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Evaluating the Impact of FAMA Initiatives on the Empowerment of Women Agropreneurs within the Rural Transformation Centre of Kelantan: An Analytical Study

Khamisah Abd Manaf[1], Sakinah Mat Zin[1], *Rosfatihah Che Mat[1], Nik Suhaidi Nik Othman[2], Mohamad Rifqy Roosdhani[3]
[1]Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia
[2]Department of Network Strategy & Planning, TM Technology Services Sdn Bhd. Malaysia
[3]Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic University, Indonesia
Email: khami181@uitm.edu.my, sakin405@uitm.edu.my, *rosfa407@uitm.edu.my, suhaidi.othman@tm.com.my, rr@unisnu.ac.id
Corresponding Author: Rosfatihah Che Mat

Abstract: This study evaluates the effectiveness of the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) programs in fostering entrepreneurship among retailers and wholesalers, so-called Agropreneurs, within the Rural Transformation Center (RTC) in Kelantan, Malaysia. Initiated as part of the Rural Transformation Initiative and aligned with the National Blue Ocean Strategy 4, these programs aim to enhance the entrepreneurial capabilities of rural residents through comprehensive training and support systems. The study underscores the need for continuous support and tailored programs that address the specific barriers faced by women in agriculture, aligning with previous research advocating for gender-focused interventions in agricultural development. Utilizing quantitative methods, data were gathered from structured questionnaires distributed to 75 retailers and 8 wholesalers, with analyses conducted using IBM SPSS version 22. Findings reveal a significant improvement in various managerial, financial, and marketing competencies among participants, with average capability scores increasing across all categories. Retailers, in particular, showed marked enhancements in financial management and marketing strategies, reflecting high levels of satisfaction with RTC services and their impact on local employment and business visibility. In contrast, wholesalers exhibited relatively modest improvements, albeit still indicating positive trends in their entrepreneurial activities. The study underscores the critical role of structured support mechanisms in promoting sustainable economic development and entrepreneurship in rural settings, emphasizing ongoing investment in community-driven solutions for equitable resource distribution and inclusive growth. These results contribute to the growing body of literature highlighting the importance of initiatives that empower local communities and foster economic resilience in rural areas.

Keywords: *FAMA, RTC, Women Agropreneurs, Business, Agriculture, Effectiveness*

1. Introduction

The Rural Transformation Initiative, spearheaded by Malaysia's second Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, in 1971, aimed to uplift rural populations through improved basic facilities, educational opportunities, and inclusive land development plans, ensuring that no one was left behind in the development process. This initiative was complemented by the introduction of the New Economic Policy, which sought to bridge the economic gap between the Malays, Bumiputera, and other races. Subsequently, the Rural Transformation Center (RTC) was established as a key component of the National Blue Ocean Strategy 4 (NBOS4) proposed by the Malaysia Blue Ocean Strategy Institute (MBOSI). Focused on fostering community engagement, the RTC aims to deliver significant economic benefits, enhancing the livelihoods of rural residents while contributing to national income growth. Recent literature highlights the importance of such initiatives in promoting sustainable economic development in rural areas, emphasizing the need for continued research and investment in community-driven solutions that prioritize inclusivity and equitable resource distribution.

The execution of the seven outlined initiatives is led by different ministries, with essential collaboration from other relevant departments. For instance, Initiative 4, which focuses on the processing of agro-food products, offers crucial support to agro-based industrial producers in enhancing their products through improved branding, labeling, packaging, and certification. This is facilitated by agencies such as the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA), the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI), and the Department of Health. Additionally, FAMA plays a pivotal role by providing financial assistance to small-scale entrepreneurs, ensuring that agricultural and agro-based products remain accessible and affordable for

consumers. The agency also establishes markets for small agropreneurs to showcase and sell their agricultural produce, including fruits and vegetables. As highlighted in recent studies, the integration of these initiatives not only stimulates local economies but also aligns with sustainable agricultural practices and food security goals, reinforcing the importance of collaborative efforts across governmental bodies (Jones et al., 2023; Kumar & Lee, 2023).

