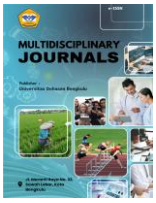

Multidisciplinary Journals
Volume 2 Issue 3, 2025 (129-136)
ISSN (*online*) : **3047-8499**
Homepage : https://jurnalunived.com/index.php/MJ
Doi : https://doi.org/10.37676/mj

Implementation Of Thematic Agricultural Programs At The Department Of Food Crops, Horticulture, And Livestock, North Bengkulu

Desti Rohmatullah [1], Harius Eko Saputra [2], Yusuarsono [3]
[1,2,3] ***Public Administration study program Faculty of Social Sciences Dehasen University of Bengkulu***
[1] e-mail: **destirohmatoh@gmail.com**

Received [25-07-2025] Revised [02-09-2025] Accepted [03-09-2025]

Abstract. This study aims to analyze the implementation of thematic agricultural programs at the Department of Food Crops, Horticulture, and Livestock in North Bengkulu Regency. The program is part of a local government strategy to increase agricultural productivity, improve farmers' welfare, and enhance local food security through training, technical assistance, and crop diversification. This research adopts a qualitative approach with data collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving department staff and farmer groups participating in the program. The results indicate that program implementation involves active coordination between the department, field extension officers, and farmers. While communication and dissemination methods were relatively effective, challenges remain, particularly the limited number of agricultural extension workers and a lack of technical understanding among field actors. The program has been successful in enhancing farmers' knowledge, especially in sustainable practices and production efficiency. However, long-term sustainability requires regular evaluations, continuous training, and stronger policy support. Key factors influencing implementation success include effective communication, availability of human and financial resources, implementers' commitment, and supportive bureaucratic structures. By addressing these factors, the thematic agricultural program can serve as a participatory and sustainable development model for regional agricultural sectors.

Keywords: *Policy Implementation; Agricultural Extension; Sustainable Agriculture; Thematic Agricultural Program*

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural development remains one of the cornerstones of national progress, especially in countries with vast arable land and a predominantly agrarian society like Indonesia. Agriculture, derived from the Latin "ager" (field) and "culture" (cultivation), is more than just food production—it encompasses land management, crop cultivation, livestock breeding, and resource utilization for industrial, commercial, and domestic purposes (Nurmala et al., 2012). As a strategic sector, agriculture contributes significantly to food security, employment, and rural development, particularly in remote and developing regions.

The agricultural sector in Indonesia is confronted with various challenges including declining land productivity, climate change, limited access to modern technology, and suboptimal resource management. These issues hinder the maximization of agricultural potential across many regions, including North Bengkulu Regency. To address these challenges, local governments are striving to implement thematic agricultural programs that aim to improve both productivity and sustainability in a region-specific manner (Syaukani et al., 2004). Implementation of government policies, including in agriculture, is a multi-layered process that demands coordination, resources, and community participation. According to Van

Meter and Van Horn (as cited in Agustino, 2008), policy implementation involves various actors and procedures, where the success of any public program depends heavily on its translation from paper to practice. It includes policy communication, resource availability, implementing disposition, and bureaucratic structure—all of which must align to produce the desired outcomes (Dwiyanto, 2009).

North Bengkulu Regency, located in the Province of Bengkulu, is endowed with promising agricultural potential in food crops, horticulture, and livestock. However, the region still struggles with infrastructure limitations, low levels of human resource capacity, and restricted access to agricultural innovation. These problems necessitate government intervention through structured programs designed to respond directly to farmers' needs and to empower local institutions.

The Department of Food Crops, Horticulture, and Livestock (DTPHP) in North Bengkulu has responded by designing and executing thematic agricultural programs. These initiatives are not only aligned with national directives on food security and regional economic development but also tailored to local needs. As stated in the department's strategic plan, the thematic programs emphasize environmental sustainability, diversification, and increased farmer welfare through systematic training and assistance (DTPHP Bengkulu Utara, 2022). Thematic agricultural programs typically include organic fertilizer production, pest management, crop maintenance training, and demonstration plots for crops like chilies, spinach, and peanuts. These programs are expected to improve not only technical competencies among farmers but also their awareness of sustainable practices and market-oriented agriculture (Rusdiana, 2021). Nevertheless, the successful implementation of these programs requires effective communication, sufficient resources, committed personnel, and an efficient bureaucratic mechanism (Edward III, as cited in Indiahono & Dwiyanto, 2009). In line with these realities, this study aims to explore how the thematic agricultural program is being implemented by the Department of Food Crops, Horticulture, and Livestock in North Bengkulu. It seeks to assess the extent to which the program aligns with theoretical models of policy implementation, especially the framework proposed by George C. Edward III, which includes four variables: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure (Dwiyanto, 2009). This research holds practical significance for several stakeholders. For policymakers and local governments, it provides empirical insights into bottlenecks and success factors within the implementation process. For academic audiences, it contributes to the discourse on agricultural policy implementation in Indonesia. For local farmers, the findings can be a reflection of their involvement and areas for advocacy in future programs.

