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# The Shackles of Rice Farmers' Dependence On The Deadline For The Study Of Islamic Business Ethics Perspectives

## Iazuli\*

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia e-mail: anjazboys@gmail.com

## Ahmad Djalaluddin

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia e-mail: <a href="mailto:djalaluddin@akuntansi.uin-malang.ac.id">djalaluddin@akuntansi.uin-malang.ac.id</a>

## Ari Kamayanti

Politeknik Malang, Indonesia e-mail: <a href="mailto:kamayanti.ari@gmail.com">kamayanti.ari@gmail.com</a>

#### Abstract

This study examines the role of middlemen in the distribution of agricultural products in Curahdami Village, Bondowoso Regency, and explores the application of Islamic business ethics in their practices. The findings of the study suggest that middlemen play an important role in facilitating market access for farmers, although their business practices are often characterized by price injustice and manipulation of product quality. This study uses a qualitative approach, by recommending several measures to improve justice and sustainability in the practice of squatting, including ethical education for farmers and middlemen, the establishment of agrarian cooperatives to strengthen farmers' bargaining power, local regulations to prevent exploitative practices, and the strengthening of social capital through community forums. These measures are expected to create a fairer distribution system and improve the welfare of farmers in the long run.

Keywords: Rice Farmers; Islamic; Business Ethics

#### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji peran tengkulak dalam distribusi hasil pertanian di Desa Curahdami, Kabupaten Bondowoso, dan mengeksplorasi penerapan etika bisnis Islam dalam praktiknya. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tengkulak memainkan peran penting dalam memfasilitasi akses pasar bagi petani, meskipun praktik bisnis mereka sering ditandai dengan ketidakadilan harga dan manipulasi kualitas produk. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan merekomendasikan beberapa langkah untuk meningkatkan keadilan dan keberlanjutan dalam praktik jongkok, antara lain pendidikan etika bagi petani dan tengkulak, pendirian koperasi agraria untuk memperkuat daya tawar petani, peraturan daerah untuk mencegah praktik eksploitatif, dan penguatan modal sosial melalui forum masyarakat. Langkah-langkah ini diharapkan dapat menciptakan sistem distribusi yang lebih adil dan meningkatkan kesejahteraan petani dalam jangka panjang.

#### Kata Kunci: Petani Padi, Etika; bisnis Islam

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Agriculture is the activity of utilizing biological resources carried out by humans to produce food, industrial raw materials, or energy sources, as well as to manage their environment.<sup>1</sup> Activities that utilize biological resources included in agriculture are usually understood by people as crop cultivation and raising, although the scope can also be in the form of the use of microorganisms and bio enzymes in the processing of advanced products, such as the production

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Dwi Sadono, "Pemberdayaan Petani: Paradigma Baru Penyuluhan Pertanian Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Penyuluhan* 4, no. 1 (2008), https://doi.org/10.25015/penyuluhan.v4i1.2170; D Lesmana, "Transformasi Sistem Penyuluhan Pertanian Era Digital," ... Pertanian Dan Peternakan Berkelanjutan, 2023.

<sup>\*</sup>Corresponding author

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of cheese and tempeh, or simply extraction, such as fishing or forest exploitation.<sup>2</sup> The agricultural sector is a sector that has a strategic role in the structure of national economic development.<sup>3</sup> Indonesia is known as an agrarian country, where most of its people depend on the agricultural sector, both as a source of livelihood and as the main pillar in supporting development.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the development of the agricultural sector is the main factor in economic development and the rate of economic growth. In this case, the agricultural sector is still one of the key sectors that is expected to be able to meet the consumption needs of the community which tends to increase. Hal ini ditunjukkan dari banyaknya penduduk atau tenaga kerja yang hidup atau bekerja in the agricultural sector and national products derived from agriculture which play an important role in the overall national economy.