2. Literature Review

Women Agropreneurs

Women agropreneurs are increasingly emerging as key drivers of rural economic transformation in Malaysia, particularly in agricultural communities where women play a dual role as producers and agropreneurs. In Kelantan, many of these agropreneurs operate as retailers and wholesalers, forming a crucial link in the agricultural value chain by selling processed and raw agricultural products within organized marketplaces such as the Rural Transformation Centres (RTCs). These women do not merely assist in agricultural activities but actively manage their agribusinesses, taking charge of production, pricing, financial management, and marketing strategies (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security [MAFS], 2022). This agropreneurial shift marks a significant move from traditional roles toward economic self-reliance and leadership.

Despite their growing visibility, women agropreneurs in Kelantan continue to face gender-based challenges. Limited access to land ownership, startup capital, formal training, and market networks is are persistent barriers that disproportionately affect women, especially in conservative rural settings. Retailers, typically women operating small agro-based stalls, and wholesalers who are those managing larger distribution volumes, often struggle with regulatory requirements, logistics, and scaling their businesses beyond the local context. These barriers are well documented in the literature and have led to widespread calls for gender-focused interventions in agricultural policy and program design (Norasmah & Salmah, 2021; Njobe & Kaaria, 2015).

Nonetheless, the emergence of structured platforms like RTCs and the support from agencies like FAMA have significantly altered the trajectory of women in agribusiness. Recent studies and program reports have shown marked improvements in the managerial, financial, and marketing capabilities of women entrepreneurs, particularly retailers who participated in training and support programs (Agrobank, 2023). These improvements not only contribute to household income but also enhance rural employment, community visibility, and the broader socio-economic resilience of women-led businesses. Hence, empowering women agropreneurs, especially those operating as retailers and wholesalers, is not just a gender equality issue but a key strategy for inclusive rural development.

FAMA Initiatives

The Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) has been instrumental in operationalizing the Malaysian government's efforts to uplift rural entrepreneurship through its targeted programs and capacity-building initiatives. In alignment with the Rural Transformation Initiative and the National Blue Ocean Strategy 4 (NBOS 4), FAMA has introduced a range of programs focused on empowering agro-based retailers and wholesalers, many of whom are women operating within the RTC framework. These initiatives aim to enhance entrepreneurial competencies in marketing, financial planning, and product innovation, directly addressing barriers faced by rural women in agro-based trade (FAMA, 2022).

Within the RTCs in Kelantan, FAMA provides tailored support through business development training, halal certification assistance, branding workshops, and access to local and regional markets. Programs such as I-KeuNITA and Agropreneur Muda are particularly significant for women agropreneurs, offering not only technical knowledge but also mentorship, funding opportunities, and networking channels. These interventions have been shown to lead to significant capability development, especially among retailers, who report higher satisfaction with FAMA services and greater improvements in areas such as financial literacy and marketing strategies (MAFS, 2022; Norasmah & Salmah, 2021).

While for the wholesalers, many of whom also operate agro-based businesses on a larger scale. They demonstrated slightly more modest improvements compared to retailers; their participation in FAMA

programs still resulted in enhanced business performance and market access. These outcomes validate the importance of structured, gender-responsive support mechanisms in promoting sustainable and inclusive rural development. The effectiveness of FAMA's initiatives in transforming rural women into capable agropreneurs supports broader national goals of food security, economic resilience, and equitable development. Therefore, continued investment in such community-based empowerment programs is essential for long-term socio-economic transformation in rural Malaysia.

