

Productivity management tools for women entrepreneurs in agribusiness

Women are among the most important human resources of countries in Asia and the Pacific. However, the potential of this human resource pool is not optimally tapped for entrepreneurial activities due to sociocultural biases against women in many countries, especially in the more conservative rural societies of Asia and the Pacific. While the role of women in agribusiness is increasingly a major element in many rural development programs, in many APO member countries, women have yet to make significant progress in the establishment and operation of agribusinesses, which remain dominated by men. Most women are also unable to move up the ladder in the agribusiness sector because of difficulties in managing their multiple roles of managing households and business enterprises. The complex nature of some agribusiness enterprises demands time and good managerial skills. These were among the common observations of participants and experts at the recent training course on Productivity Management Tools for Women Entrepreneurs in Agribusiness conducted by the APO in cooperation with the Government of Indonesia, in Bali, 3–12 July. The aim of the course was to encourage women in agribusiness by providing knowledge and skills in the use of productivity management tools and techniques to enhance their entrepreneurial and managerial capacities.

Twenty women and five men from the public sector, private sector, academia, industry associations, and nongovernmental organizations attended. Four international experts from India, Japan, Malaysia, and the Philippines and two national experts gave presentations and led discussions on the various topics covered under the seven modules of the 10-day training course: 1) Concepts and principles of entrepreneurship in agribusiness; 2) Productivity and quality management in agribusiness; 3) Productivity and quality improvement tools and techniques; 4) Financial analysis tools and techniques; 5) Supply chain management for improving productivity; 6) Quality assurance systems and private quality standards; and 7) Designing and implementing company productivity improvement programs.



Examining vanilla beans at Bayu Jaya Kusuma

The course included several exercises involving application of the tools and techniques to practical problems. Participants also visited Bayu Jaya Kusuma, a family-owned and -operated company engaged in the processing and export of vanilla and coffee beans and in fresh vegetable marketing; and Giri Murya, a sweet potato processor and promoter of small enterprises among farmers using processed sweet potatoes as an anchor product. Course attendees performed rapid appraisals to recommend how the productivity of those firms could be enhanced. The two agribusiness companies demonstrated the feasibility of involving women in rural enterprise job creation. Participants recommended that the course be offered again so that more women could be trained to become successful agribusiness managers and entrepreneurs in APO member countries. 