



## Strengthening the Development Strategy of the Agropolitan Area as an Economic Potential of Kusan Tengah District, Tanah Bumbu Regency

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze strategies for developing the Agropolitan Area in Kusan Tengah District, Tanah Bumbu Regency, identify the constraints faced, and formulate strengthening solutions. The research is based on the condition that the agricultural sector in Kusan Tengah has considerable economic potential, with a sustainable food agricultural land area of 5,886.66 hectares and a rice planting area of 6,866 hectares in 2022. However, the implementation of Regional Regulation No. 9 of 2019 concerning Rural Area Development has not been optimal, indicating the need for more targeted strategies. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. Data analysis was conducted through the interactive Miles and Huberman model, and validity was ensured through source and method triangulation. Key informants included the Head of the Community and Village Empowerment Office and the Head of Bappeda Litbang of Tanah Bumbu Regency. The results indicate that the development strategies include optimizing land utilization, strengthening agricultural infrastructure, providing new water sources through drilled wells and piping systems, media-based promotion (print and digital), open recruitment of area managers, and encouraging private investment. The main challenges identified include limited infrastructure, underdeveloped village economic institutions, weak cross-sector coordination, and low private sector participatio

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## INTRODUCTION

Rural and regional development are national priorities under the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). The government emphasizes reducing urban-rural disparities, strengthening local economic potential, and improving the welfare of rural communities. This is reinforced by Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, which defines rural area development as an inter-village collaboration aimed at accelerating service delivery, empowering communities, and improving development quality through participatory approaches. Supporting regulations include Government Regulation No. 43 of 2014 and Ministerial Regulation of Villages PDDT No. 5 of 2016 concerning Rural Area Development.

Kusan Tengah District in Tanah Bumbu Regency was designated as an Agropolitan Area through Regional Regulation No. 9 of 2019. The designation was expected to stimulate local economic growth through the agricultural sector, especially rice and secondary crops. In 2022, the rice planting area reached 6,866 hectares with a harvested area of 5,783 hectares. Salimuran Village was the main production center with a planting area of 1,525 hectares and a harvested area of 1,509 hectares. Average rice productivity ranged between 400-450 quintals per hectare, with the highest yields recorded in Api-Api, Pakatellu, and Salimuran Villages, and the lowest in Mekar Jaya Village. This demonstrates that the district holds significant agricultural potential to strengthen food security and community income.

In addition to rice, secondary crops have developed in several villages such as Sepunggur, Saring Sungai Bubu, and Saring Sungai Binjai, reinforcing agricultural diversification. The district possesses 5,886.66 hectares of Sustainable Food Agricultural Land (LP2B), consisting of 2,197.35 hectares of potential land and 3,689.31 hectares of active land. Satiung Village has the largest potential area (1,590.80 hectares), while Karya Bakti Village has the smallest (9.27 hectares). However, the Agropolitan Area development has not been optimal. Nearly three years after the enactment of Regulation No. 9 of 2019, follow-up actions remain limited. Although in 2023 the Tanah Bumbu Government issued key policies Regent Decree No. 188.46/330/DPMD/2023 on the Coordination Team for Rural Area Development, Decree No. 188.46/331/DPMD/2023 on Agropolitan Area Development Locations, and Regent Regulation No. 66 of 2023 on the Agropolitan Area Development Plan implementation has been delayed.

This delay highlights the gap between the region's potential and weaknesses in governance. Other challenges include inadequate agricultural infrastructure (irrigation, farm roads, storage facilities), weak village economic institutions, poor stakeholder coordination, and limited private sector involvement. If unresolved, these issues may hinder the Agropolitan goal of creating agriculture-based economic growth centers that improve rural welfare. The Agropolitan concept was first introduced by Friedmann and Douglass (1976) as a regional development strategy integrating agricultural production, processing, and distribution with institutional and infrastructure support. Soenarno (2003) emphasized that Agropolitan areas are characterized by agricultural centers serving surrounding regions through integrated agribusiness systems. Rustiadi and Pranoto (2007) added that Agropolitan

development requires key prerequisites such as flagship commodities, land carrying capacity, sufficient population, supporting infrastructure, and strong institutions.

In regional development management, Agropolitan strategies are often formulated through SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This approach helps formulate realistic and adaptive strategies to leverage potential and overcome constraints (Rangkuti, 2020). Various studies on Agropolitan areas in Indonesia support this approach. Suyatno (2018) found that Agropolitan development in Semarang Regency required consistent policy coordination and strengthened farmer institutions. Wokas & Memah (2020) emphasized SO strategies in Rurukan, Tomohon, focusing on eco-friendly organic farming and community involvement through farmer groups. Rahman & Mubarokah (2022) highlighted agricultural intensification supported by education and training in Sidoarjo, while Agastya & Ariyani (2023) identified WO strategies in Wonosalam, Jombang, to overcome farmers' weaknesses through market information and institutional strengthening.

