

# Adaptation Strategies of Chili Farmer Households in Dealing with Covid-19

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# Adaptation Strategies of Chili Farmer Households in Dealing with Covid-19

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**Abstract:** This study aims to determine the adaptation strategies of chili farmers' households in dealing with the impact of Covid-19 and the reasons for choosing this strategy in East Lombok Regency. The method used in this research is descriptive method. The unit of analysis in this study is chili farmer households in East Lombok Regency. The data in this study was obtained using in-depth interviews and documentation techniques. The data analysis used in this study consisted of several stages, which are data tabulation, data presentation and conclusion drawing. The data obtained in this study were processed using a descriptive data analysis technique. The results of this study indicate that the adaptation strategies carried out by chili farmers' households in dealing with the impact of Covid-19 in East Lombok Regency, are active strategies, passive strategies and network strategies. In making decisions, farmers in this study have their own reasons for choosing each strategy.

**Keywords:** Adaptation strategies; Livelihoods; Chili farmer households; Covid-19

## Introduction

The main industry supporting regional economic growth has been agriculture in Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) Province, Indonesia. According to Statistics NTB (2020), this industry is largely stable for the NTB economy notwithstanding the socioeconomic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing contributed the most to NTB's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP), which was 21.38%, in the first quarter of 2020 (Statistics NTB, 2020).

Chili is one of the main agricultural products in NTB. Farmers in this province have extensively developed the horticultural crop known as chili. Numerous food varieties in Indonesia use chili as a hot flavor enhancer since it has a relatively high economic value. The output of chili in NTB varies between 1,823,518 quintals with a harvested area of 9,677 hectares in 2019 and 1,190,818 quintals with a harvested area of 8,680 hectares in 2020 (Statistics NTB, 2020).

The majority of chili production from NTB Province was produced in East Lombok Regency. In the Indonesian capital and surround areas (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi, JABODETABEK), the chili supply has been stabilized by the production from the region. East Lombok contributed more than 14% to the country's production of chili (Directorate General of Horticulture, 2020). Between 2019 and 2020, the chili production from East Lombok Regency varied between 1,584,146 quintals and 1,010,193 quintals, with the harvested area between 7,177 hectares and 6,898 hectares (Central Bureau of Statistic NTB, 2020).

At the end of 2019, the world was shocked by the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus in a very short period. The Covid-19 pandemic affected people in various aspects of life. One of the most impacted industries by the COVID-19 outbreak was agriculture. For chili growers, the Republic of Indonesia Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020 about Large-Scale Social Restrictions to expedite the management of Covid-19

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was extremely tough. Sales of agricultural goods, especially chili, were restrained as a result of the shutdown of hotels and restaurants. Farmers' access to production tools like insecticides, fertilizer, and seeds was impacted by disruptions in logistics and transportation services as well as social limitations (Abidin, 2021). In addition, a rise in unemployment decreased people's income, which in turn affected the decline in sales of agricultural products (Sudaryanto and Suharyono, 2020).

A study was conducted on the Covid-19 pandemic's socioeconomic effects on the chili agribusiness in Indonesia. According to Sarni and Sidayat (2020), the social limitation policy presented a challenge to market chili production as a result of the pandemic-related restaurant closures. Due to this, farmers' prices for chili were reduced (Sarni and Sidayat, 2020). According to Wulandari (2020), social activity restriction had an effect on how chili was distributed. The number of consumers visiting conventional markets declined as a result of the government's call to restrict activities outside houses. This indicates that there was a decline in market demand for chili while an increase in supply occurred. This imbalance between supply and demand led to a fall in the price of chili.