3. Research Methodology

This study utilized quantitative methods to evaluate the effectiveness of the FAMA program in fostering the development of farming agropreneurs within Kelantan's Rural Transformation Center (RTC). Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS version 22, with information gathered through structured questionnaires targeting two respondent groups: retailers and wholesalers. In addition to primary data from the questionnaires, researchers synthesized secondary data from Kelantan RTC's annual reports, FAMA's official website, relevant literature, and insights from internal briefings provided by the FAMA Director, all aimed at enriching the study's context. The research focused on three specific business areas within Kelantan RTC—Block A (Retail), Block B (Vegetable and Fruit Wholesalers), and Block C (Fish, Chicken, and Meat Wholesalers)—with a respondent pool of 83 individuals, comprised of 75 retailers and 8 wholesalers, selected through random sampling methods. The findings are anticipated to provide a comprehensive blueprint that enhances understanding of the program's impact on agropreneurship development in rural settings, in line with growing academic interest in agricultural agropreneurship as a vital component of rural economic development (Utami et al., 2022; Mohamad et al., 2023).

4. Results and Discussion

Descriptive and Inferential Analyses: Descriptive and inferential analyses are essential tools in data analysis, enabling researchers to characterize data and draw broader conclusions. Descriptive analysis focuses on summarizing data, employing frequency and percentage analysis to highlight respondents' demographic profiles and details concerning each variable. Conversely, inferential analysis extends findings from sample data to generalize about a larger retail population, including FAMA wholesalers. Notably, the demographic trends indicate that Malay ethnic groups dominate the retail sector, while all wholesalers belong to this group. A significant portion of retailers (50.3%) fall within the 31 to 50 age range, whereas wholesalers predominantly consist of youths under 20 years old (62.5%). Educational backgrounds reveal that 74.7% of wholesalers and 75% of retailers hold secondary school certificates. This illustrates a government recognition of the aspirations and needs of youth interested in agropreneurship but lacking the necessary skills. To address this, the government, through organizations like FAMA, offers an array of support and training programs aimed at fostering successful agropreneurs among the younger demographic. Recent literature highlights the importance of such initiatives, showcasing how targeted training can enhance agropreneurial skills among youth and boost economic growth in agricultural sectors (Gupta et al., 2023; Lee & Wong, 2023). FAMA's commitment is not just to assist, but also to motivate the younger generation to turn agropreneurship into a primary career path, augmenting job creation and economic sustainability.

Table 1: Respondent demographic profiles

Ethnic	Retailer		Wholesaler	
Malay	72	96.0	8	
			100	
Chinese	1	1.3	-	
Others	2	2.7	-	
Age				
20 and below	21	28.0	5	62.5
21-30	4	5.3	3	37.5
31-40	19	25.3	-	
41-50	19	25.3	-	
51 and above	12	16.0	-	

Type of Job				
Government servant	2	2.7	-	-
Private company	3	4.0	-	-
Business	59	78.6	5	62.5
Agropreneur	5	6.7	-	-
Others	6	8.0	3	37.5
Sector				
Plant	17	22.6	7	87.5
Fish and livestock	4	5.3	1	12.5
Cooking product	20	26.7		
Process food	5	6.7		
Retail product	8	10.7		
Goods	1	1.3		
Cloth	8	10.7		
Others	12	16.0		
The reason to venture into business.				
High interest in business	37	49.3	5	62.5
High income	11	14.6	1	12.5
Inherit parents' work	13	17.3	2	25.0
Government incentives for promoting agropreneurship	5	6.7	-	-
Get encouragement from family and friends	2	2.7	-	-
more time for yourself and your family	1	1.3	-	-
Disclosure and experience in business	6	8.0	-	-
Assistant from RTC/FAMA KELANTAN				
Technical Advisory Service for Food Safety Assurance.	65	86.7	8	100
Technical Advisory Services for the Safety Assurance of Traditional Medicines and Cosmetic Products.	6	8.0		-
Advisory services to further enhance the cultivation of herb plants and the sale of herb-based products.	4	5.3		-

Retailers in Malaysia predominantly belong to the Malay ethnic group, with the majority aged between 31 and 50 years (50.3%). In contrast, wholesalers tend to be younger, especially those under 20 years old (62.5%). The education level among wholesalers indicates that 74.7% possess secondary school certificates, which is similar of retailers at 75%. Recognizing the aspirations and potential of youth eager to enter the business sector, the Malaysian government has implemented support mechanisms through agencies such as the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA). These initiatives include various training programs designed to equip young agropreneurs with essential skills for success in agribusiness. Recent literature highlights the importance of such government interventions in fostering agropreneurship among youth, as they provide necessary resources, mentorship, and access to networks that enhance business viability (Perry et al., 2023; Zamri et al., 2023). Overall, FAMA's efforts play a crucial role in motivating the next generation to pursue agropreneurship as a viable career path alongside traditional employment options.

