

## Collective Action in Indonesian Agricultural Marketing: What Do Farmers Gain?

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**Abstract:** Smallholder farmers in Indonesia often face limited market access, weak bargaining power, high transaction costs, and reliance on middlemen. Collective action has been promoted as a strategy to address these constraints; nevertheless, the specific gains farmers receive from collective action in agricultural marketing remain dispersed across different studies. This article aims to review what Indonesian farmers gain from collective action in agricultural marketing. Using a narrative literature review, this study synthesizes Scopus-indexed publications on farmer groups, cooperatives, collective marketing, and related institutional arrangements in Indonesian agriculture. The findings show that collective action provides farmers with numerous advantages, including improved market access, stronger bargaining power, reduced dependence on middlemen, better knowledge sharing, and institutional strengthening. However, these gains are hindered by weak governance, limited managerial capacity, poor communication, elite domination, digital gaps, and insufficient institutional support. The review suggests that collective action should be strengthened not only as an organizational model, but also as a farmer-centered marketing strategy supported by good governance, digital access, direct market linkages, and inclusive participation.

**Keywords:** collective action; agricultural marketing; farmer groups; cooperatives; Indonesia.

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### 1. Introduction

In Indonesia, smallholder farmers continue to face persistent challenges in agricultural marketing, such as limited market access, insufficient bargaining power, high transaction costs, and reliance on intermediaries. Collective action has been extensively discussed as a strategy to overcome these constraints by allowing farmers to organize production, pool resources, reduce marketing costs, and negotiate improved terms with buyers (Permadi & Winarti, 2026; Ton, 2008). Collective action in agricultural contexts may manifest in a variety of ways, such as farmer groups, cooperatives, farmer corporations, collective marketing organizations, and community-based initiatives.

Collective action has been implemented in Indonesia across a variety of agricultural commodities and institutional contexts. Collective chili marketing in Yogyakarta is

supported by farmer organizations, and managerial capacity and member motivation are critical factors in enhancing smallholder market access through collective action (Bihrajihant Raya, 2014; Permadi & Winarti, 2026). Cooperatives also play an important role in supporting agricultural activities, such as input provision, credit access, and marketing services (Sedana, 2020). Furthermore, collective action in Indonesian agribusiness has been associated with stronger institutional development, although the effectiveness of cooperatives is frequently depends on whether they are initiated by farmers themselves or by external intervention. Collective action in agriculture also promotes efficiency, market guarantees, lower transaction costs, credit access, and input access. However, the government-driven cooperatives may become vulnerable if they are not rooted in farmers' collective awareness (Hariance et al., 2021).

The farmers may gain numerous advantages from collective action. These include enhanced market access, increased income, reduced transaction costs, greater access to inputs and credit, knowledge sharing, and stronger social networks (Jelsma et al., 2017; Markelova & Mwangi, 2010; Ochieng et al., 2018). Moreover, collective action can strengthen the position of farmers in value chains, promote sustainable practices, and enhance communication among actors (Anggreany & Lubis, 2026; Hariance et al., 2024; Jelsma et al., 2017; Nugraha et al., 2021; Rachim et al., 2025). Nevertheless, these advantages are not instantaneous. The efficacy of collective action can be diminished by poor governance, low participation, limited managerial capacity, weak communication, elite domination, and dependence on external actors (Anggreany & Lubis, 2026; Fischer & Qaim, 2014; Hariance et al., 2026).

Despite the fact that numerous studies have examined collective action in Indonesian agriculture, the specific benefits that farmers derive from collective action in agricultural marketing have not been systematically and comprehensively synthesized. It is challenging to identify broader patterns of farmer benefits across the Indonesian context, as the majority of studies focus on specific commodities, regions, or institutions. This article aims to synthesize how collective action is practiced in Indonesian agricultural marketing and what farmers gain from it, particularly in terms of market access, bargaining power, efficiency, income, knowledge sharing, and institutional strengthening.

## 2. Research Method

This study employs a narrative literature review to summarize existing Scopus-indexed research on collective action in Indonesian agricultural marketing. This method was chosen because the paper seeks to offer a comprehensive intellectual and thematic insight into the benefits farmers derive from collective action, rather than performing a statistical meta-analysis.

The material was sourced from the Scopus database utilizing combinations of keywords: collective action, farmer organizations, cooperatives, agricultural marketing, smallholder farmers, and Indonesia. The review focused on studies

discussing collective action practices in agriculture, including farmer groups, cooperatives, farmer corporations, community-based initiatives, and collective marketing arrangements.