In Indonesia, the agricultural sector is divided into five subsectors, namely the agri-food subsector, the plantation subsector, the forestry subsector, the livestock subsector, and the fisheries subsector.<sup>5</sup> To meet needs, crops are usually one of the materials that can be traded. In conducting a trading business, there are ethics that must be followed by all elements who carry out the buying and selling process, such as middlemen, farmers, and buyers. In this regard, Islam has rules of the game that explain various ethics that must be implied by traders in carrying out buying and selling transactions. It is hoped that traders and buyers will comply with the Islamic trade ethics. Food is an essential need, where every country spends a huge amount of money to stabilize food prices. The process of economic growth requires the necessary conditions to solve the problem of food security first. Considerable dependence on food from outside will weaken national resilience, resulting in social and economic instability. Efforts to increase food security in the future, both at the national and household levels, must be the main concern in agricultural development. This can be done by prioritizing production achievements to meet national needs as a strategic goal to avoid the influence of world food price instability. The development of rice commodities as one of the priorities in achieving the development goals of the agricultural sector is also encouraged by the Bondowoso government. In terms of agroclimate, Bondowoso is suitable and able to produce rice.

Bondowoso is an agricultural area so that the agricultural business field still plays an important role in the economy in this district. The majority of the population has a livelihood in agriculture, namely as farmers and farm laborers. Therefore, development in the agricultural sector is one of the development priorities in Bondowoso. The development of agricultural

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Alviano Ottohan Octavianus Rumimpunu, "KAJIAN HUKUM KONSERVASI SUMBER DAYA ALAM HAYATI DAN EKOSISTEMNYA DI INDONESIA," *LEX ET SOCIETATIS* 8, no. 4 (2020), https://doi.org/10.35796/les.v8i4.30905.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Pemerintah RI, "Undang-Undang Nomor 5 Tahun 1990 Tentang Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam Hayati Dan Ekosistemnya," *UNDANG-UNDANG Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam Hayati Dan Ekosistemnya*, 1990.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Amam Amam and Supardi Rusdiana, "PERTANIAN INDONESIA DALAM MENGHADAPI PERSAINGAN PASAR BEBAS," *Jurnal Agriovet* 4, no. 1 (2021), https://doi.org/10.51158/agriovet.v4i1.506.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ega Rusanti, A. Syathir Sofyan, and Syarifuddin, "Implementasi Konsep Ekonomi Islam Pada Sektor Pertanian Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Dan Tantangan Pembiayaan Di Perbankan Syariah," *Jurnal Ilmu Perbankan Dan Keuangan Syariah* 5, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.24239/jipsya.v5i1.188.29-51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Desi Novita et al., "POTENSI DAN PENGEMBANGAN KOMODITAS UNGGULAN SEKTOR PERTANIAN DI PROVINSI SUMATERA UTARA," *JURNAL AGRICA* 16, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.31289/agrica.v16i1.8434.

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businesses is expected to generate optimal income so that it can improve the welfare of the people. The food commodity with the largest harvest and production area in Bondowoso is the rice crop commodity. Rice is a commodity that is cultivated to meet food needs. Until now, rice is still the highest food commodity in Bondowoso. Rice is processed by producers to become rice which is then consumed as a staple food for the community.

Bondowoso is one of the regions in Indonesia where the community is dominated by farmers. Therefore, people from traditional times to modern times today still rely on middlemen. For the farming community, middlemen are the only support for their lives. With the presence of middlemen, they can quickly sell agricultural products, even if they are valued for small wages. Farmers as one of the livelihoods are increasingly unpopular, especially by the younger generation. Farmers in the context of social, economic, and political associations have always been a marginalized group and are often used for certain interests. In fact, as an agrarian country, Indonesia has abundant potential so that the development of the agricultural sector should be able to further improve the welfare of farmers and the role of farmers in various areas of their lives, be it the development of a quality of life that is physical-material and mental-spiritual. However, there are still many problems faced by these farmers. These various problems include aspects of production prices that often fluctuate, marketing aspects, and capital. The problem of commodity prices of agricultural products, which are often unstable, is certainly very detrimental to farmers because the prices of production materials such as fertilizers and medicines tend to increase.

