

Assisting Local Farmers with Smart Agriculture Practices Using IoT Technology

Mumu Muzayyin Maq¹

¹⁾ Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Cirebon, Indonesia

Correspondence email: muzrama@gmail.com

Article history

Submitted: 2025/01/10;

Revised: 2025/02/01;

Accepted: 2025/03/29

Abstract

This community service initiative aimed to improve agricultural practices in rural smallholder farming by adopting Internet of Things (IoT) technology for smart farming. The challenge in Desa Sukamaju, a region reliant on traditional farming methods, was the inefficient use of water and suboptimal crop yields, which were exacerbated by unpredictable weather patterns. This intervention aimed to empower local farmers by providing them with real-time data on soil moisture, temperature, and humidity to optimize irrigation and improve crop productivity. The approach adopted was Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), ensuring active farmer involvement in every program phase. The project utilized hands-on training to install and use IoT sensors, followed by continuous monitoring and support. Results showed a 23% reduction in water usage and an 18% increase in crop yields, particularly in vegetable crops. Additionally, qualitative feedback indicated a significant increase in farmer confidence, with 85% reporting greater technological competence. This indicates that IoT can significantly enhance resource management and crop productivity, even for farmers with limited digital experience. However, challenges such as technology maintenance and scalability sustainability were identified. The findings highlight the potential of IoT to modernize smallholder farming and underscore the need for continuous support and cost-effective solutions for long-term impact. The contribution of this work lies in demonstrating the practical, scalable application of IoT technology in rural farming settings, with recommendations for future projects to ensure sustainability and broader adoption.

Keywords

Community Empowerment, IoT Technology, Smart Agriculture, Smallholder Farmers, Technology Adoption.



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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of economic stability and food security, particularly in rural and developing regions where a significant portion of the population depends on farming for their livelihood. However, traditional agricultural methods are increasingly unable to meet the rising demands for food production due to climate change, soil degradation, water scarcity, and fluctuating market conditions [1]. A lack of access to modern farming knowledge, tools, and techniques among local farmers further exacerbates these issues. As the global population grows and arable land becomes limited, there is a pressing need to enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability through innovative practices [2].

Integrating technology into agriculture, especially through the Internet of Things (IoT), offers a promising solution to these challenges.

One of the major problems local farmers face is the lack of timely and accurate information regarding environmental conditions that directly affect crop yields, such as soil moisture, temperature, humidity, and rainfall. Most smallholder farmers still rely on manual observations or traditional knowledge passed down through generations, which, while valuable, may not always be accurate or sufficient to make informed decisions in today's rapidly changing environmental landscape [3]. This often leads to inefficiencies, such as overwatering, under-fertilizing, or delayed pest management, which can significantly reduce crop productivity and income. Furthermore, limited access to extension services and agricultural training programs means that many farmers are unaware of the potential benefits of modern technologies to their farming practices [4].

What sets this study apart is its focus on applying IoT-based smart agriculture systems as a community service initiative rather than a purely academic or commercial research endeavor. While numerous studies have explored IoT in agriculture from a technological or economic perspective, few have actively involved local communities in deploying, training, and using such technologies [5]. This article emphasizes participatory engagement and capacity building among farmers, ensuring that the target communities not only introduce but also effectively adopt and maintain technological solutions [6]. This human-centric approach bridges the often-overlooked gap between innovation and real-world application, ensuring the sustainability and long-term impact of the intervention.

Previous community service efforts in agriculture have typically focused on providing physical resources such as seeds, fertilizers, or tools or delivering short-term training sessions without incorporating sustained technological support [7]. While these initiatives have made valuable contributions, they often fail to create lasting change due to the absence of continuous engagement, follow-up, and adaptability to evolving needs [8]. Moreover, previous programs rarely incorporate data-driven decision-making frameworks that allow farmers to monitor and adjust their practices based on real-time information. This gap in previous community outreach efforts highlights the need for a more integrated, tech-supported, and participatory model of agricultural assistance.