The inclusion criteria were: (1) publications indexed in Scopus; (2) studies related to agriculture or agribusiness; (3) studies addressing collective action, farmer organizations, cooperatives, or collective marketing; and (4) studies offering insights into farmer benefits, marketing outcomes, institutional roles, or participation challenges. Studies unrelated to agricultural marketing or collective action at the farmer level were excluded.

The selected literature was examined through a simple thematic synthesis. Key findings from each article were manually coded and categorized into five main themes: forms of collective action in Indonesian agricultural marketing, farmer gains from collective action, mechanisms through which collective action strengthens bargaining power, challenges limiting farmer gains, and strategic pathways for strengthening collective action. The synthesis was used to answer the central research question: What do farmers gain from collective action in Indonesian agricultural marketing?

### 3. Results and Discussions

#### 3.1. Forms of Collective Action in Indonesia

Collective action in Indonesia manifest in several institutional and community-based forms, including cooperatives, farmer groups, community marketing initiatives, digital platforms, and policy-driven collective arrangements. Table 1 presents that collective action is implemented through diverse institutional frameworks, ranging from formal organizations such as cooperatives and farmer groups to more flexible mechanisms such as community-based initiatives, digital platforms, and policy-driven arrangements. Across these forms, collective activities are primarily oriented toward improving market access, strengthening coordination, and enhancing farmers' economic and social outcomes.

Table 1. Forms and Activities of Collective Action in Indonesia

Form of Collective Action	Main Activities	References
Cooperatives	Input provision, credit access, collective marketing, resource pooling	Sedana (2020); Hariance et al. (2026)
Farmer groups	Commodity-based production, collective selling, product bulking, marketing coordination	Permadi & Winarti (2026); Raya (2014); Ochieng et al. (2018)
Community-based initiatives	Farmers' markets, agritourism, local product promotion, joint problem-solving	Attree et al. (2018); Nugraha et al. (2021); Padmaningrum et al. (2025)
Digital platforms	E-commerce, digital marketing, online sales, buyer networking	Soeyatno et al. (2024); Relawati et al. (2025)

Policy-driven collective arrangements	Irrigation groups, co-management schemes, incentive-based collective work	Paramita et al. (2023)
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Cooperatives represent a prevalent model, allowing farmers to pool resources, access inputs, obtain credit, and conduct collective marketing, as shown in the case of Subak cooperatives in Bali (Sedana, 2020). However, cooperative-based collective action may face sustainability problems when tangible member benefits are limited and collective identity is weak (Hariance et al., 2026).

Farmer groups are another important form of collective action, especially in organizing commodity-based production and marketing activities (Permadi & Winarti, 2026). In Yogyakarta, farmer groups have been used to support collective chili marketing, showing how group performance can shape farmers' ability to participate in markets more effectively (Bihrajihant Raya, 2014). The effectiveness of farmer groups depends strongly on managerial capacity, member motivation, and internal organizational structures (Ochieng et al., 2018; Permadi & Winarti, 2026).

In addition to formal organizations, collective action also appears through community-based initiatives such as farmers' markets, agritourism, and local product promotion (Attree et al., 2018; Nugraha et al., 2021). Social capital, comprising trust, norms, and networks, enhances collective activities by strengthening cooperation and solidarity among farmers (Nugraha et al., 2021). This is also reflected in community-based practices, where collective action emerges from trust and communication to solve shared agricultural problems (Padmaningrum et al., 2025).

Digital platforms are progressively emerging as a new form of collective marketing support for farmers in Indonesia. E-commerce enable farmers to expand vegetable sales and reach wider markets, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas (Soeyatno et al., 2024). Digital marketing strategies also provide opportunities to improve product visibility, fortify buyer connections, and facilitate agricultural market transformation (Relawati et al., 2025).

The primary activities within these collective arrangements include collective selling, product bulking, input sharing, training, capacity building, and joint problem-solving. Collective marketing helps farmers reduce dependence on intermediaries and improve bargaining positions through coordinated selling (Bihrajihant Raya, 2014; Ochieng et al., 2018; Sedana, 2020). Training and awareness-building are also important because farmers' participation in collective action is shaped by their understanding of benefits, motivation, and perceived value of group participation (Gyau et al., 2016; Permadi & Winarti, 2026). Policy-driven initiatives also shape collective action, as seen in irrigation-related programs that combine economic incentives with local norms such as gotong royong (Paramita et al., 2023).