These studies reveal regional variations in strategic focus depending on local conditions. However, a common thread emerges: strengthening village institutions, improving agricultural infrastructure, and involving private and community actors. Therefore, this study contributes a new perspective by examining Kusan Tengah District in Tanah Bumbu Regency a newly designated Agropolitan area still in the early implementation stage following Regional Regulation No. 9 of 2019 and Regent Regulation No. 66 of 2023. This research emphasizes formulating development strategies based on SWOT analysis, supported by primary data from interviews and observations and secondary data from government documents.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of **agropolitan area development** integrates agricultural productivity with spatial and institutional planning to promote rural-based economic transformation. Friedman and Douglass (1976) define the agropolitan model as a regional development framework grounded in agribusiness activities that link agricultural production, processing, and distribution, aiming to accelerate the growth of rural economies. Soenarno (2003) further explains that an agropolitan area functions as a **rural spatial system** in which a central village serves as the growth hub supported by surrounding villages, interconnected within the regional spatial plan (*RTRW*). Rustiadi and Pranoto (2007) highlight that the essential requirements for agropolitan development include competitive agricultural commodities, suitable land capacity, sufficient population density, supportive infrastructure, and strong institutional capacity.

From the perspective of **strategic management**, the concept of development strategy emphasizes the systematic alignment of organizational objectives, resources, and environmental conditions. Bryson (2020) defines strategy as a coherent pattern of decisions and actions that connect an organization's mission with its external context to achieve long-term goals. In regional development, this approach allows local governments to manage resources efficiently, harmonize stakeholder coordination, and ensure consistency between policy formulation and implementation. Strategic management thus serves as the guiding principle for transforming agropolitan areas into sustainable centers of rural growth. The **SWOT analysis framework** (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) plays a crucial role in identifying internal capacities and external conditions that affect regional development outcomes. Pearce and Robinson (2018) describe SWOT as a diagnostic tool that helps planners assess the interplay between internal advantages and external challenges. Rangkuti (2020) argues that a balanced strategy should leverage strengths and opportunities while mitigating weaknesses and threats. This analytical model enables policymakers to formulate adaptive strategies for local development, particularly in contexts that require coordination among multiple actors, such as agropolitan management.

Synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, agropolitan development can be viewed as a **multi-dimensional strategic process** involving spatial, economic, and institutional integration. The combination of agropolitan theory, strategic management principles, and SWOT analysis creates a comprehensive framework that guides policymakers and local communities toward sustainable rural transformation. Through this integrated approach, agropolitan areas can function as inclusive growth centers that strengthen local competitiveness, promote agricultural innovation, and ensure long-term regional resilience.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach conducted in Kusan Tengah District, Tanah Bumbu Regency, South Kalimantan. Informants were purposively selected, consisting of the Head of the Community and Village Empowerment Office and the Head of Bappeda Litbang as key informants, supported by Functional Community Empowerment Officers and Professional Facilitators from the Ministry of Villages. The data comprised primary data from in-depth interviews and field observations, as well as secondary data from policy documents, official government reports, statistical data, and academic literature.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, documentation, and triangulation to ensure validity. Data analysis followed the interactive Miles and Huberman model, encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data credibility was ensured through tests of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability by integrating multiple sources and methods.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Development Strategies of the Agropolitan Area (SWOT Analysis)

Based on the SWOT analysis, development strategies for the Kusan Tengah Agropolitan Area fall into four main categories. The SO (Strength Opportunity) strategy focuses on optimizing internal strengths to leverage external opportunities. This includes maximizing land utilization, improving agricultural facilities and infrastructure, engaging local SMEs in agri-food products, and promoting the area through print and digital media. The WO (Weakness Opportunity) strategy aims to address internal weaknesses by utilizing external opportunities, such as developing new water sources through drilled wells and piping systems, recruiting professional area managers through open selection, and attracting private investment in agriculture and agrotourism. The ST (Strength Threat) strategy emphasizes using internal strengths to mitigate external threats by conducting community outreach and installing public awareness boards to promote environmental cleanliness. Finally, the WT (Weakness Threat) strategy seeks to minimize weaknesses to reduce vulnerability to threats, including improving irrigation systems through drilled wells and pipelines and enhancing operational monitoring.

### Constraints in Developing the Agropolitan Area

Despite the strategic framework, implementation in the field faces several challenges. First, agricultural infrastructure is limited production roads, storage warehouses, and irrigation systems largely depend on natural tidal flows. Second, village economic institutions, especially BUMDesa, have not yet functioned optimally in managing agricultural commodities collectively. Third, cross-actor coordination remains weak, with poor integration between central, regional, and village governments. Fourth, private sector involvement is minimal, both in agricultural processing investments and in developing potential agrotourism sectors.