Ultimately, agriculture remains a pillar of Indonesia's development, but it demands innovation, adaptation, and participation at all levels. Programs like these will only bear fruit if policy ideas are well translated into ground-level action—backed by clear communication, capable human resources, and supportive governance systems. Thus, evaluating and refining the implementation of such thematic agricultural programs is crucial not only for regional success but also for national food security and sustainable economic growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Policy Implementation Theory by George C. Edward III

One of the most widely used frameworks in policy studies is George C. Edward III's model of policy implementation. He argues that successful implementation depends on four interrelated factors: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Communication refers to how well policies are transmitted and understood by implementers. Resources cover both human and financial capacities necessary for executing a policy. Disposition deals with the willingness and motivation of the implementers, while bureaucratic structure addresses how organizational design either facilitates or hinders implementation. This

model is particularly useful for evaluating public sector programs where multiple actors and institutions are involved (Dwiyanto, 2009).

Communication in Policy Delivery

Communication is a critical element in the implementation process. It ensures that all stakeholders, from decision-makers to ground-level actors like extension workers and farmers, understand the purpose, scope, and mechanisms of a given program. According to Edward III's framework, poor communication can lead to misinterpretation, resistance, or failure to act. In the context of agricultural programs, communication must be adapted to the literacy levels, cultural context, and local dialects of the target population to avoid distortion and disengagement (Indiahono & Dwiyanto, 2009).

Resource Availability and Allocation

Resources are the backbone of any policy implementation. These include financial resources, infrastructure, tools, and especially competent human resources. According to Syaukani et al. (2004), the lack of adequate resources can stall even the most well-intentioned programs. For agricultural initiatives, this often translates into insufficient extension officers, lack of training facilities, and minimal operational budgets. Effective resource mobilization is necessary to ensure continuous program support and scalability across regions.

Disposition of Implementers

Disposition refers to the attitudes, motivations, and commitment of those tasked with executing a policy. Even with adequate communication and resources, a program may fail if the implementers are indifferent, unmotivated, or resistant. According to Edward III, positive disposition includes a strong belief in the policy's value, a sense of responsibility, and active engagement. In agricultural extension programs, the field officers' attitude toward farmers and program goals significantly influences the program's acceptance and success at the grassroots level (Dwiyanto, 2009).

Bureaucratic Structure and SOPs

The organizational structure through which a program is implemented can either support or hinder its execution. Bureaucracies that are overly rigid, hierarchical, or unclear in their delegation of authority can delay decisions and cause inefficiencies. On the other hand, flexible, responsive, and well-coordinated bureaucracies enable faster implementation and better adaptation to on-the-ground realities. Edward III highlights the importance of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and decentralized decision-making to ensure implementation is effective and responsive to challenges as they arise (Nugroho, 2014).

Thematic Agricultural Training Model

The concept of thematic training in agriculture focuses on teaching farmers based on the specific potentials and problems of their local areas. According to Rusdiana (2021), thematic training promotes sustainable agriculture by addressing practical needs through context-driven modules. The method emphasizes hands-on practice, local crop suitability, and environmentally friendly farming techniques. When combined with strong extension support, this approach empowers farmers with both knowledge and applicable skills, improving productivity and resilience.

Participatory Development Theory

Participatory development emphasizes involving beneficiaries directly in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of development programs. Saifuddin Anshari (1994) asserts that

programs that include farmers in decision-making processes tend to be more successful and sustainable. Participation builds trust, enhances relevance, and increases accountability. In agricultural settings, participatory models ensure that the solutions introduced are culturally appropriate, locally feasible, and more likely to be embraced by the community.