### 3.2. What Farmers Gain from Collective Action?

Collective action provides Indonesian farmers with several practical gains in agricultural marketing, particularly in improving market access, income opportunities, bargaining power, knowledge exchange, and resilience. Farmer groups can assist smallholders overcome market barriers by pooling resources, coordinating production, and strengthening their capacity to reach more competitive markets (Permadi & Winarti, 2026). In the case of kepok banana farmers in Central Kalimantan, collective action improved market access by strengthening managerial capacity and member motivation within farmer groups (Permadi & Winarti, 2026)

Farmers also derive economic advantages when collective action is supported by strong institutional arrangements. In smallholder oil palm systems, collective action has been associated with higher productivity and more inclusive participation in sustainable palm oil systems (Jelsma et al., 2017). Another important benefit is stronger bargaining power. Through collective marketing, farmers can negotiate better prices, reduce dependence on dominant buyers, and improve their position in agricultural value chains (Anggreany & Lubis, 2026; Jelsma et al., 2017). Collective action also supports knowledge sharing and capacity development, especially when farmer groups, cooperatives, and communication networks facilitate learning about production, marketing, and technology adoption (Hariance et al., 2024; Rachim et al., 2025). Training and awareness-building are important because participation intensity is influenced by farmers' motivation, perceived benefits, and understanding of collective action (Gyau et al., 2016).

Collective action may also strengthen resilience and sustainability. In West Sumatra, multi-stakeholder collective action in organic tea farming helped promote sustainable practices through collaboration among farmers and supporting actors (Hariance et al., 2024). In rubber farming, collective action models have been suggested to help farmers manage temporary income loss during replanting by pooling resources and developing shared coping strategies (Novra, 2020).

**Table 2. Benefits of Collective Action in Indonesian Agricultural Marketing**

Benefit	Description	References
<b>Improved market access</b>	Farmers access wider and more competitive markets through group coordination and resource pooling.	Permadi & Winarti (2026); Jelsma et al. (2017)
<b>Higher income and productivity</b>	Collective action can improve productivity, income, and welfare through better coordination and institutional support.	Jelsma et al. (2017)
<b>Stronger bargaining power</b>	Collective marketing improves farmers' ability to negotiate prices and reduce dependence on intermediaries.	Jelsma et al. (2017); Anggreany et al. (2026)
<b>Knowledge sharing and capacity building</b>	Farmer groups and cooperatives facilitate learning, training, and technology adoption.	Hariance et al. (2024); Rachim et al. (2025); Gyau et al. (2016)

<b>Resilience and sustainability</b>	Collective action supports risk sharing, sustainable farming, and collaborative problem-solving.	Hariance et al. (2024); Novra & Suparjo (2020)
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### 3.3 How Collective Action Strengthens Bargaining Power?

Collective action strengthens farmers' bargaining power by enabling them to organize collectively, pool resources, reduce transaction costs, and negotiate more effectively with buyers and input suppliers. Table 3 present these mechanisms and their specific contributions to farmers' bargaining power in agricultural marketing.

Table 3. Mechanisms of Collective Action and Its Contribution to Farmers' Bargaining Power

Mechanism	Contribution	References
<b>Farmer groups and cooperatives</b>	Provide collective platforms for accessing inputs, credit, training, and markets	Rombeallo et al. (2024)
<b>Product aggregation and economies of scale</b>	Enable farmers to meet buyer volume requirements and negotiate better prices	Baruah et al. (2022); Permadi & Winarti (2026)
<b>Reduced dependence on intermediaries</b>	Improve farmers' ability to negotiate directly with buyers	Permadi & Winarti (2026); Anggreany et al. (2026)
<b>Institutional support</b>	Strengthens coordination, agribusiness integration, and market participation	Harjanto et al. (2022); Anggreany et al. (2026)
<b>Social capital and trust</b>	Builds cohesion, reduces conflict, and supports collective decision-making	Susanto et al. (2025); Sugiarto & Cahyo (2025)
<b>Inclusive reward systems</b>	Sustains participation and aligns stakeholder interests	Hariance et al. (2024); Hariance et al. (2026)

In Indonesia, farmer groups, associations, and cooperatives provide institutional platforms through which farmers can access inputs, training, credit, and marketing support more effectively than when acting individually (Rombeallo et al., 2024). Joined farmer groups or Gapoktan also support collective access to farm inputs, equipment, and marketing channels, which can improve production and farmer income (Arsyad et al., 2018).

One important mechanism is the creation of economies of scale. By engaging in collective selling, farmers can aggregate products, meet buyer volume requirements, reduce marketing costs, and improve their position in price negotiation (Baruah et al., 2022; Permadi & Winarti, 2026). In Indonesia, managerial capacity and member motivation within smallholders groups are important in improving market access and reducing dependence on intermediaries (Permadi & Winarti, 2026). Farmer

corporations are also promoted as a way to integrate farmer groups into broader agribusiness systems, although their success depends on communication, coordination, and institutional capacity (Anggreany & Lubis, 2026; Harjanto et al., 2022).