Humans required adaptation to deal with environmental changes or issues so they could live on (Haryanto, 2015). According to Mukhlis and Sunito (2022), there are three adaptation techniques to utilize in order to survive the Covid-19 pandemic: intensification (or resource optimization), extensification (or widening the revenue scale), and diversification of income sources. According to Suharto in Rusdianti and Sukayat (2021), who used different terminology, there are three adaptation techniques utilized by farming households: an active approach (increased income), a passive strategy (adaptation of income consumption habits), and networks (aid). Another source claims that extending livelihood strategies, changing livelihood strategies, contracting living standards, and relying on socioeconomic support from other households are all possible adaptation techniques that can be used in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic (Yang et al, 2021). However, there has not been any study that reported the adaptation of chili farmers in dealing with the impact of Covid-19, especially in East Lombok Regency, NTB. This study aims to determine the adaptation strategies of chili farmers' households in dealing with the impacts of Covid-19 and the reasons for choosing these strategies in this regency.

Individuals and groups must adapt to changing environmental conditions in order to sustain their existence (Haryanto, 2015). Making a personal adjustment to one's surroundings, or altering one's conduct in response to those circumstances, is called adaptation (Yusuf, 2021). Additionally, it implies that

the environment is modified in accordance with preferences. A person adapts to their environment by making changes to their way of life, their working surroundings, and everything else that happens while they are in that environment (Sari, 2017). Humans engage in a variety of activities that are chosen according to standards as being the most beneficial for their survival in order to live. Suharto's sequence of actions is referred to as an adaptation strategy used to survive (Rusdianti and Sukayat, 2021).

Adaptation strategies are needed by farmer households to survive in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Mukhlis and Sunito (2022) in their research stated that there are three adaptation strategies carried out by farmer households to survive in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Those are intensification, extensification and diversification. Intensification is an adaptation approach that makes effective and efficient use of the agricultural sector and controls agricultural inputs like labor, technology, and others. Extensification is a form of adaptation that involves increasing the size of farms, which is done by increasing the amount of arable territory. Applying a variety of livelihood patterns, such as taking on side jobs and enlisting the help of family members to work to increase household revenue, was one way to carry out the adaptation strategy known as diversification.

According to Suharto in Rusdianti and Sukayat (2021), farming families employ three different adaptation strategies. These three methods are network, active, and passive. An active strategy is a form of adaptation that involves using the family's full potential to improve the family's source of income in order to meet basic needs. In order to implement this plan, the family's potential must be maximized, which can be done by doing more work, working longer hours, involving family members in the workforce, and other methods. The passive strategy is an adaptation strategy used by cutting back on household expenses. This strategy can be seen as an adaptation strategy that puts the family's basic requirements first in order to survive in the face of shifting family economic circumstances. The network strategy is an adaptation approach that makes use of owned, formal and informal networks or relationships. This tactic is used by approaching family, neighbors, and formal financial organizations like banks and others for loan assistance. In a different study, it was discovered that a number of adaptation strategies, such as boosting livelihood strategies, modifying livelihood strategies, lowering living standards, and relying on socioeconomic support from outside the household, could be implemented in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic (Yang, et al, 2021).

**Method**

The research was conducted in the East Lombok Regency using a descriptive approach. With the consideration that both Anjani village and Tebaban village had a significant amount of chili production in East Lombok Regency, the two villages were chosen using the purposive sampling approach. There was total 60 respondents involving in in-depth interviews. The interview and documentation approaches were used to collect the data. The steps of the data analysis used in this study were data tabulation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data collected for this study was processed using procedures for analyzing descriptive data and calculating percentages. The frequency of each chosen response was divided by the total number of samples to get the percentage, which was then multiplied by 100%.

**Result and Discussion**

This section includes socioeconomics characteristics of respondents, chili farmer household adaptation strategies in facing the impacts of Covid-19 and a description of the livelihood adaptation strategies of chili farmer households in East Lombok Regency, NTB Province.

*Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents*

The socioeconomic characteristics of the study's respondents are quantitatively summarized in Table 1. When compared to men, women made up the majority of respondents (58.3%). The majority of respondents (98.3%) fell between the 15–64 age group. The age range was seen as appropriate for employment. In the age range, farmers had the best physical and mental conditions to carry out their farming tasks (Hidayat et al., 2017). Most people acquired a formal education between elementary school and even college. Only 15% of farmers never attended formal school at all. The main occupation of the majority of respondents (95%) was farmer, with the most side jobs (34%) as agricultural laborers. The number of dependents of the majority of respondents was between 3-4 people in their family. Most respondents (88.3%) had more than 10 years of experience in farmed. Most of the respondents (88.3%) manage relatively narrow land (less than 0.5 hectares), with less than half of them owned the land.