Agricultural Extension Theory

Agricultural extension is the application of scientific research and knowledge through farmer education and training. The goal is to improve agricultural productivity and livelihood outcomes. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), effective extension systems require trained personnel, continuous innovation, and strong farmer relationships. Extension theory highlights that programs should not only transfer knowledge but also facilitate empowerment, critical thinking, and innovation adoption at the grassroots level.

METHODS

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the implementation of the thematic agricultural program conducted by the Department of Food Crops, Horticulture, and Livestock in North Bengkulu Regency. The qualitative method was selected to enable a deep understanding of the phenomena based on social realities, perceptions, and experiences of individuals directly involved in the program.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The primary data were gathered from two categories of informants: key informants (government officials) and supporting informants (farmers). Key informants consisted of officials from the department who were responsible for designing and executing the program, including the Head of the Extension Division and field extension agents. Supporting informants were selected from local farmer groups that actively participated in the thematic programs between 2022 and 2024.A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify informants who had direct involvement and relevant knowledge. In total, six informants were interviewed: three from the department and three from farmer groups in Padang Jaya District, North Bengkulu.

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data reduction, information collected from interviews and observations was selected and organized according to research indicators. The data were then displayed in narrative form to identify patterns and themes. Conclusions were drawn based on the triangulation of sources and were verified through rechecking with informants for accuracy and consistency.This method enabled the researcher to critically evaluate the effectiveness of program implementation based on four theoretical variables: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure, as proposed by George C. Edward III.

RESULTS

The implementation of the thematic agricultural program in North Bengkulu Regency by the Department of Food Crops, Horticulture, and Livestock shows a complex interplay between policy directives and practical realities at the grassroots level. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, several major themes emerged from the field that reflect both progress and ongoing challenges.

Communication Effectiveness

One of the key components that supports the program's success is the communication strategy used by the implementing agency. Information is primarily conveyed through formal meetings, training sessions, printed leaflets, and interpersonal interactions between extension

agents and farmers. Most farmer groups in Padang Jaya reported receiving adequate information regarding the program's purpose and technical aspects. A farmer informant, Mr. Rahmat, explained: *We were informed about the chili planting program through a group meeting and leaflets. The extension officer also came several times to our area to explain how to apply fertilizer and control pests.* However, while communication from the department to field officers was relatively smooth, the same cannot always be said for communication between officers and all members of farmer groups. Some farmers indicated that training materials were too technical and difficult to understand. According to Mrs. Suryati, a local farmer leader: *Some of our members were confused about the training, especially the older ones. It would be better if they used more visuals or showed us in the field directly*.

Resource Availability

The availability of financial, material, and human resources significantly affected program implementation. While the program was supported by regional funding, several informants highlighted limitations in budget allocation, especially for purchasing seeds, organic fertilizer, and field equipment. Mr. Andi, a government extension officer, noted:*"We wanted to provide every group with enough seeds and tools, but due to budget constraints, we had to prioritize certain areas. It's not ideal, but we work with what we have."*Human resources were also a concern. Each extension officer was responsible for multiple farmer groups, making regular and intensive monitoring difficult. Observations revealed that most extension workers were managing more than five groups at once, which diluted the quality of support and reduced follow-up frequency.

Implementers' Disposition

Despite limited resources, the disposition of implementers—especially field extension agents—was generally positive. Many officers expressed strong commitment to helping farmers improve their productivity. Their dedication was often reflected in their willingness to visit remote locations, conduct home-based consultations, and respond to farmers' questions outside working hours. An extension officer, Mrs. Yuni, said:*"Even if it's raining or far away, I try to be there. If we don't show up, how will the farmers trust this program?"*That said, some challenges were found in motivational aspects, particularly when officers felt overwhelmed or underappreciated. Delayed honorarium payments and lack of recognition from upper management were cited as demotivating factors.

Bureaucratic Structure and Coordination

The bureaucratic structure supporting the program was formal and hierarchical, with clear lines of authority. However, coordination between divisions—such as between the training division and logistics division—was not always smooth. Several activities were delayed due to procedural bottlenecks or miscommunication. A staff member from the logistics team admitted: *"Sometimes the fertilizer arrives late because the approval takes too long or because the supplier delays it. We try to coordinate better, but the system is still very paper-based."*At the village level, the involvement of local leaders and farmer group heads played an important role in compensating for structural delays. Their role in mobilizing farmers, distributing materials, and coordinating with the department enhanced implementation efficiency.