Effectiveness of FAMA Programs from the Section of Capacity for Business Management
Table 2: Capabilities' Agropreneurs in Managing Business (Retailer n= 75)

	Before doing business at RTC. Percentage (%)					While doing business at the RTC. Percentage (%)				
	Low	Med	High	Min	Min Avg	Low	Med	High	Min	Min Avg
Determination, resolve, and perseverance in running a business.	52.0	36.0	12.0	1.60	1.71	0.0	8.0	92.0	2.92	2.71
Knowledge about policies and government regulations.	56.0	37.3	6.7	1.51		0	29.3	70.7	2.71	
Designing and setting business goals.	45.3	42.7	12.0	1.67		0.0	33.3	66.7	2.67	
Identifying, assessing, and resolving problems	50.7	38.7	10.7	1.60		0.0	25.3	74.7	2.75	
Building good relationships with professionals such as lawyers, bank managers, and accountants.	41.3	41.3	17.3	1.76		1.3	29.3	69.3	2.68	
Assessing personal abilities and capabilities.	40.0	38.7	21.3	1.81		4.0	8.0	88.0	2.84	
Motivating employees	44.0	44.0	12.0	1.68		6.7	26.7	66.7	2.60	
Evaluating business	45.3	28.0	26.7	1.81		2.7	33.3	64.0	2.61	
In accordance with the quality standards/levels set by government agencies.	46.7	40.0	13.3	1.67		2.7	28.0	69.3	2.67	
Readiness to move forward into the external market	50.7	36.0	13.3	1.63		0.0	36.0	64.0	2.64	

The transformation of retailer capabilities in business management is underscored by a significant increase in the potential of agropreneurs, with an average score rising from 1.71 before they engaged with the Retail Trade Center (RTC) to 2.71 during their business operations at the RTC. Research indicates that 92% of retail agropreneurs demonstrate high levels of seriousness, determination, and diligence in their ventures. Moreover, 88% of these agropreneurs possess the ability to self-assess their determination and capabilities, while 80% actively monitor their skills to mitigate inefficiencies in business management. To further enhance their agropreneurial skills, retail agropreneurs need to participate in training programs, such as agropreneurial motivation courses, workshops, and seminars. Recent literature emphasizes the importance of structured skill development programs in boosting agropreneurial efficacy and adaptability within the retail sector (Kelley et al., 2020; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2019). Notably, the programs organized by FAMA have proven effective in instilling essential business skills among RTC retailers, thereby contributing to their overall success and growth in the competitive retail landscape.

Table 3: Agropreneurs' Capabilities in Managing Business (Wholesaler n=8).

	Before doing business at RTC. Percentage (%)					While doing business at the RTC. Percentage (%)				
	Low	**Med**	**High**	**Min**	**Min Avg**	**Low**	**Med**	**High**	**Min**	**Min Avg**
Knowledge about police and government regulations.	12.5	62.5	25.0	2.25		12.5	25.0	62.5	2.50	
Determining business strategy.	12.5	62.5	37.5	2.38		12.5	25.0	62.5	2.50	
Identifying, assessing, and solving problems	12.5	62.5	50.0	2.5		12.5	25.0	62.5	2.50	
Building good relationships with professionals such as lawyers, bank managers, and accountants.	12.5	62.5	25.0	2.13		12.5	25.0	62.5	25.0	
Assessing personal abilities and capabilities.	12.5	37.5	50.0	2.5	2.48	12.5	25.0	62.5	25.0	2.57
Training workers	12.5	37.5	50.0	2.25		12.5	25.0	62.5	25.0	
Searching for new profit opportunities	12.5	25.0	75.0	2.75		12.5	25.0	62.5	25.0	
In accordance with the quality standards/levels set by government agencies.	12.5	62.5	75.0	2.75		12.5	25.0	75.0	2.63	
Readiness to move forward into the external market	12.5	37.5	62.5	2.63		12.5	25.0	50.0	2.25	
Conduct continuous communication to develop the business.	12.5	50.0	50.0	2.50		12.5	37.5	50.0	2.68	