Indonesia's agricultural land area is 10.61 million hectares with a production of around 55.67 million tons of GKG. If converted into rice, rice production in 2022 is estimated at 32.07 million tons. Meanwhile, the rice harvest area in 2022 is estimated at 10.61 million hectares, an increase of 194.71 thousand hectares or 1.87 percent compared to the rice harvest area in 2021 which was 10.41 million hectares. Rice production in 2022 is estimated at 55.67 million tons of GKG, an increase of 1.25 million tons of GKG or 2.31 percent compared to rice production in 2021 which is around 54.42 million tons of GKG. Rice production in 2022 for population food consumption is estimated at around 32.07 million tons, an increase of 718.03 thousand tons or 2.29 percent compared to rice production in 2021 which was 31.36 million tons.<sup>8</sup> Rice farmers in the context of socio-economic associations have always been a marginalized group and are often used for certain interests. In fact, as an agrarian country, Indonesia has abundant potential so that the development of the agricultural sector should be able to further improve the welfare of farmers and their role in various areas of life, be it the development of a quality of life that is physical-material or mental-spiritual. However, there are many problems that farmers must face outside their control for the benefit of certain groups.

Some of the reasons why rice farmers sell their crops to middlemen is that rice farmers easily hand over their crops because middlemen are able to transport and take care of harvesting

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Markus Patiung, "PENYUSUNAN NILAI TUKAR PETANI KABUPATEN BONDOWOSO TAHUN 2017," *Jurnal Ilmiah Sosio Agribis* 17, no. 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.30742/jisa.v17i2.383.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Kementerian Pertanian, "Statistik Lahan Pertanian Tahun 2015-2019," *Statistik Lahan Pertanian Tahun 2015-2019*, 2020.

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and transportation themselves without causing trouble for rice farmers. In addition, rice farmers do not need to spend money for this. The middleman also has some labor in terms of harvesting. Usually farmers do not need to harvest or even grind or dry the crops; The middleman will harvest the agricultural products and transport them immediately. In addition, middlemen are able to buy crops in large quantities. This causes rice farmers' dependence on middlemen to still survive. With the various problems that have been mentioned above, the author is very interested in conducting research on the Shackles of Dependence of Rice Farmers on the Study of Islamic Business Ethics Perspective.

#### RESEARCH METHOD

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach. It aims to produce descriptive data in the form of written and oral words from informants, as well as observed behaviors. Qualitative research was chosen because it is able to interpret phenomena based on natural backgrounds involving various methods. The type of research used is phenomenology, as Husserl explains, that phenomenology studies the subjective experiences of individuals and their awareness of a phenomenon. In this study, an Islamic phenomenological approach is applied to understand and analyze patron-client relationships in the relationship between middlemen and rice farmers, especially in the perspective of Islamic business ethics to free farmers from the shackles of middlemen. The presence of the researcher in this study is as the main instrument that acts as an observer and an active actor in collecting data through interviews, observations, and documentation. The research location is centered in Curahdami District, Bondowoso Regency, with the research object of rice farmers and middlemen. The researcher approached the informant to obtain primary data, namely direct data from rice farmers, middlemen, farmer groups, and other related parties. Secondary data, such as references from journals, books, and official documents, are used to complete the findings.

In data collection, three main methods were used: observation, interviews, and documentation.<sup>11</sup> Observations are actively carried out in the field, where researchers not only observe but also interact with farmers and middlemen to understand their relationship patterns in depth. Observations are made by recording the interactions that occur, especially regarding transactions, revenue sharing, and capital management. Interviews were conducted in depth with key informants such as farmers, middlemen, and farmer group leaders. This interview aims to explore information about the profit-sharing system, the application of capital, and the dependence of farmers on middlemen. Documentation complements the data by collecting written or visual evidence, such as field records, statistical data, or official reports related to rice

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> J Lexy Moleong, "Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif J Lexy Moleong," *Jurnal Ilmiah*, 2020; Lexy J. Meleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Sugiyono, "Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif," Bandung: Alfabeta, 2016; Ahmad Rijali, "ANALISIS DATA KUALITATIF," Alhadharah: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah 17, no. 33 (2019), https://doi.org/10.18592/alhadharah.v17i33.2374.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R & D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2011); Prof.Dr.Sugiyono, "Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif. In Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif," *Rake Sarasin*, 2020.