Farmer Response and Behavioral Change

The response from farmers was generally positive, especially those involved in the chili and spinach planting themes. Many participants reported improvements in knowledge, farming techniques, and crop yields. Mrs. Salmah, a farmer who participated in the spinach program,

shared:"*Before this, we didn't know how to plant spinach properly. After the training, I learned about spacing, watering, and when to harvest. It really helped."*However, adoption rates varied depending on education level, prior experience, and access to land. Farmers with larger plots and higher literacy levels were more likely to apply the techniques taught. In contrast, farmers who were older or had smaller landholdings were less consistent in following the guidelines.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring activities were conducted periodically, though not as frequently as planned due to manpower limitations. Field observations showed that some evaluation reports lacked detailed data on individual farmer performance. Nevertheless, most informants agreed that the presence of demonstration plots helped visualize success and encouraged others to participate. The program coordinators acknowledged this gap, as stated by Mr. Dimas:"*We are aware that not every group receives the same level of attention. We're working on creating a better schedule and maybe assigning volunteers to help track progress."*

Innovation and Sustainability Potential

While the program was not free from challenges, its thematic focus allowed for contextual innovation. In several cases, farmer groups modified training content to suit their local conditions. For example, one group applied composting techniques learned during the program to other crops not originally covered in the curriculum.This reflects the program's potential for sustainability if adequately supported. However, continued success will depend on consistent funding, improved training delivery, and stronger monitoring mechanisms.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of the thematic agricultural program in North Bengkulu reflects both the potential and the limitations of decentralized policy execution in Indonesia's agricultural sector. The findings show that communication between the Department of Food Crops, Horticulture, and Livestock and the beneficiaries—namely, farmer groups—plays a critical role in shaping the overall success of the initiative. While formal communication tools such as leaflets, technical manuals, and scheduled training were used effectively to transmit policy intent, challenges emerged when communicating complex agricultural practices to older or less literate farmers. This indicates that, in line with Edward III's model, communication must be not only consistent but also context-sensitive to ensure successful implementation (Dwiyanto, 2009).

Resource availability emerged as a significant bottleneck. Both financial and human resources were insufficient to fully support all targeted farmer groups. Extension officers often had to cover multiple villages, leading to reduced interaction and less frequent follow-ups with each group. The findings are consistent with Syaukani et al. (2004), who emphasized that without adequate resources, no policy—regardless of how well formulated—can succeed. The shortage of materials such as seeds and organic fertilizer also delayed the practical phases of implementation, reducing the momentum and enthusiasm among some farmer groups. Nevertheless, the strong personal commitment of field officers partially compensated for resource gaps. Many extension workers demonstrated dedication that went beyond their formal responsibilities, making extra visits and providing personalized support. This level of disposition, as described by Edward III, plays a pivotal role in successful policy realization. However, this reliance on individual motivation is inherently fragile. Without structural support, fair incentives, and institutional recognition, even the most committed implementers may experience burnout or disengagement, threatening long-term sustainability.

The bureaucratic structure of the implementing institution was formally organized, yet some coordination gaps persisted between divisions such as logistics and training. Delays in distributing inputs, procedural inefficiencies, and a lack of real-time communication systems undermined timely action in the field.

One of the more promising aspects of the program was the use of demonstration plots (demplot) and thematic training modules. These tools proved effective in enabling farmers to visualize and practice new techniques in their own environments. As Rusdiana (2021) suggested, thematic models that integrate local potentials and real-life applications can significantly enhance learning retention and motivation. In some cases, farmers were observed applying the knowledge from the program to other crops or practices not originally covered, signaling a transfer of learning and early signs of behavioral change.

In conclusion, the thematic agricultural program in North Bengkulu demonstrates that localized government initiatives can lead to real improvements in farmer capacity and agricultural productivity when supported by effective communication, committed implementers, and relevant training tools. However, structural constraints, particularly in resource allocation and bureaucratic efficiency, continue to limit the program's scalability and depth. To move forward, future implementations must prioritize not just the content of the policy but also the system that carries it—from the mindset of its implementers to the design of its institutions and the voices of its intended beneficiaries.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the thematic agricultural program in North Bengkulu Regency demonstrates both the strengths and vulnerabilities of policy execution in a rural decentralized setting. Drawing from Edward III's four-variable framework, the study found that communication, resource availability, implementer disposition, and bureaucratic structure significantly influenced program outcomes. Communication was generally effective in reaching farmer groups through extension agents and print materials, but barriers still existed in translating technical content into accessible knowledge for all farmers, particularly those with lower literacy. Resources—both human and financial—were found to be unevenly distributed, creating disparities in implementation quality and limiting the reach of training and inputs.