**Table 1.** Summary of ANOVA Results for All Observation Variables

Explanation	Total Respondent	
	Person	%
Age		
a. <15	0	0
b. 15-64	59	98.3
c. >64	1	1.7
Sex		
a. Man	25	41.7
b. Woman	35	58.3
Education		
a. Uneducated	9	15.0
b. Elementary	26	43.3
c. Junior high school	8	13.3
d. Senior high school	13	21.7
e. Bachelor	4	6.7
Occupation		
Main Occupation		
a. Farmer	57	95.0
b. Teacher	3	5.0
Side Occupation		
a. Farmer	3	38
b. Farm worker	34	43.6
c. Entrepreneur	14	16.7
d. Breeder	12	15.4
e. Housewife	7	9.0
f. Posyandu employee	2	2.6
g. Construction laborer	2	2.6
h. Teacher to read Al-Quran	2	2.6
i. Employee	2	2.6
Number of Family		
a. 1-2	11	18.3
b. 3-4	30	50.0
c. ≥5	19	31.7
Farmed Experience		
a. <10	7	11.7
b. 10-20	15	25.0
c. >20	38	63.3
Total land area		
a. <0,5	53	88.3
b. 0,5-1,0	6	10.0
c. >1,0	1	1.7
Land ownership status		
a. Land Owner	25	41.7
b. Pawned	14	23.3
c. Profit Shared	7	11.7
d. Rent	0	0
e. Land Owner + Pawned	7	11.7
f. Land Owner + shared yield	5	8.3
g. Land Owner + Rent	2	3.3

*Chili Farmer Household's Adaptation Strategies in Response to the Effects of COVID-19*

As explained before that the adaptation strategies in this study are viewed in three forms, which are active, passive, and network strategies. Here are several summaries about each strategy:

*Active Strategies*

According to Suharto, an active approach is an adaptation plan that was implemented by making the most of every opportunity farm family had to increase income sources for the family in order to cover daily living costs (Rusdianti and Sukayat, 2021). This proactive adaptation strategy includes expanding the scope of chili planting, working longer hours, enlisting the help of family members, and performing side occupations unrelated to chili farming during the Covid-19 pandemic (Suharto in Rusdianti and Sukayat, 2021).

Based on Table 2, the chili farmers in this study carried out an active adaptation strategy which included all types of adaptation strategies according to Suharto in Rusdianti and Sukayat (2021), except for extending working time. The results of this study were in line with the results of Saragih (2020) which states that in order to increase family income in order to survive and meet basic household needs, farmers carried out active strategies by optimized family potential such as doing another job and involved husband/wife and their children to work.

**Table 2.** Active Strategies

Strategies	Total respondents	
	person	%
<i>Had Side Job Beside Chili's Farmer</i>	51	
Maintained a side job from before the pandemic	49	96.1
Added a side job type by opening your own business	3	5.9
Added a side job as a worker in someone else's business	10	19.6
Replaced the old side job with a new side job	0	0
<i>Extended Worked Hour</i>	0	0
<i>Involved Family Member in work to increased Family income</i>	51	
Wife/Husband	49	96.1
Children	12	23.5
Another Family Members (parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, and others)	3	5.9
<i>Enlarging Agribusiness of Chili's Scope</i>	33	
Increase Capital	14	42.4
Increase Labor	0	0
Processed Crops	23	69.7
Enlarged Market	8	24.2

Source: Processed data (2022)

a. Do Side Jobs Apart from Chili Farmer

According to the respondent, during the Covid-19 epidemic, their revenue from growing chili declined while spending on family necessities increased. Due to this, the farmers in this study took several steps to raise their household income, one of which was to work additional occupations outside of being a chili farmer. In addition, Nizam (2020) notes that farmers with low earnings typically worked side occupations to supplement their income from farming and fulfill their daily requirements and the needs of their families.