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farmer productivity. The data analysis technique follows the Miles and Huberman method, which involves three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and verification. Data reduction is carried out by summarizing and selecting the main points that are relevant to the focus of the research. In the context of Islamic business ethics, data analysis is focused on how values such as fairness, balance, and responsibility are applied in patron-client relationships. The principles of Islamic ethics provide guidelines for economic activities aimed at creating a balance between economic interests and moral values. In this study, it was found that rice farmers' dependence on middlemen often violates these principles, especially in terms of price injustice and exploitation. The validity of the data in this study is guaranteed through triangulation techniques, discussions with peers, and checking references. Triangulation is performed by comparing data from different sources and methods to ensure accuracy. Discussions with peers help review and confirm the interpretation of the data. Meanwhile, references from the scientific literature are used to strengthen arguments and findings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### The Working Mechanism of the Middleman and the Role of the Economy

Curahdami Village in Bondowoso Regency, East Java, is an agricultural area with the majority of its population dependent on the agricultural sector, especially rice. Its location is in a mountainous area with a variety of elevation and rainfall that supports agricultural production. In addition to geographical conditions, the socio-culture in this village also reflects a unique diversity, especially in the pattern of cooperation between farmers, middlemen, and rice mills. The existence of middlemen in Curahdami makes a significant contribution to the sustainability of the supply chain of agricultural products. However, this distribution pattern is not completely free from challenges. Based on Kotler's theory of economic distribution, the role of intermediaries such as middlemen can speed up market processes by connecting producers directly to the broader market. However, this efficiency can only be achieved if the principle of fairness in distribution is applied

The working mechanism of middlemen in Curahdami Village illustrates a simple but significant distribution structure in the village economy. The middleman starts the transaction by giving a down payment (panjer) to the farmer as a sign of commitment to buy the crop. This process involves negotiating prices that are heavily influenced by market fluctuations in large warehouses. Farizi, one of the speakers, explained that full payment is usually made the day before harvest (D-1). This mechanism provides certainty for farmers who need quick funds for operational and household needs. However, behind these efficiencies, there are ethical and structural challenges. As expressed by the theory of economic distribution, fairness in distribution

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Yoki Yusanto, "Ragam Pendekatan Penelitian Kualitatif," *JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION (JSC)* 1, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.31506/jsc.v1i1.7764.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Philip Kotler, "Philip Kotler: Some of My Adventures in Marketing," *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 9, no. 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1108/JHRM-11-2016-0027.

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plays an important role in maintaining a balance between the profits of producers and intermediaries.<sup>14</sup>

Honest middlemen, such as Farizi and Sopian, understand the importance of maintaining transparency in transactions. They ensure that the prices offered follow the quality of the crops and the market prices in large warehouses. However, there are also middlemen who take greater advantage of manipulative means, such as reducing the weight of the scales or claiming that the quality of the rice is lower than it actually is. In addition, there is a dynamic between the choice of large and small warehouses. Large warehouses offer higher prices but require additional transportation costs, while small warehouses are more practical despite lower prices. The decision of the middleman in choosing a warehouse depends on the analysis of the net profit, taking into account the distance and volume of the harvest. From a microeconomic perspective, this choice reflects how variable costs such as transportation can affect overall profits in a simple distribution model.