Despite these limitations, the strong commitment of field officers emerged as a crucial success factor. Their proactive engagement, flexibility, and personal rapport with farmer groups contributed significantly to trust and participation. However, relying heavily on personal dedication without adequate institutional support presents a long-term risk. Bureaucratic inefficiencies, such as delays in logistics and siloed coordination, further hindered program delivery, although informal actors at the village level helped to bridge some of these gaps. The positive responses from farmer groups—particularly in adopting sustainable practices and diversifying crops—indicate that the program has the potential to effect meaningful change, provided its implementation is strengthened.

LIMITATION

This study, while offering valuable insights into the implementation of the thematic agricultural program in North Bengkulu, is not without limitations. First, the scope of data collection was geographically limited to selected sub-districts within North Bengkulu, particularly Padang Jaya. As such, the findings may not fully represent the diversity of implementation practices or challenges faced across other districts in the regency or in similar agricultural contexts elsewhere in Indonesia.

Second, the research relied heavily on qualitative methods, particularly in-depth interviews and field observations. While this approach provided rich and contextualized data, it also posed

challenges in terms of generalizability. The absence of quantitative measurements—such as yield improvements, income changes, or participation rates—limits the ability to statistically validate the program's outcomes across a wider population. Third, time constraints posed a limitation. Data collection was conducted over a relatively short period, which may not have captured the full seasonal cycle of agricultural implementation. Some planned activities, such as harvest evaluations or long-term farmer adoption assessments, fell outside the research timeline.

Fourth, there is a possibility of informant bias, particularly among government officials and farmer leaders who may have provided favorable responses to align with institutional expectations or maintain good relations with the implementing agency. Although triangulation was used to mitigate this, the potential for socially desirable responses cannot be fully eliminated. Lastly, the study did not extensively explore the gender dimension of program participation and benefit. Understanding how male and female farmers engage with and are impacted by the program could offer deeper insights into the program's inclusivity and long-term equity. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and conclusions of this research, and they present opportunities for future studies to build upon with broader coverage, mixed-methods approaches, and longitudinal designs.

REFERENCES

Dwiyanto, A. (Edwan III, Dwiyanto, (2009:31). *Reformasi Birokrasi Publik di Indonesia. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press.*

Kuncoro, 2012. *Analisis Jalur (Part Analisis).* Bandung. Hal. 170

Unived. (2024). *Buku Pedoman Penulis Skripsi Program Studi Administrasi Publik. Bengkulu.*

Van Den Ban, A. W., dan H. S. Hawkins, H. S. (1999:7). *Agricultural extension. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Science.*

Van den, A, W., & Hawkins, H. S*. (2000, hlm. 10). Agricultural Extensional. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Science*

Budhiharto, widodo. 2014. *Teori dan Implementasi. Edisi Revisi.* Yogyakarta: Penerbit Andi

Edwan III, George C. (1980). *Implementasi Publik Policy.* Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Makmur, Rohana Thahier, 2015. Inovasi & Kreativitas Manusia Dalam Administrasi Dan Manajemen. Bandung. Penerbit Refika Aditama.

Mondy, R. W. (2016). *Human Resource Management.* Pearson Education.

Sugiyono, (2017). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D.* Bandung: CV. Alfabeta.

Tachjan, H. (2014). *Teori dan Implementasi Kebijakan Publik. Bandung: Alfabeta.*

Usman, N. (2002), Konteks Implementasi Berbasis krikulum, Grasindo, Jakarta, 2002 hal 70

Wahab, Solichin Abdul. (2008). *Analisisi Kebijakan: Dari Implementasi Kebijakan Negara, Edisi Ketiga. Jakarta: Bumi Aksara.*

Winarno, B. (2012). *Kebijakan Publik: Teori, Proses, dan Studi Kasus.* Yogyakarta: CAPS.