestock (ducks)
	Colo	Food crops (corn)
	Dukuh Waringin	Food crops (corn), plantation (clove), fisheries (catfish)
	Tergo	Livestock (sheep)
	Japan	Livestock (sheep)
	Kandangmas	Food crops (rice, soybean), livestock (sheep)
	Rejosari	Livestock (goat)
	Samirejo	Food crops (rice)
	Cendono	Food crops (rice)
Jekulo	Glagah Kulon	Livestock (goat)
	Puyoh	Food crops (rice, corn), plantation (coconut), fisheries (catfish)
	Cranggang	Livestock (goat)
	Piji	Food crops (corn), plantation (coconut), fisheries (catfish), horticulture (duku fruit)
	Soco	Food crops (corn)
	Ternadi	Food crops (rice)
	Margorejo	Food crops (corn, cassava)
	Klaling	Food crops (rice), livestock (free-range chicken), crafts (woven products)
	Gondoharum	Food crops (rice, corn)
	Hadipolo	Food crops (mung beans)
	Tanjungrejo	Food crops (mung beans)
	Hanggosoco	Food crops (rice)
	Bulungkulon	Livestock (beef cattle)
	Bulungcangkring	Livestock (buffalo)
	Jekulo	Food crops (rice, corn)
	Pladen	Food crops (corn)
	Sidomulyo	Fisheries (tilapia)
	Terban	Food crops (corn)
Sadang	Fisheries (tilapia)	

Source: Data Processed, 2024

A review of the nine sub-districts in Kudus Regency and a description of each village reveals that the region has a strong agricultural base, with a particular focus on food crops, horticulture, and biopharmaceuticals. The performance of the Kudus Regency agricultural sector is gauged by two key indicators: the area of harvested land and the level of production. In accordance with the Regional Development Planning of Kudus Regency for the period 2018-2023, the agricultural sector, as evidenced by the data on land area and production levels, represents a sector that requires improvement. This is due to the fact that the contribution of agriculture to the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) remains at 2.44 percent. This contribution is, in fact, relatively modest when one considers the challenging geography of the land area in question. However, Kudus Regency does possess a reliable array of agricultural commodities.

The Village Leading Product Development Strategy

The development of superior products represents a significant technical strategy for accelerating the regional economy. In addition to providing a direct boost to economic growth, this development also brings additional benefits, including the occurrence of multiplier effects that extend positive impacts to other sectors of the economy. Such effects include the creation of new employment opportunities and the identification of novel and sustainable sources of economic growth. To achieve these outcomes, a variety of strategic measures must be undertaken, including investments in research and development, workforce upskilling, and infrastructure improvements. The figure below illustrates the requisite efforts to optimize the development of a flagship product and maximize its economic benefits.

The results of the questionnaire indicate that marketing and promotion are of central importance in the development of the leading sector in Kudus District. Nevertheless, it is also crucial to emphasise the significance of training and education, network development, and research and innovation as key contributors to the growth and competitiveness of these sectors. The implementation of an integrated strategy encompassing all of these aspects will provide a robust foundation for sustainable and successful economic development in the future. The village superior product development strategy is outlined in detail in the table below.

Tabel 3. The Village Leading Product Development Strategy

Strategy	Key Advantages	Development Strategies	Involved Parties
Marketing and Promotion	Market potential, government support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build digital campaigns for local leading products (via social media, websites, e-commerce) to reach wider markets. 2. Create unique and sustainable branding for village products, highlighting local advantages and inspirational stories. 3. Actively participate in national and international product exhibitions. 4. Enhance offline promotions through local and regional market events. 5. Optimize collaboration with local and national media to publicize village leading products. 	Local government, MSME actors, tourism and cooperative offices, media, local influencers, NGOs
Partnership Development	Availability of raw materials, added value	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open access to collaborations with financial institutions to provide micro-business credit with low-interest rates. 2. Connect village entrepreneurs with major industrial partners to support product distribution. 3. Establish partnerships with suppliers and input networks for production efficiency. 4. Build partnerships with modern markets and distributors to expand distribution. 5. Initiate strategic partnerships with tech startups to improve digitization and business efficiency. 6. Encourage competitive business financing schemes. 	Financial institutions (banks and non-banks), large industries, raw material suppliers, local government, tech startups, e-commerce, KADIN