Bargaining power is also influenced by social capital. Trust, networks, and shared norms enhance group cohesion, reduce internal conflict, and support collective decision-making among farmers (Sugiarto & Cahyo, 2025; Susanto et al., 2025). These social foundations are important because collective marketing requires farmers to coordinate timing, quality, quantity, and sales decisions. However, collective action does not automatically improve bargaining power. Poor communication, elite domination, fragmented cooperatives, and limited inclusiveness can prevent collective institutions from representing farmers equally (Anggreany & Lubis, 2026; Hariance et al., 2026). Reward systems and inclusive governance are therefore needed to sustain participation and align the interests of farmers, cooperatives, and other stakeholders (Hariance et al., 2024).

### **3.4 Key Challenges Limiting Farmer Gains from Collective Action**

While collective action can improve farmers' market access and bargaining power, its advantages are often limited by broader structural challenges in Indonesian agriculture. One major constraint is the weak economic position of farmers, reflected in limited land ownership, low agricultural wages, unfavorable selling prices, and slow improvement in farmers' purchasing power (Setiartiti, 2021). Market inefficiencies also reduce farmer gains, as many producers rely on middlemen and face high transportation costs, particularly in geographically dispersed supply chains such as coconut farming in Indragiri Hilir (Nabillah et al., 2025). These problems became more visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, when supply chain disruptions, input price increases, and reduced market access weakened smallholders' ability to benefit from agricultural production (Stöber et al., 2021).

Environmental pressures further limit the effectiveness of collective action. Climate change affects water availability, irrigation systems, and crop productivity, creating additional risks for farmers who already operate under uncertain market conditions (Aldyan, 2023; Idris, 2021). Maize farmers in Indonesia, for instance, require adaptation strategies to cope with climate-related production risks and changing rainfall patterns (Ariningsih et al., 2026). Land degradation and peatland-related environmental risks also affect agricultural productivity and long-term sustainability, especially in areas such as Central Kalimantan (Surahman et al., 2017).

Social and institutional constraints are equally important. Farmer regeneration remains a challenge because young people are often less interested in agriculture due to migration, alternative employment, and perceptions of farming as low-income work (Maulida & Wati, 2022). Limited knowledge, weak technology adoption, and insufficient training also reduce farmers' capacity to improve productivity and

participate effectively in collective marketing (Nababan & Regina, 2021; Tubagus & Mahyuni, 2024). Policy and regulatory barriers further constrain farmer gains, including limited access to subsidies, credit, extension services, improved seeds, and legal space for farmer innovation (Antons et al., 2020). Simultaneously, competition from imported agricultural products and poor knowledge-sharing systems can reduce the competitiveness of local farmers (Kusuma et al., 2023).

These challenges suggest that collective action alone is insufficient unless supported by stronger market access, climate resilience, technological inclusion, and institutional support. Community-based strategies, fairer marketing systems, and direct-to-consumer models can help reduce dependence on intermediaries and improve farmers' value capture (Triatmo et al., 2025). Technology-based solutions, including low-cost irrigation, smart farming, IoT, and blockchain, may also improve transparency, efficiency, and resilience when adapted to farmers' capacities and local conditions (Hasbi et al., 2026; Riza Chakim et al., 2024).

### 3.5 Strategic Pathways for Strengthening Collective Action in Indonesian Agricultural Marketing

Several opportunities can be used to strengthen collective action in Indonesian agricultural marketing. These prospects might be perceived as several interrelated components that support stronger collective action in agricultural marketing. Rather than operating separately, institutional capacity, social capital, digital transformation, market institutions, and value-chain integration reinforce one another in shaping farmers' ability to cooperate, access markets, and improve marketing outcomes. Table 4 depicts key components and potential contributions to strengthening collective action in Indonesian agricultural marketing.