## Application of Islamic Business Ethics in Tengkulakan Practice

Season is an important variable in determining the work pattern of middlemen in Curahdami Village. In the dry season, cooperation between farmers and ranchers creates a mutually beneficial relationship. Farmers use straw as animal feed, which indirectly reduces the need for harvest labor. The middlemen benefit because labor costs are reduced, while farmers get added value from straw that is usually wasted. However, the rainy season brings significant challenges. The high moisture content in rice causes a decrease in the quality of crops, which leads to a plummeting price in the market. Farizi explained that this condition forces middlemen to bear additional drying costs to maintain the quality of rice before selling it to the warehouse. In this context, agrarian risk theory is relevant to explain how weather change creates uncertainty in agricultural incomes and business squats. In addition to operational challenges, the seasons also affect the social relationship between farmers and middlemen. In the rainy season, farmers' trust in middlemen can be disrupted if middlemen are considered unfair in setting prices. For example, wet rice is often priced much lower, even though middlemen can still sell it to warehouses at a higher price. This kind of injustice creates social friction that has the potential to damage long-term relationships between the two parties.

The mitigation strategy carried out by middlemen such as Farizi, one of the residents of the bulk dame, involves intensive communication with farmers to explain price fluctuations and factors that affect purchasing decisions. This step reflects the importance of a trust-based approach in maintaining sustainable business relationships. Islamic business ethics provides a relevant value framework for analyzing the practice of squatting in Curahdami Village. The main values such as honesty (al-sidq), justice (al-adl), and avoidance of usury (gharar) are moral

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong, *Kotler & Armstrong, Principles of Marketing | Pearson, Pearson,* 2018.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Paul V. Preckel, "Hazell, Peter B. R., and Roger D. Norton. Mathematical Programming for Economic Analysis in Agriculture . New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1986, Xiv ... 400 Pp., \$@@-@@42.50 ," American Journal of Agricultural Economics 69, no. 3 (1987), https://doi.org/10.2307/1241712.

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guidelines for middlemen who seek to maintain blessings in their business.<sup>16</sup> In general, Curahdame residents gave an example of how honesty is applied in every transaction, especially in terms of weighing rice. He believes that fraud in scales or price manipulation not only harms farmers but also reduces business blessings.

This approach is in line with Islamic business ethics theory, which emphasizes that economic benefits must always be balanced with moral and social responsibility.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the principle of friendship is an important element in maintaining good relations between middlemen and farmers. According to Granovetter, strong social relationships create social capital that can improve business efficiency and sustainability. Farizi and Sopian practice this principle by actively listening to farmers' complaints, providing moral support, and ensuring that their relationship is not only transactional but also respectful.<sup>18</sup> However, the application of this ethics is not universal. Some middlemen in Curahdami are still trapped in manipulative practices, such as reducing the quality of rice to increase profit margins. This kind of practice is contrary to the principle of prohibition of fraud (al-ghish) in Islam and creates distrust among farmers.

## Socio-Economic Impact and Hunger Challenge

The practice of squatting in Curahdami Village has a complex impact on the local economy and community social relations. From a positive standpoint, middlemen make it easier for farmers to access markets, provide quick funding through down payments, and help overcome logistical challenges. However, the negative impact is also significant, especially in the form of price injustice and manipulation of crop quality. The main challenges faced by middlemen include price fluctuations, weather uncertainty, and high transportation costs. In the perspective of dependency theory, this challenge reflects the position of middlemen as a liaison in an economic system dominated by large market actors, such as warehouses and rice mills. Naoval as part of the resource person revealed that one way to overcome this challenge is to increase transparency and communication with farmers. He also emphasized the importance of experience in understanding market price patterns and mitigating the risk of losses. This experiential strategy is relevant to the concept of organizational learning where individuals and groups learn from past experiences to improve future performance. The results of this study show that middlemen in Curahdami Village play a strategic role in the distribution system of agricultural products, but their business