Strategy	Key Advantages	Development Strategies	Involved Parties
Training and Education	Skills in production, capacity building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organize business management training for entrepreneurs to improve administrative and operational skills. 2. Provide technical training programs, such as product processing, packaging, and digital marketing techniques. 3. Collaborate with vocational schools and universities to offer internship programs for village youth. 4. Conduct training on financial management to enhance operational efficiency. 5. Train on digital technology usage to improve production and marketing. 6. Provide mentorship for entrepreneurs on business management. 7. Develop business unit incubators to boost business volume, increase business population, and reduce the risk of failure. 8. Promote CSR and PKBL programs for incubation and training in village business units. 	Local government, education offices, training institutions, universities and vocational schools, private institutions focused on training, senior MSME actors as mentors
Research and Innovation	Product value addition, market potential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct research on developing new products and diversifying leading products with high market potential. 2. Apply innovations in product design, such as eco-friendly and modern packaging. 3. Use advanced processing technology to improve quality and productivity. 4. Conduct market research to understand local and global consumer trends. 5. Promote collaboration with Research and Development (R&D) institutions for local wisdom-based product innovations. 6. Facilitate collaboration and partnerships to direct innovation and invention from research institutions to entrepreneurs. 	Universities, R&D institutions, industrial offices, private research institutions, MSME actors, supporting technology industries, entrepreneur communities
Investment in Production	Availability of raw materials, government and stakeholder support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in modern production equipment, such as automated machines, to increase production capacity. 2. Improve basic infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and internet, to support production and distribution activities. 	Local government, public works department, transportation department, private investors, MSME actors, financial institutions,

Strategy	Key Advantages	Development Strategies	Involved Parties
		3. Build storage and post-harvest processing facilities to maintain quality (agricultural products).	infrastructure providers
		4. Provide logistics and distribution centers at the village level to accelerate market access (community mapping).	
		5. Invest in waste management and product recycling to promote environmental sustainability.	

Source: Data Processed, 2024

The formulation of a Village-leading Product Development Strategy

The advancement of superior products in Kudus District necessitates a strategic approach that is both phased and comprehensive in order to achieve long-term success. The initial stage is concerned with the reinforcement of the fundamental elements of the project, entailing the gathering of essential data and the procurement of requisite resources. In the initial phase, the focus is on identifying superior products, developing the brand, and formulating digital promotion strategies. The conceptualization of strategies for the reinforcement of collaborative networks with raw material suppliers and markets, as well as the formation of local entrepreneurial associations, is currently underway. The formulation of a pertinent training curriculum represents the inaugural step in enhancing the technical and managerial capabilities of village enterprises. In this initial phase, the preliminary development of cluster patterns and interactions between potential areas was also delineated.

Table 4. The development of superior products for villages

Stages	Strategy	Development Activities
Stage 1: Strengthening Basic Foundations	Marketing and Promotion	1. Identify leading products to be promoted. 2. Create branding and identity for village products. 3. Design digital promotion campaigns via social media and e-commerce platforms.
	Partnership Development	1. Identify potential partners (raw material suppliers, distributors, modern/traditional markets). 2. Form local business associations to strengthen business networks.
	Training and Education	1. Develop relevant training curricula (business management, production skills, digital marketing). 2. Identify training institutions to be involved.
Stage 2: Implementation and Development	Marketing and Promotion	1. Launch promotional campaigns on social media and e-commerce platforms. 2. Actively participate in local product exhibitions. 3. Develop a website or marketplace for village products.
	Partnership Development	1. Build partnerships with modern/traditional markets and raw material suppliers. 2. Organize meetings between business associations and financial institutions for access to business credit.
	Training and Education	1. Conduct technical and managerial skills training. 2. Organize internship programs for youth in large business units. 3. Field schools for prospective or new entrepreneurs projected to grow.
Stage 3: Strengthening and Expansion	Research and Innovation	1. Conduct research on new product development and diversification. 2. Apply more advanced processing technology from partnerships.