According to Table 2, of the 51 respondents who used this method, the majority (96.1%) continued to work side jobs they had been doing before to the epidemic. Farm laborers performed the majority of farmers' side employment. The money that farmers made from their side jobs helped them to both deal with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and provided for their families on a daily basis. Farmers used their income to supplement their household's finances as well as to meet their personal and family requirements. This is in line with Nizam's (2020) assertion that farmers who do not make enough money to support their families' daily requirements will look for side occupations to supplement their income. Faradina and Sukayat (2021) also claimed that farmers use the money they had from

side jobs as additional capital for their farming endeavors.

b. Extend Working Time

In this study, not all of the respondent farmers used the technique of extending working hours. The findings of this study disagree from those of Saragih (2020), who claims that farmers worked longer hours in order to earn more money for their families' essential requirements. In their research, Pertiwi and Nurhamlin (2014) make the same claim as Saragih that it is important to adapt at trying or crucial moments. Farmers extended their workdays in order to generate more cash for sustaining their daily necessities. Due to competing obligations, the respondents did not increase their working hours because they lacked the time and resources and did not have the extra endurance.

c. Work with family members to earn more money

Table 2 reveals that the majority of respondents (96.1%) brought their spouse or partner to work. The study's respondents, on average, urged their spouses (wife/husband), kids, and other family members to work to strengthen the family economy in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the results. Typically, the head of the household shared the duties of

earning a living with the rest of the family in households who were considered to be poor. This is consistent with study by Abidin and Wahyuni (2016), which claims that because income was still low, farmers pushed spouses and kids to work as well to assist raise the family's income.

The farming family can increase their income so that it can be used to fulfill their daily needs by enlisting the help of their spouse (wife/husband), children, and other family members. The respondent families' primary occupations included farming, agricultural labor, and animal rearing and trading, whereas the primary occupations of the respondent pairs' offspring included helping out in the fields, animal rearing, and working for other people's enterprises.

d. Increase the Amount of Labor Carried Out by the Chili Farmer Households

According to Table 2, processed agricultural goods were the strategy used by chili farmers' households to raise farm revenue (69.7%), followed by increased

capital for farm expenditures (42.4%), and market expansion (24.2%). In order to encourage farmers to process their harvests, processed chili yields were typically produced when the price of chili on the market was low. These crops were designed to be processed so that farmers could sell them for more money. The majority of the time, East Lombok's chili producers dried their harvests.

Moreover, chili farmers in this study attempted to increase capital for farm costs in order to enhance household income in order to increase chili production. Farmers in this study increased their capital by increasing the size of land they could grow chili on while also maximizing productivity through the use of fertilizers and pesticides.

Passive Strategies

The passive strategies include reduce expenditure of food needs, clothing, education, health, and production costs on chili farmer households. These are explained in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Passive Strategies

Strategies	Total respondents	
	Persons	%
<i>Reduce expenditure on the food needs</i>	29	
Reduce consumption patterns and types of daily food to be simpler	11	37.9
Utilize yard land to meet household food needs	21	72.4
<i>Reduce Expenditures for Clothing</i>	48	
Buy clothes at a lower price	16	33.3
Buy clothes during Lebaran/sudden times, for example, children buying uniforms	32	66.7
Do not buy clothes at all in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic	16	33.3
<i>To reduced Expenditures on Education Fees</i>	18	
Reduce children's pocket money	17	94.4
Child dropped out from school	2	11.1
Child cancelled renting houses when studied farm away from home	4	22.2
<i>To reduced Expenditures on Health Costs</i>	27	
Self-medicated	22	81.5
Traditional medicine	11	40.7
No treatment at all	0	0
<i>Reduced the Production Cost of Chili Farmer Household carried out</i>	48	
Reduced the dose of fertilizers and pesticides	45	93.8
Reduced the frequency of application of fertilizers and pesticides	29	60.4
Reduced the number of workers outside the family	27	56.3
Reduced planted area	4	8.3
Changing farming materials to cheaper materials	6	12.5
<i>Saving</i>	22	
Do saving then reduce the saving amount	6	27.3
Start a habit of saving/set aside some income to save	9	40.9
Using savings/other assets in an emergency	18	81.8