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Ananto Triwibowo and Muhammad Afani Adam, "Etika Bisnis Islam Dalam Praktek Bisnis Di Era Digital Ekonomi," *Margin : Jurnal Bisnis Islam Dan Perbankan Syariah* 2, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Dedi Mulyadi, "PEMIKIRAN EKONOMI ISLAM UMER CHAPRA (Studi Analisi Terhadap Sistem Ekonomi Kapitalisme, Sosialisme, Dan Negara Sejahtera)," *ADLIYA: Jurnal Hukum Dan Kemanusiaan* 10, no. 2 (2019), https://doi.org/10.15575/adliya.v10i2.5153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Gustavo Passos Fortes, Túlio Silva Oliveira, and Cândido Vieira Borges Junior, "Mark Granovetter Nos Estudos Do Empreendedorismo e Da Inovação: Uma Revisão Bibliométrica Da Última Década," *Revista de Gestão e Secretariado (Management and Administrative Professional Review)* 14, no. 4 (2023), https://doi.org/10.7769/gesec.v14i4.1985.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Husnul Isa Harahap, "Ekonomi Politik Model Asia: Masalah Dan Implikasinya Bagi Pembangunan," *Langgas: Jurnal Studi Pembangunan* 1, no. 2 (2022), https://doi.org/10.32734/ljsp.v1i2.9502.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> A Gideon, "Peran Learning Organization Dan Knowledge Sharing Dalam Upaya Meningkatkan Organization Performance," *J-CEKI: Jurnal Cendekia Ilmiah*, 2023.

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practices need to be improved to be more equitable and sustainable. One way to achieve this is by applying Islamic business ethics that are able to create harmony between economic and social aspects. Islamic business ethics, which emphasize honesty, transparency, and the prohibition of usury, can be a guideline for middlemen in carrying out business practices with greater integrity. Therefore, training on the principles of Islamic business ethics for farmers and middlemen is urgently needed to improve relations and practices in this distribution system.

In addition, the establishment of local agrarian cooperatives is an important step to reduce farmers' dependence on middlemen. Cooperatives can give farmers direct access to a wider market and increase their bargaining power in determining the price of crops. On the other hand, local governments are also expected to issue regulations that prevent manipulative practices by middlemen, such as manipulation of rice prices and quality. These regulations must ensure that the prices offered to farmers reflect fair market values, thus encouraging balance in economic relations between farmers and middlemen. Strengthening social capital is also needed to improve the relationship between farmers and middlemen. This can be done through discussion forums and social activities that strengthen friendship, build trust, and create mutually supportive working relationships. Strong friendship between the two parties will create a more conducive business environment, where economic interests do not neglect human values.

With these steps, the distribution system of agricultural products in Curahdami Village is expected to be more equitable and sustainable. Improving farmers' welfare, strengthening ethics in business, and blessings in business practices can be achieved through the synergy between education, regulation, and good social relations. These measures also provide opportunities for villages to strengthen their competitiveness in the agricultural sector while maintaining socioeconomic balance at the local level.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals that the role of middlemen in Curahdami Village, Bondowoso Regency, is very significant in supporting the distribution of rice farmers' crops. Middlemen provide easy market access for farmers through a working mechanism that involves providing advance payments (panjer), price negotiations, and transporting crops. However, this business practice is not completely free from challenges, such as unfairness in pricing, manipulation of rice quality, and inequality of bargaining position between farmers and middlemen. Season is also an important factor that affects the dynamics of the business of the shortcut. In the dry season, there is a symbiotic relationship of mutualism between farmers, middlemen, and breeders, while in the rainy season, challenges in rice quality due to high moisture content cause a decrease in prices. Weather uncertainty increases the risk of losses for farmers and middlemen, so an experience-based mitigation strategy and good communication are needed to maintain a harmonious working relationship.

The application of Islamic business ethics is an important element in the practice of strangling. Values such as honesty, justice, and usury avoidance are applied by some middlemen to create mutually beneficial relationships with farmers. However, not all business people adhere to these values, so there are still manipulation practices that hurt trust. In this context, the

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principles of Islamic business ethics have proven to be able to provide a good direction to create blessings in business. This study recommends strengthening local regulations, education on Islamic business ethics, and the establishment of farmer cooperatives to support a fairer and more sustainable distribution system. With the application of ethical values, good risk management, and institutional cooperation, the crop distribution system in Curahdami Village can provide greater economic benefits and create better social harmony in the future.

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