Stages	Strategy	Development Activities
	Investment in Production	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Conduct market tests for new products resulting from business incubation. 1. Invest in modern production equipment. 2. Build storage and post-harvest processing facilities. 3. Improve basic village infrastructure (roads, electricity, internet).
Stage 4: Optimization and Sustainability	Investment in Production	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in modern production equipment. 2. Build storage and post-harvest processing facilities. 3. Improve basic village infrastructure (roads, electricity, internet).
	Marketing and Promotion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance international promotion through overseas product exhibitions. 2. Strengthen digital marketing with current technologies (SEO, online advertising). 3. Provide mentoring for product development based on specific market segmentation.
	Partnership Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop strategic partnerships with tech startups for business digitization. 2. Strengthen collaboration with international partners for product exports.

Source: Data Processed, 2024

The initial phase, which entailed the reinforcement of the fundamental structure, concentrated on the marketing and promotion of superior products. The initial steps included the identification of products to be promoted, the creation of a brand and product identity, and the design of a digital promotion campaign utilising social media and e-commerce platforms. Furthermore, the development of networks and partnerships is of paramount importance. This entails identifying potential partners, such as raw material suppliers and distributors, as well as establishing an association of local entrepreneurs that can reinforce business networks. Furthermore, training and education are incorporated into this phase. A training curriculum is developed to enhance business management, production skills, and digital marketing proficiency.

The second stage is implementation and development, during which promotional campaigns are initiated on social media and e-commerce platforms. Furthermore, active participation in local product exhibitions is an important strategy for increasing visibility. The development of a website or marketplace for village products facilitates access to information for consumers. At this juncture, the objective is to cultivate networks and forge alliances with both contemporary and traditional marketplaces, as well as raw material suppliers. Meetings between business associations and financial institutions will facilitate access to business credit, which is currently in short supply. Training in technical and managerial skills is provided to enhance the capabilities of entrepreneurs, complemented by internship programs and field schools for aspiring young entrepreneurs.

The third phase, which is concerned with strengthening and expansion, is focused on research and innovation. It is imperative that research be conducted on new product development and diversification in order to maintain competitiveness. The implementation of contemporary processing technology in collaboration with the aforementioned partnership will enhance production efficiency. Furthermore, market tests for novel products developed through the business incubation process will facilitate the determination of product feasibility prior to their extensive release. Conversely, investment in production factors, such as modern production equipment and post-harvest storage facilities, is a priority to enhance the efficiency of the production process. It is similarly imperative to enhance the fundamental infrastructure of the village, encompassing the construction of roads, the provision of electricity, and the establishment of internet access, in order to facilitate economic activities.

The final stage is optimization and sustainability. In this stage, the focus on marketing and promotion is achieved by increasing international exposure through product exhibitions abroad. The latest digital marketing technologies, such as search engine optimization (SEO) and online advertising, are employed to expand the reach of the market. Assistance in product development

that is tailored to specific market segments represents a crucial aspect of this strategy. The objective of network and partnership development is twofold: firstly, to foster collaboration with technology startups in order to facilitate business digitalization, and secondly, to enhance international partnerships with the aim of expanding product exports. Ultimately, investment in production factors will be allocated toward the development of logistics and distribution centers within the village, as well as the implementation of environmentally conscious waste management and recycling systems. This will facilitate the establishment of a circular economy and ensure the sustainability of the village's superior products.

The advancement of village superior products may be facilitated by examining the potential for forming clusters. The objective is to enhance production efficiency, as the cluster system will prove advantageous for optimizing production and distributing inputs in an efficient manner, along with a range of other benefits. The identification of clusters is predicated on two factors: the proximity of geographically proximate areas and the degree of similarity in the commodities and superior products present in each adjacent region. The following section presents the development clusters of superior products at the subdistrict level.

Table 5. The Clustering Analysis of Village Leading Product Development

Cluster	Leading Sector	Village Leading Products	Districts
Cluster A	Horticulture, food crops, and fisheries	1. Horticulture: ginger, galangal, mango, coffee, water guava, sugarcane 2. Food crops: rice	Dawe, Gebog, Jekulo, Kaliwungu
Cluster B	Horticulture, plantation crops, wood, food and beverages	1. Horticulture: ginger, galangal, banana, galangal, pamelorange, avocado 2. Plantation: coffee 3. Wood products: furniture, decorative items 4. Food and beverages: processed snacks	Dawe, Bae, Gebog
Cluster C	Livestock, food and beverages	1. Livestock: cattle, buffalo, small livestock (goats and sheep) 2. Food and beverages: tofu and tempeh processing	Bae, Mejobo
Cluster D	Manufacturing, trade, accommodation, food and beverages	1. Manufacturing: textiles and embroidery, food and beverages 2. Services: others, education, health 3. Accommodation and dining	Kota, Jati
Cluster E	Food crops, livestock	1. Livestock: beef cattle, goats, sheep, fisheries (catfish) 2. Food crops: rice, corn	Mejobo, Kaliwungu
Cluster F	Food crops, horticulture, livestock	1. Food crops: rice, legumes 2. Horticulture: water guava, mango, banana 3. Livestock: poultry	Undaan