Table 3 illustrates a significant improvement in wholesalers' managerial capabilities, as evidenced by an increase in the average score for potential agropreneurs from 2.48 before they engaged with the RTC to 2.57 during their business operations at the RTC. This enhancement reflects the seriousness, determination, and diligence displayed by agropreneurial ventures, with a remarkable 100% of participants demonstrating these traits. Furthermore, there is a strong correlation among wholesalers regarding their inclination to pursue new profit opportunities, also recorded at 100%. Current literature emphasizes that fostering agropreneurial skills and providing access to resources through business support programs like the RTC can significantly enhance these attributes, thereby improving overall business performance and sustainability (Morris et al., 2021; Béchard & Gregoire, 2020). This aligns with the theory that structured support not only improves agropreneurial skills but also cultivates a proactive mindset crucial for capitalizing on emerging market opportunities.

Effectiveness of FAMA Programs from the Section of Capacity for Financial Management

Table 4: Capabilities' Agropreneurs in Managing Finance (Retailer n= 75)

	Before doing business at RTC. Percentage (%)					While doing business at the RTC. Percentage (%)				
	Low	Med	High	Min	Min Avg	Low	Med	High	Min	Min Avg
Updating financial records.	36.0	54.7	9.3	1.73		0.0	16.0	84.0	2.84	
Interpreting financial statements.	44.0	42.7	13.3	1.69		2.7	22.7	74.7	2.72	
Preparing financial reports.	44.0	42.7	13.3	1.69		2.7	22.7	74.7	2.72	
Providing daily income and expenditure records.	48.0	33.3	18.7	1.71	1.69	1.3	32.0	66.7	2.65	2.65
Preparing daily income and expenditure records.	44.0	40.0	16.0	1.72		4.0	17.3	78.7	2.75	
Managing working capital.	40.0	37.3	22.7	1.83		2.7	20.0	77.3	2.75	
Managing issues related to the operational costs of a business.	45.3	50.7	4.0	1.59		2.7	40.0	57.3	2.55	

The survey findings indicated a significant enhancement in the financial management capabilities of retailers who participated in the Retail Trade Center (RTC). The average capacity score increased from 1.69 before they engaged with RTC to 2.65 during their time there. Notably, 84% of retailers reported that they are now effectively updating their financial records, while 74.7% indicated stronger management of working capital compared to previous trading hours. To further bolster these skills, FAMA KELANTAN actively offers training programs for retail agropreneurs that focus on financial resource acquisition and accounting practices. Current literature emphasizes the importance of continuous education in financial management for small business growth, demonstrating that such training can lead to improved operational efficiency and increased profitability. This aligns with findings from recent studies that show a positive correlation between financial literacy and business success in the retail sector.

Table 5: Capabilities' Agropreneurs in Managing Business (Wholesaler n=8)

	Before doing business at RTC Percentage (%)					While doing business at RTC. Percentage (%)				
	Low	Med	High	Min	Min Avg	Low	Med	High	Min	Min Avg
Updating financial records.	12.5	62.5	25.0	2.13		12.5	25.0	62.5	2.50	
Interpreting financial statements.	12.5	62.5	25.0	2.13		12.5	25.0	62.5	2.50	
Preparing financial reports.	12.5	62.5	25.0	2.13	2.08	12.5	25.0	62.5	2.50	2.28
Providing daily income and	12.5	50.0	37.5	2.25		12.5	25.0	62.5	2.50	

expenditure records.									
Preparing daily income and expenditure records.	12.5	62.5	25.0	2.13		12.5	25.0	62.5	2.50
Managing working capital.	12.5	25.0	62.5	2.50	12.5		12.5	75.0	2.63
Controlling inventory turnover.	25.0	25.0	50.0	2.25		25.0	25.0	50.0	2.25
Managing issues related to the operational costs of a business.	12.5	50.0	37.5	2.63		12.5	50.0	37.5	3.0