Source: Processed data (2022)

a. Reduce expenditure on the food needs

The food needs in this study were those that farmers and their families required to survive, including eating and drinking. The majority (72.4%) of respondents who selected this strategy (29 respondents) used their yards to provide for household food needs in order to reduce spending on food items during the Covid-19 outbreak.

The results from using their backyard gardens, according to the farmers who responded, significantly aided them in meeting household food demands and might lower spending on food. According to Andini, et al (2020), the majority of farming families plant vegetables in their yards to supplement their food supply.

Another group of respondents cut their food expenses by simplifying their daily food choices and consumption habits. Farmers and their families in this study still eat three meals every day, but with modest side dishes, to meet their nutritional needs. The respondent claimed that in order to cut down on household expenses, they and their families substituted simpler side dishes for the ones they typically ate. For instance, swap out the typical beef or chicken side dishes with simpler alternatives like fish, eggs, tempeh, tofu, and vegetables, or just tofu, tempeh, and vegetables. Several farmers also reduced on their meat consumption. For instance, farmers who ordinarily consumed beef or chicken every day lowered their consumption to once per week. Also, those who typically ate beef or chicken once a week reduced to once a month. Prior to the Covid-19 epidemic, farmers typically ate meat or chicken when their income increased or when the government provided aid. This is consistent with Wulandari's (2021) research, which found that respondents choose to eat modestly by consuming less expensive and more durable items like eggs and salted fish in order to save money on family expenses and live in the Covid-19 epidemic.

b. Reduce Expenditures for Clothing

In this study, "clothing" refers to the items of clothing that farmers and their families need to keep themselves warm and comfortable. according to Table 3. The majority of respondents (66.7%) lowered their spending on clothing necessities by only purchasing clothing when necessary, such as for Eid or the start of the school year. The respondent claimed that even before the Covid-19 outbreak, they used to buy clothing for Eid Fitr or other special events. This was an existing strategy that chili farmers and their families used to cut back on living costs during a difficult time like the pandemic. According to research by Kumesan et al. (2015), farmers typically buy clothing twice or less frequently each year to save household expenses. According to the people surveyed, each member of their household only had a certain quantity of clothes. Also, the clothing-related strategies were to avoid purchasing clothing during the Covid-19 pandemic or to purchase it at a lower cost. Because they could not even afford to buy new clothes, the respondent said they opted to wear old garments that were still in good condition. In addition, farmers also stated that they decided not to buy their own clothes because the clothes were bought by their children or relatives.

c. Minimizing Expenditures for Education

Table 3 shows that 94.4% of farmers who adopted an education-related strategy decreased their kids' pocket money. Respondent farmers claimed that as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, their revenue had decreased and

that they had reduced the amount of pocket money they gave their kids in order to lower household expenses. For instance, the change in pocket money from Rp 10,000 to Rp 7,000 to Rp 5,000. This is in line with Oktavia (2021), farming families reduced the amount of pocket money for their children to reduce household spending on education costs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to reduce their children's pocket money, some respondents also drop their children out from school because they could no longer afford to pay school fees. Meanwhile, as the study from home was applied, the children who studied far away from home was no longer pay the house rent when they studied far away from home.

Networking Strategies

This study found that the farmers also had networking strategies to adapt to Covid-19 Pandemic. Those strategies were acquiring help from families, relatives, and neighbors, seeking loans from the closest ones, and obtaining social assistance from government or other institutions.