Source: Processed Data, 2024

There are several clusters that reflect superior potential. Cluster A shows the diversity of horticultural products, food crops, and fisheries. The sub-districts of Dawe, Gebog, Jekulo, Kaliwungu, contribute to producing ginger, kencur, mango, coffee, and rice. Cluster B includes Dawe, Bae, and Gebog sub-districts that focus on horticulture and plantations. Products such as ginger, kencur and avocado play an important role, along with wood products for furniture and snack products. This diversity provides an opportunity to strengthen the branding and competitiveness of local products. Cluster C combines Bae and Mejobo, with an emphasis on agriculture and livestock. In this cluster, cattle, buffalo, and processed tofu and tempeh are the leading products, helping to improve food security as well as the income of local farmers. Then, Cluster D, which consists of Kota and Jati, focuses on processing industry and trade. The textile and embroidery, food and beverage,

and other services sectors create an ecosystem that supports economic growth and job creation. Cluster E highlights food crops and livestock in Mejobo and Kaliwungu. The production of rice, corn, as well as beef cattle and catfish farming open-up opportunities for business diversification and the development of sustainable agriculture-based products. Finally, Cluster F in Undaan highlights the importance of food crops and horticulture, with the presence of water guava, mango and banana.

The findings indicate that while the identification and mapping of leading sectors at the village level have been successfully conducted, there remains a critical gap in formal policy frameworks that govern the development, regulation, and legal protection of these economic potentials. Government initiatives have primarily focused on mapping village-based superior products, but no concrete policies have been enacted to ensure their sustainable development, market competitiveness, or legal safeguarding. This absence of regulatory mechanisms presents a major vulnerability, as it exposes village-based industries to market fluctuations, external competition, and risks of misappropriation, particularly concerning intellectual property infringements and unauthorized commercialization by larger entities. The lack of a structured legal framework further limits investment attraction, institutional support, and financial assistance, restricting local enterprises from scaling up their businesses, integrating into broader supply chains, and accessing larger markets. Additionally, without comprehensive guidelines on sectoral development, local governments and village communities face difficulties in formulating strategic interventions that align with regional and national economic policies, leading to fragmented and inconsistent efforts that undermine long-term economic sustainability.

To address this regulatory gap, this study proposes the development of a comprehensive policy framework designed to ensure the sustainable protection and strategic advancement of leading village sectors. This framework should introduce formal legal recognition for superior local products through mechanisms such as geographical indications (GI), certification schemes, and intellectual property rights, which will help preserve authenticity, prevent exploitation, and enhance market positioning for local producers. Furthermore, an integrated development roadmap should be established to guide policy implementation, incorporating financial incentives for research and development (R&D), investment in infrastructure, and targeted capacity-building programs to strengthen the village economy. Public-private partnerships should also be encouraged to facilitate technology transfer, access to capital, and business mentorship programs that enhance competitiveness. Additionally, adopting a participatory governance model, where local stakeholders, industry leaders, cooperatives, and policymakers engage in a collaborative decision-making process, will ensure that policy interventions remain contextually relevant and community-driven. By embedding legal protection within broader economic policies, Kudus Regency can secure the long-term viability of its village-based economic sectors, fostering inclusive growth, economic resilience, and sustainable rural development.