To overcome these challenges, several solutions are proposed: (1) preparing a participatory Master Plan for Agropolitan development to guide sustainable programs; (2) strengthening village institutions through the establishment of Joint BUMDesa as agribusiness aggregators; (3) enhancing farmer and manager capacity through education, training, and continuous mentoring; (4) developing new water sources via drilled wells and piping systems to overcome irrigation shortages; (5) aligning regional and village development plans (RPJMD and RPJMDes) to ensure consistent direction; and (6) encouraging private investment in agriculture, processing, and agrotourism to enhance local value-added.

These findings align with Friedmann and Douglass's (1976) Agropolitan theory, which conceptualizes agriculture-based regions as drivers of regional economic growth supported by integrated agribusiness systems. However, field evidence indicates institutional and infrastructure gaps that must be addressed. This is consistent with Suyatno (2018) in Semarang, who emphasized cross-sector coordination, and Agastya & Ariyani (2023) in Jombang, who found that institutional reinforcement and infrastructure support can overcome farmer weaknesses.

Furthermore, the recommendation for digital promotion aligns with Bryson’s (2020) argument that public organizations must leverage information technology to expand reach and competitiveness. The proposal to strengthen village institutions through Joint BUMDesa also aligns with Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, emphasizing village economic independence through community participation. Thus, this study enriches empirical literature on Agropolitan development in Indonesia by highlighting the need for institutional strengthening, multi-level synergy, and private participation as key success factors.

Table 1. Summary of SWOT Analysis of the Kusan Tengah Agropolitan Area

Aspect	Description	Derived Strategy
Strengths (S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extensive agricultural land</li> <li>- Superior rice commodities</li> <li>- Availability of basic infrastructure</li> </ul>	SO Strategy: Optimize land and infrastructure utilization, promote the area, and encourage local culinary SMEs
Weaknesses (W)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited water resources</li> <li>- Limited managerial human resources</li> <li>- Insufficient funding</li> </ul>	WO Strategy: Develop drilled wells and pipeline systems, recruit professional area managers, and open private investment opportunities
Opportunities (O)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government financial support</li> <li>- Potential for agrotourism</li> <li>- Growing digital promotion trends</li> </ul>	ST Strategy: Conduct public awareness campaigns and install cleanliness information boards
Threats (T)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extreme weather conditions</li> <li>- Limited internet access</li> <li>- Low environmental cleanliness awareness</li> </ul>	WT Strategy: Strengthen operational supervision and improve irrigation through drilled wells and pipeline networks

Source: Author’s analysis (2025)

Table 2. Main Constraints and Strategic Solutions for Area Development

Constraint	Strategic Solution
Limited agricultural infrastructure (irrigation, roads, warehouses)	Construction of drilled wells and pipeline systems; rehabilitation of irrigation networks; improvement of farm access roads
Suboptimal village institutions (BUMDesa)	Establishment and strengthening of Joint BUMDesa as aggregators and managers of the agribusiness value chain
Weak cross-actor coordination	Synchronization of planning and budgeting between the District RPJMD and Village RPJMDes within the Agropolitan area

Low private-sector participation	Preparation of investment project briefs in agriculture and agrotourism; digital-based promotion to attract investors
Low literacy on hygiene and area promotion	Implementation of community education programs, installation of information boards, and promotional campaigns through social media and local events

Source: Author's analysis (2025)

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that the Kusan Tengah Agropolitan Area holds substantial potential, supported by extensive sustainable agricultural land, high rice productivity, and emerging opportunities in agrotourism and investment. The SWOT analysis produced four strategic packages: (1) SO leveraging strengths and opportunities through land optimization, infrastructure improvement, and promotion; (2) WO addressing weaknesses through new water sources, professional management, and private investment; (3) ST using strengths to mitigate threats through public education and cleanliness campaigns; and (4) WT minimizing weaknesses via operational supervision and irrigation strengthening.

Key challenges include limited agricultural infrastructure, weak village economic institutions, poor inter-actor coordination, low private participation, and inadequate promotional literacy. Solutions include developing a participatory Master Plan, strengthening Joint BUMDesa as aggregators, enhancing human resources through capacity-building programs, constructing drilled wells and piping systems, synchronizing district village planning, and leveraging digital promotion to attract investors. In summary, this study reinforces the significance of infrastructure, village institutional capacity, private engagement, and digital integration in building sustainable, agriculture-based regional development.

## FUTURE STUDY

This research still has delays, so it is necessary to conduct further research related to the topic Strengthening the Development Strategy of the Agropolitan Area as an Economic Potential of Kusan Tengah District, Tanah Bumbu Regency in order to improve this research and add insight for readers.

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