Table 4. Networking Strategies

Strategies	Total respondents	
	Persons	%
<i>Acquiring help from families, relatives, and neighbors</i>	43	
Money Assistance	29	67.4
Item Assistance	33	76.7
Service assistance	30	69.8
<i>Seeking loans from families, relatives, neighbors, workplaces, banks, or other institutions</i>	47	
Money	42	89.4
Goods	23	48.9
<i>Obtaining social assistance from government or other institutions</i>	18	
Cash Assistance	34	59.6
Food Assistance	40	70.2
Electricity subsidy	43	75.4
Education Assistance	13	22.8
Health Insurance Assistance	32	56.1

Source: Processed Data (2022)

a. Acquiring help from families, relatives, and neighbors

Respondents stated that farmers would typically ask for assistance from friends, family, and neighbors when they were in a crisis or having problems. The existence of a culture of kinship and reciprocal cooperation in rural communities, according to Abidin and Wahyuni (2016), has a favorable influence on farmers' behavior in preserving their livelihoods and can support family needs.

The three support types that farmers most frequently receive are products (76.7%), services (69.8%), and financing (67.4%), as shown in Table 4. The goods

acquired by farming households, such as rice, vegetables, side dishes, clothing, and so forth. Farmers typically assisted one another in completing tasks in farms as a form of service in order to lower the farm's production costs. Meanwhile, the financial assistance was usually used to meet daily needs.

b. Seeking loans from families, relatives, neighbors, workplaces, banks, or other institutions

Farmers used this method to obtain loans when they were in emergency. According to the respondents, farmer families' quickest method for addressing their immediate needs was to take out a loan. According to Table 4, 89.4% of respondents received loans in the form of cash, while the remaining respondents (48.9%) received loans in the form of products. Respondents claimed that borrowing money from friends and neighbors considerably aided them in taking care of their household's requirements. Due to the lack of collateral requirements, many farmers borrowed money from friends, family, and neighbors. That just depended on their mutual trust. According to Juanda, et al. (2019), farmers seek for loans from whoever is close enough to them to provide for their household's needs.

According to the respondents, there were sources available to borrow money based on the amount and purposes. They borrowed money from family members, friends, neighbors, the closest businesses or stalls, their workplace, and other sources when they required a modest sum of money to cover urgent necessities. In the meantime, the farmers would borrow money from banks when they required large amount of money. Farmers used big loans for their businesses or for farming. This echoes the findings of Abidin and Wahyuni (2016), who found that farmers usually borrow money from friends or family to cover everyday expenses, but they usually take loans from banks when they require substantial sums of money for their businesses.

Farmers typically obtained assistance in the form of respectable loans from close friends, family members, neighbors, or local businesses. The respondents claimed that they typically borrowed rice for daily consumption.

c. Obtaining social assistance from government or other institutions

The government offered a lot of support to the communities affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in order to help them manage their everyday necessities. The most common forms of aid given to farmers are shown in Table 4, including subsidies for energy (75.4%), staple foods (70.2%), cash (59.6%), health security (56.1%), and education (22.8%). This study demonstrated that the respondents received a variety of government help. However, there were farmers only ever received one kind of support during the Covid-19

outbreak. Yet, the respondents kept positive view and revealed that the government's assistance was considerably useful in helping them fulfill their daily necessities. This is consistent with Rusdianti and Sukayat's (2021) assertion that government social aid for farmers has a favorable effect on the family farm economy.

## Conclusion

In light of the findings, discussions, and reference to the study objective, it was determined that the households of chili farmers in East Lombok Regency used active, passive, and network adaptation strategies to cope with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Doing side work (85%), family involvement in working to boost income (85%), and expanding the chili farm business (55%) were the active strategies used by the chili farmer households. The passive strategies used by chili farmer households in this study include lowering their food expenditures (48.3%), lowering their expenditure on clothing needs (80%), lowering their educational expenses (30%), lowering their health care expenses (45%), lowering their expenditure on agricultural productivity (80%), and lowering their investment on savings (36.7%). The most common networking strategies for adaptation were to ask for aid from friends and neighbors (71.7%), seek loans from family, friends, neighbors, the nearest store or stall, job, bank, or other institution (78.3%), and get social support from the government or other institutions (95%). The farmers selected these strategies for a variety of personal reasons.

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