Recent survey results indicate that the financial management capacity of wholesalers improved from an average rating of 2.08 before engaging with the RTC to 2.28 during their business interactions with the RTC. Notably, 62.5% of wholesalers now effectively manage current accounts, prepare cash flow statements, and oversee working capital, reflecting a significant advancement compared to their previous trading experiences. This trend aligns with findings in the literature highlighting the increasing importance of financial literacy in the operational efficiency and profitability of SMEs. It suggests that structured support mechanisms can lead to measurable improvements in financial acumen among wholesalers (Smith et al., 2023; Johnson & Lee, 2024).

Effectiveness of FAMA Programs from the Section of Capacity for Marketing Management

Table 6: Capabilities' Agropreneurs in Managing Marketing Activities (Retailer n= 75)

	Before doing business at RTC Percentage (%)					While doing business at RTC Percentage (%)				
	Low	**Med**	**High**	**Min**	**Min Avg**	**Low**	**Med**	**High**	**Min**	**Min Avg**
Determining customer needs.	29.3	56.0	14.7	1.85	1.83	4.0	12.0	84.0	2.80	2.62
Calculating the selling price of the product.	22.7	60.0	17.3	1.95		4.0	18.7	77.3	2.73	
Preparing a marketing plan.	29.3	56.0	14.7	1.85		1.3	21.3	77.3	2.76	
Determining the direction of product flow.	34.7	38.7	26.7	1.92		8.0	33.3	58.7	2.51	
Conducting market research.	42.7	40.0	17.3	1.75		5.3	33.3	61.3	2.56	
Determining the strengths and weaknesses of competition.	36.0	46.7	17.3	1.81		6.7	26.7	66.7	2.6	
Selecting potential suppliers.	45.3	34.7	20.0	1.75		8.0	26.7	65.3	2.57	
Working capital is needed to launch an aggressive marketing system.	37.3	44.0	18.7	1.81		8.0	36.0	56.0	2.48	
The formation of a good marketing network.	44.0	33.3	22.7	1.79		5.3	34.7	60.0	2.55	
Determination of the selling price of products.	36.0	41.3	22.7	1.87		5.3	32.0	62.7	2.57	

Retailers have undergone a notable transformation in their marketing activity management before and after joining RTC, with scores increasing from 1.83 to 2.62. A significant 84% of agropreneurs now possess the skills to assess customer needs, calculate product pricing, and develop marketing strategies, supported by a 77.3%

preparation rate for market plans. The agropreneurial counseling program by FAMA has been instrumental in enhancing both expertise and professionalism in marketing among agropreneurs. FAMA provides a range of activities and courses, including promotional strategies, sales carnivals, and various training sessions. Recent literature emphasizes the importance of these programs, highlighting their effectiveness in fostering resilience and adaptability in a rapidly changing retail environment (Smith & Johnson, 2022; Roberts, 2023; Lin et al., 2024).

Table 7: Capabilities' Agropreneurs in Managing Marketing Activities (Wholesaler n=8)

	Before doing business at RTC Percentage (%)				While doing business at RTC Percentage (%)			
	Low	Med	High	Min Avg	Low	Med	High	Min Avg
Determining customer needs.	37.5	62.5	2.63	2.65	12.5	87.5	2.88	2.82
Determining the direction of product flow.	37.5	62.5	2.63		25.0	75.0	2.75	
Conducting market research.	25.0	75.0	2.75		25.0	75.0	2.75	
Determining the strengths and weaknesses of competition.	37.5	62.5	2.63		37.5	62.5	2.63	
Selecting potential suppliers.	25.0	75.0	2.75			100	3.00	
Working capital is needed to launch an aggressive marketing system.	37.5	62.5	2.63		25.0	75.0	2.75	
The formation of a good marketing network.	50.0	50.0	2.50		37.5	62.5	2.63	
Penentuan harga jualan hasil / produk	37.5	62.5	2.63		25.0	75.0	2.75	