Agricultural potential is integral to the sustainable development of rural villages, offering a foundation for economic growth and resource optimization. Yusuf et al., (2022) highlight how targeted identification of competitive agricultural commodities, such as sago and bamboo shoots in Kweel Village, has catalyzed regional economic strategies, demonstrating the role of local resources in achieving economic resilience. Maulana & Pratama (2021) further emphasize the effectiveness of village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) in transforming agricultural assets into sustainable revenue streams, directly contributing to community welfare and self-reliance. Sugiono et al., (2020) provide additional insights by showcasing the impact of integrating agricultural production with market access, underscoring the necessity of inclusive policies that bridge rural producers and larger economic system. These empirical findings underline the critical role of agricultural innovation and participatory development in achieving integrated and sustainable rural village progress. The processing of regional superior agricultural products based on demand trends aligned with viral marketing and emerging issues represents a key strategy for enhancing village economic potential (Yusuf et al., 2023). This approach involves diversifying product processing while integrating viral-based marketing strategies to effectively capture market opportunities and drive economic growth.

Empirical findings underscore the critical role of strategic development based on superior commodities in enhancing the socio-economic resilience of rural communities. The research by Suci

Ramadhani et al., (2022) highlights that regional development plans rooted in leading agricultural commodities not only bolster local economic activities but also address pressing challenges like poverty and regional disparities. The potential of superior commodities, such as rice and plantation crops in Pasaman Regency, illustrates the capacity of targeted strategies to optimize land use, integrate socio-economic policies, and elevate rural livelihoods. Similarly, the integration of superior agricultural resources into village development plans supports a holistic growth model, fostering economic empowerment while safeguarding sustainability principles. Nugraha et al., (2022) emphasizes the necessity of identifying village-specific superior commodities as the basis for formulating targeted development strategies that are contextually appropriate and impactful. Pongi et al., (2015) further illustrate that superior commodities like sago and bamboo shoots can be effectively utilized to drive economic competitiveness and enhance regional resilience.

The tourism sector is closely intertwined with agricultural potential and local superior products, as these resources often form the foundation of tourist attractions and economic activities in rural areas. Tourism has proven to be a significant driver of economic empowerment in rural areas, fostering inclusive growth and improving livelihoods. Sugiarto et al., (2020) demonstrate that community-based tourism (CBT), by involving local stakeholders in managing tourism activities, not only generates employment but also ensures equitable revenue distribution, thereby directly benefitting rural economies. In Jimbung Tourism Village, Sumargana et al., (2022) report how creative economy initiatives linked to tourism have become a catalyst for sustainable socio-economic development, preserving cultural identity while expanding income opportunities. Furthermore, participatory tourism development strategies, such as leveraging natural attractions and cultural heritage, have led to increased local welfare and stronger community-based enterprises and inclusive community empowerment (Cahyono et al., 2018). These findings collectively reinforce the empirical importance of tourism as a tool for stimulating economic development and fostering regional resilience.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

This study underscores the critical role of phased strategies and product clustering in facilitating the advancement of village development in Kudus Regency. The findings reveal that the identification and categorisation of leading products based on local potential and competitive advantages provides a structured framework for the optimisation of regional resources. The phased strategies, which encompass the strengthening of foundations, implementation, expansion and sustainability, ensure a systematic approach to development that is aligned with the capacities of the villages and their growth trajectories. Moreover, the clustering of products by sector, such as agriculture, tourism, and crafts, enables villages to concentrate on their distinctive capabilities while fostering regional collaboration and market integration. These approaches collectively demonstrate the significance of strategic planning and targeted interventions in attaining sustainable village development and socio-economic resilience in Kudus Regency.

To further support village development based on leading product potential, it would be beneficial for policymakers to encourage participatory planning involving local stakeholders, with the aim of aligning strategies with community aspirations. It is imperative that the government provides targeted investments in infrastructure, market accessibility, and capacity-building programmes in order to reinforce local value chains. The formation of collaborative relationships with private sector entities, academic institutions, and technological organisations can facilitate the advancement of innovative practices and enhance the competitive advantage of leading products. Furthermore, the establishment of inter-village collaboration platforms and the promotion of village branding can serve to enhance regional identity and market positioning.

The present study is constrained by its qualitative approach, which is primarily concerned with empirical findings in Kudus Regency. It would be beneficial for future research to incorporate a mixed methods approach in order to validate the findings across a broader range of contexts and to evaluate the quantitative impact of phased and clustered strategies. It would be beneficial to conduct long-term studies in order to analyse the sustainability and adaptability of these

approaches, particularly in relation to the integration of technology and environmental considerations into village development frameworks.

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