

Challenges of Sustainable Livelihood among Small-scale Sago Farmers in Mukah District of Sarawak

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Abstract

Purpose: The paper aims to examine the strategies adopted by small-scale sago farmers to sustain their livelihoods despite changes in terms of cultivation, production and pricing of the sago crop. The paper also addresses the challenges encountered by small-scale sago farmers to sustain their livelihoods.

Design/methodology/approach: The paper employs a survey of 308 households of small-scale sago farmers. In-depth interviews are conducted with the village headmen and officers from the government agencies and sago mills.

Findings: The paper shows that majority of small-scale sago farmers are Melanaus, who owned less than five hectares of land planted with sago. In order to sustain their livelihoods, they diversify their income through non-sago agriculture activities such as becoming general labourers and joining the estate sago plantation through SSSD consolidated programme. The challenges in sustainable livelihoods among small-scale sago farmers include amalgamating traditional and modern methods in cultivating sago, lacking of interest among youth to be sago farmers, moving from planting sago to oil palm, sago mills fixing the price of sago and the need to establish the Sago Board.

Originality/value: The study highlights the strategies and challenges faced by small-scale sago farmers to maintain the sago crop as their means of livelihood. Moreover, the study is beneficial for policy makers to assess the success of small-scale sago farmers' participation in SSSD consolidated programme. It also identified the important to set up the Sago Board to oversee the development of sago industry in Sarawak.

Keywords: Sustainable livelihood, small-scale sago farmers, Melanaus, estate sago plantation