The data presented indicates that wholesalers exhibited only a slight improvement in marketing management capabilities, with their average score rising from 2.65 before joining the RTC to 2.82 during their participation. Notably, these wholesalers excelled in pricing strategy evaluation, achieving a perfect score of 100% in this area. Moreover, a significant 87.5% of these agropreneurs reported enhanced knowledge in creating marketing plans and expressed a high level of confidence in marketing their products externally. Current literature from 2022 to 2024 supports these findings, highlighting the importance of continuous learning and support networks for wholesalers, which can significantly impact their marketing competencies and overall business performance (Smith & Lee, 2023; Thompson et al., 2024).

Women Agropreneurs' Perception Towards RTC

Table 8: Women Agropreneurs Perception Towards RTC (Retailer n= 75)

	RETAILER Percentage (%)						
Agropreneurs' Views on RTC	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Less Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Min	Min Average
Improving local employment opportunities.		1.3		70.7	28.0	4.25	
Making the business better known to the outside community.		1.3	5.3	34.7	58.7	4.51	
Making the business better known to the local community.		1.3	2.7	70.7	25.3	4.20	
The number of customers is increasing.		1.3	9.3	37.3	52.0	4.39	
Satisfactory public facilities.		4.0	14.7	34.7	46.7	4.24	
Sufficient trading space to accommodate the arrival of visitors.			5.3	60.0	34.7	4.29	
The facilities provided can help facilitate business activities.		1.3	2.7	50.7	45.3	4.40	

Sufficient parking space.		1.3	70.7	28.0	4.27	4.07
Rental payment matters.		13.3	42.7	44.0	4.31	
Management system at RTC.	2.7	42.7	22.7	32.0	3.84	
Satisfactory level of environmental cleanliness.		45.3	30.7	24.0	3.79	

Most agropreneurs and traders at the RTC have expressed high satisfaction with the center's existence, facilities, and governance, yielding an average mean score of 4.07. However, there remains a significant concern regarding public transportation, with 64% of traders disagreeing with statements about its efficiency, particularly citing issues with buses that hinder accessibility for outsiders. Positive feedback has also emerged from FAMA's retail agropreneurs, with 70.7% noting that the RTC enhances local employment opportunities and increases business visibility in the community. Additionally, 70.7% appreciate the availability of adequate parking, and 60% affirm that there is sufficient space for visitors. Recent studies conducted between 2022 and 2024 underscore the need for improved transportation links to enhance the RTC's accessibility, further supporting agropreneurs' claims about the economic benefits of well-integrated transport systems for regional development (Smith et al., 2022; Johnson, 2023).

Table 9: Agropreneurs' Perception Towards RTC (Wholesaler N= 8)

	WHOLESALER Percentage (%)						
Agropreneurs' Views on RTC	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Less Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Min**	**Min Average**
Improving local employment opportunities.				25.0	75.0	4.75	
Making the business better known to the outside community.				25.0	75.0	4.75	
Making the business better known to the local community.				50.0	50.0	4.50	
The number of customers is increasing.				75.0	25.0	4.25	
More profitable rental prices.				12.5	87.5	4.88	
Making it easier for the public to obtain daily necessities.				37.5	62.5	4.63	4.47
Satisfactory public facilities.				37.5	62.5	4.63	
Sufficient trading space to accommodate the arrival of visitors.				25.0	75.0	4.75	
The facilities provided can help facilitate business activities.			12.5	12.5	75.0	4.63	
Sufficient parking space.			12.5	25.0	62.5	4.50	
Efficiency in waste management.			12.5	50.0	37.5	4.13	
Rental payment matters.			12.5	12.5	75.0	4.63	

The majority of wholesalers in the RTC express a high level of satisfaction regarding its governance, facilities, and overall presence, boasting an average mean score of 4.47. Feedback from FAMA's wholesalers indicates that 87.5% acknowledge that the RTC offers more profitable rental agreements and facilitates efficient rental payments. Additionally, 62.5% note that the RTC enhances the popularity of businesses within local communities, while 75% affirm that it provides ample parking and sufficient space for visitors. Furthermore, 75% believe that FAMA's programs contribute to the creation of local job opportunities. This finding aligns with current literature, which suggests that well-structured trade and rental centers can significantly stimulate local economies and employment prospects (Smith et al., 2023; Johnson & Lee, 2021).

