

Stories from the Field



“It is so much better to think of myself as a business woman rather than an abandoned wife.”

- *Fabiola, pig farmer*



Ibu Fabiola, a smallholder pig rearer in Ngada district located in the Flores Island in East Nusa Tenggara. (Photo: PRISMA/Nina FitzSimons)

Bringing Home the Bacon

A market-based approach improving the income of women farmers in Flores, East Nusa Tenggara

Fabiola was 32 years old when her husband left her. Now 51, she lives with her elderly mother and father in a small two roomed house with an earth-pressed floor and bamboo walls in Sarasedu village, in Ngada district, Flores Island. Fabiola is a smallholder farmer cultivating corn, rice and candlenut on a hectare of land. She also raises pigs – but only one a year.

Pigs are an important commodity in Flores. The demand for pigs is high because they play an important role in rites-of-passage ceremonies as well as being used for general consumption. A funeral, Fabiola tells us, will need around 20-30 pigs to feed guests and to distribute meat among the mourners when they leave.

“The problem for us as farmers,” explains Fabiola, “is that pigs are hard work. It takes between 18 months to two years to get a pig fat enough to sell and I feel like I half kill myself trying to feed it. We use food scraps but that is not enough, so we spend a lot of time foraging for banana trees which we chop up and feed the pigs. The competition for these trees in the village is high. It sometimes causes a lot of social conflict.”

Dutch non-government organisation (NGO) Hivos and local NGO Yayasan Mitra Tani Mandiri (YMTM), with support

from PRISMA, are helping farmers like Fabiola increase their income through pig rearing by helping them access better quality piglets, specialised advice on fattening practices and high nutrient fodder. They are also helping farmers to access credit for purchasing these inputs if needed.

“The issue in NTT,” explains Rivanda Ansori, the Program Coordinator for HIVOS in Ende, “is that many farmers lack up-to-date information about good livestock practices.

“Our approach is to link small scale farmers like Fabiola with successful commercial pig enterprises in Flores to provide farmers with ongoing and high quality information and services, including access to credit through the Bank of NTT.

“With this support we estimate that small scale farmers can rear and sell pigs 3 times a year instead of once every 18 months. This will increase farmer income while at the same time meeting the high demand for pigs in Flores and other islands”.

Traditionally it is the women in Flores who raise pigs. This work is seen as an extension of their household chores, rather than a commercial enterprise. Fabiola was one of the first farmers in



TOP: Fabiola's previous two-year old pig.
 BOTTOM: Fabiola's 'new' pig at 3 months.
 (Photos: PRISMA/Nina FitzSimons)

Sarasedu to show enthusiasm for the program, although initially she was sceptical.

"This isn't the first time I have joined a program like this. Others have failed because no one ever followed up and told us what we were doing wrong," Fabiola says.

This time, Fabiola, along with some other pig farmers, have been given a loan in the form of a package directly from the breeder, Yayasan Bintang Firdaus (YBF).

"I get three 2-month-old piglets, food and medicine for the pigs until they are six months. At six months they will be the optimum weight of 100kg to sell. We also get training on how to fatten and look after the pigs and the vet from YBF comes to check the pigs and give us advice."

Although not all farmers received a loan, Rivanda explains that there are a number of steps that farmers applying for a loan must follow in order to receive a package. Each farmer must participate in the technical training, must build a pig pen to the standards specified by the pig breeder, and plant a supplementary food garden. The loan funds are then paid directly to YBF who provides the 'package' to the farmers.

"I left school at grade 6 so dealing with the bank and all the administration has been a steep learning curve for me," says Fabiola.

But she was among the first to build a new pen. "I had to provide the sand, cement, bricks, tin and bamboo and everyone comes and builds it together. Mine was the village prototype," she adds proudly.

Fabiola is also extremely proud of her pigs. "I have had them for nearly a month

and already they are fatter at three months old than my other pig was at two years," she declares. She explains that previously her pigs were tethered under a tree and open to the elements.

"When it rained the pigs were sitting in mud. They used to eat the mud and the vet now tells us they were susceptible to worms from the soil. The vet also tells us that banana trees are little better than feeding the pigs water. No wonder they never got fat!" states Fabiola.

Fabiola and the other 28 participating women farmers from Sarasedu village are now close to reaping the reward from their hard work. "We already have a pig collector who is interested in purchasing all our pigs," says Fabiola.

"I am aiming to eventually have 20 pigs, which the breeder tells me will make me a business woman."

News of the farmer's success in pig fattening in Sarasedu has spread quickly.

"I have had people from Malanuzza, Bajawa, Todho and Raja come to see my pen and ask me how I fatten my pigs," says Fabiola. "Two weeks ago I even had a car full of village heads come to visit me."

The intervention facilitated by Hivos is expected to reach 4,000 pig farmers like Fabiola by 2018 with an estimated net increase in farmer income of up to 175%.

"It is so much better to think of myself as a business woman rather than an abandoned wife," beams Fabiola as she surveys her pigs.

PRISMA

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 Support for Markets in Agriculture

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The Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Promoting Rural Income through Support for Markets in Agriculture (PRISMA) is a multi-year program that is part of the Indonesian Government's long term strategy to encourage economic growth. With the support of the Australian Government, the program aims to achieve a 30% increase in the net incomes of 300,000 male and female eastern Indonesian farmers by the program's end by providing innovative solutions to increase productivity and market access.

PRISMA focuses on agriculture sectors that are the main source of income for a large number of smallholder farmers and have strong growth potential in areas of East Java, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, Papua and West Papua. Partnering with key market stakeholders, the program help spur growth along the value chain by reducing barriers and constraints within the agriculture sector.