Table 4. Key Components and Contributions of Strategic Pathways

Components	Potential Contribution	Reference
<b>Farmer group and cooperative strengthening</b>	Enhances managerial capacity, coordination, market access, and collective bargaining	Permadi & Winarti (2026); Hariance et al. (2024)
<b>Social capital and community-based action</b>	Strengthens trust, cooperation, solidarity, and local resilience	Nugraha et al. (2021); Padmaningrum et al. (2025); Triatmo et al. (2025)
<b>Digital transformation</b>	Improves communication, knowledge sharing, digital marketing, and market linkages	Rachim et al. (2025); Ton (2008)
<b>Institutional innovation</b>	Supports price discovery, quality control, trade efficiency, and stakeholder coordination	Nugroho (2021)
<b>Value-chain integration</b>	Expands access to technical assistance, marketing support, and input services	Roshetko et al. (2012); Ton (2008)

First, farmer groups and cooperatives can be strengthened as key institutional platforms for improving market access, especially when managerial capacity and member motivation are improved (Permadi & Winarti, 2026). Cooperatives also facilitate collective bargaining, knowledge sharing, and sustainable farming practices when coordination among farmers, local governments, and private actors is well managed (Hariance et al., 2024).

Second, social capital can be leveraged to sustain cooperation among farmers. Trust, social networks, and shared norms support collective action in rural agritourism and community-based agricultural initiatives (Nugraha et al., 2021). The practice of *gropyokan tikus* also shows how trust and communication can mobilize farmers to solve shared agricultural problems collectively (Padmaningrum et al., 2025). Community-based strategies, such as regional product identity and direct-to-consumer initiatives, can further strengthen collective resilience and local agricultural sustainability (Triatmo et al., 2025).

Third, digital transformation creates new opportunities for collaborative marketing. New media platforms facilitate knowledge sharing, marketing communication, and collaboration among farmers, yet digital literacy and infrastructure remain important prerequisites (Rachim et al., 2025). Digital marketing and postharvest technologies can also help farmer groups meet quality requirements, reduce dependence on intermediaries, and access wider markets (Ton, 2008).

Fourth, institutional innovation can improve farmers' market position. Auction markets can increase trade efficiency, improve product quality, and offer better price discovery when supported by coordination among farmers, buyers, suppliers, and financial institutions (Nugroho, 2021). Ultimately, value-chain integration through technical, marketing, and material support can also improve smallholder participation in agricultural markets, as shown in smallholder agroforestry systems in West Java (Roshetko et al., 2012).

### **3.5 Future Research Direction**

Based on the reviewed literature, future study on collective action in Indonesian agricultural marketing should focus more on sustainability, environmental outcomes, market dynamics, and comparative learning. First, future studies should investigate how collective action can promote sustainable agricultural practices, including organic farming, agroecology, and community-based resource management. Current research indicates that multi-stakeholder collective action in organic tea farming can support sustainable practices, while social capital and community cooperation can strengthen sustainable rural initiatives such as agritourism and collective pest control (Hariance et al., 2024; Nugraha et al., 2021; Padmaningrum et al., 2025). Nevertheless, additional empirical evidence is needed on whether these practices generate measurable environmental benefits for local ecosystems.

Secondly, future study should explore the role of collective action in strengthening farmers' climate resilience. Collective arrangements can assist farmers in risks-sharing, coordinating adaptation strategies, and managing resources more sustainably, but this remains underdeveloped in Indonesian agricultural marketing studies (Novra, 2020; Triatmo et al., 2025). Therefore, further research is needed to evaluate how farmer groups and cooperatives support adaptation to climate shocks, price instability, and livelihood uncertainty.

Third, future studies should investigate the impact of collective action on access to both domestic and international markets, especially through cooperatives, auction markets, digital platforms, and value-chain integration (Nugroho, 2021; Rachim et al., 2025; Roshetko et al., 2012; Ton, 2008). More attention is also required on consumer preferences, branding, and marketing strategies for products generated through collective action initiatives.

Ultimately, international comparative research is essential to identify transferable lessons from countries with similar smallholder agricultural contexts. Such comparisons can help Indonesia in designing more adaptive and inclusive collective action models for its agricultural marketing.

#### 4. Conclusion

This review shows that collective action in Indonesian agricultural marketing contributes to farmers' benefits through improved market access, stronger bargaining power, reduced dependence on intermediaries, enhanced knowledge exchange, and institutional strengthening. These benefits are derived from cooperatives, farmer groups, community-based initiatives, digital platforms, and policy-supported arrangements.

However, collective action does not automatically yield positive outcomes. Its effectiveness depends on governance quality, managerial capacity, trust, inclusive participation, technological access, and supportive market institutions. Poor communication, elite domination, inadequate digital literacy, infrastructure constraints, and insufficient institutional support may hinder farmers' ability to benefit from collective marketing.

Therefore, collective action should be strengthened not merely as an organizational arrangement, but as a farmer-centered marketing strategy. Policy and practice must emphasize collaborative governance, farmer group capacity, digital market access, direct market linkages, and inclusive participation. Future studies should further assess sustainability outcomes, climate resilience, consumer preferences, and comparative insight from other smallholder agricultural systems.

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