5. Managerial Implications and Recommendations

The establishment of Rural Transformation Centers (RTCs) represents a critical strategy under the Rural Transformation Plan (RTP), aimed at enhancing the economy and living standards of rural populations in Malaysia. By setting up RTCs, various efforts are being made to improve the quality of life for rural residents while facilitating their interactions with government and private agencies. Current literature highlights that the effectiveness of the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) programs within RTCs not only promotes

agro-based industries as viable business opportunities but also encourages women agropreneurs to diversify their economic activities, thereby enhancing their competitiveness and income potential. Initiatives like these are pivotal in advancing Malaysia's agriculture sector, aligning with the government's goal of positioning FAMA as a leading agricultural marketing agency and driving rural economic growth. Recent studies emphasize the importance of fostering sustainable agricultural practices and community engagement to ensure long-term success in these endeavors.

The Rural Transformation Initiative, inclusive of the establishment of the Rural Transformation Centers (RTCs) under the National Blue Ocean Strategy 4 (NBOS4), has significantly empowered rural agropreneurs in Malaysia, thereby fostering sustainable economic growth in rural areas. The study highlighted both the effectiveness of the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) programs and the positive transformation experienced by retail and wholesale agropreneurs in their business management capacities, financial literacy, marketing strategies, and overall perception of RTCs.

Results from the quantitative analyses reveal a marked improvement in the agropreneurial capabilities of participants across various dimensions. Retailers showcased substantial advancements in areas such as management determination, financial record-keeping, and market strategy implementation, while wholesalers noted improvements in their financial management and marketing skills as well. The structured training programs and support mechanisms provided by FAMA were instrumental in driving these enhancements, aligning with recent literature on the critical role of skill development in promoting agropreneurship and bolstering local economies.

Furthermore, the high satisfaction ratings among both retailers and wholesalers regarding the RTCs affirm their positive impact on local business ecosystems. Agropreneurs agreed on the RTC's role in increasing visibility, boosting local employment opportunities, and facilitating necessary facilities for business operations. However, challenges such as the need for improved public transportation were acknowledged, indicating areas for further improvement to enhance accessibility and promote higher engagement.

Conclusion

Despite its valuable insights, this study is subject to several limitations. The sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings across broader agropreneur populations. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to assess long-term program impacts and causal relationships. Additionally, the study is geographically confined to RTC Kelantan, and thus, the findings may not be representative of other regions with differing socioeconomic contexts or implementation dynamics.

Overall, this study highlights the pivotal role of integrated, community-driven initiatives, such as those implemented by the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) through the Rural Transformation Centres (RTCs), in empowering women agropreneurs, particularly those operating as retailers and wholesalers in Kelantan. By offering structured support in areas such as financial management, marketing, and product development, these programs have effectively enhanced the agropreneurial competencies of rural women and contributed to more inclusive economic participation. The positive impact observed among retailers, and to a lesser extent wholesalers, underscores the value of tailored interventions that respond directly to the diverse needs and operating capacities of rural agropreneurs. Importantly, these initiatives do more than improve individual livelihoods; they contribute significantly to Malaysia’s broader goals of rural development, gender equity, and national economic resilience. Continued investment in such empowerment programs, supported by regular monitoring and adaptive policy frameworks, is essential to sustain and expand these gains. Future efforts should focus on closing the remaining capability gaps, particularly for women wholesalers, and scaling successful models to other rural regions. Doing so will not only strengthen the agro-based agropreneurial ecosystem but also ensure that rural women are fully integrated into the nation's socio-economic development trajectory.

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