The primary goal of this scientific community service initiative is to assist local farmers in adopting smart agriculture practices by introducing an IoT-based monitoring system tailored to their specific needs and environmental conditions. This includes deploying affordable and user-friendly sensors to collect data on key agricultural parameters, developing a centralized data platform for analysis, and conducting hands-on training sessions for farmers to interpret and act on the information. Farmers will gain the skills and confidence to independently manage their farming operations with greater efficiency, resilience, and sustainability through this process. The project also aims to create a replicable model that can be adopted by other communities facing similar agricultural challenges.

This initiative is hoped to lead to measurable improvements in crop yield, resource

efficiency, and environmental sustainability among participating farmers. Beyond the immediate agricultural outcomes, the project aspires to foster a culture of innovation and lifelong learning within the community, empowering farmers to become agents of change in their own right. By integrating modern technology with traditional knowledge, this initiative addresses current agricultural challenges and prepares the community to face future uncertainties with greater adaptability. It contributes to the broader goals of rural development, food security, and technological equity.

METHODS

The community service activity adopts the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach, emphasizing inclusive and collaborative engagement with local farmers as key stakeholders in identifying problems, designing solutions, and implementing smart agriculture practices using IoT technology. The program was conducted over four months, from July to October 2024, in the rural agricultural area of Desa Sukamaju, a village known for its rice and vegetable farming but still dependent on traditional methods. The primary target group consisted of 30 smallholder farmers, mostly with less than two hectares of land, who were selected through coordination with the village agricultural office. The activity began with a planning phase, which included field visits, informal discussions with community leaders and farmer groups, and mapping of farming challenges and potentials. After obtaining formal permission from the village government and agricultural extension agency, the team attended community meetings to build trust and discuss the program's objectives. These initial dialogues ensured that the planned technology interventions aligned with local needs and were culturally acceptable.

Following the planning and licensing stages, the preparation phase involved developing and customizing IoT sensor kits for soil moisture, temperature, and humidity, along with designing a simple mobile-based dashboard to display real-time data in an accessible format. During the implementation phase, farmers participated in a hands-on workshop to install the sensors in their fields and learn how to interpret the data to inform watering schedules, pest control, and fertilization. Data collection techniques included direct observation, interviews, sensor data logs, and focus group discussions. The primary data sources were the farmers, the installed IoT devices, and agricultural extension officers acting as co-facilitators. The sensor data was analyzed quantitatively using time series analysis and correlation tests (e.g., Pearson correlation) to determine the relationship between environmental factors and crop yield indicators.

In contrast, qualitative data from interviews and group discussions were analyzed using thematic coding to capture farmer perceptions, behavioral changes, and technology acceptance. The monitoring process included weekly check-ins by the research team and regular updates from farmer groups via WhatsApp. In the evaluation phase, an online survey and comparative yield data were used to measure the impact. The findings were presented in a final village forum to ensure transparency, gather feedback, and discuss sustainability

strategies. This integrative and participatory flow ensured that the community was not only a recipient but an active co-creator in the success of the smart agriculture intervention.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this community service program revealed several significant findings regarding the adoption and impact of IoT-based smart agriculture practices among local farmers in Desa Sukamaju. One of the most notable outcomes was a measurable improvement in farmers' decision-making capabilities related to crop management. Farmers could access consistent and accurate data on soil moisture, temperature, and humidity by implementing real-time monitoring using IoT sensors. This information allowed them to optimize irrigation schedules, reducing water usage and plant stress. Comparative analysis between pre-intervention and post-intervention periods indicated a 23% decrease in water consumption without negatively affecting crop yields. This suggests farmers could implement more efficient watering practices informed by sensor data.

Statistical analysis using Pearson correlation demonstrated a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.78$) between the application of IoT-based decisions and crop yield outcomes. Specifically, farmers who followed data-guided practices observed an average yield increase of 18%, particularly in vegetable crops such as chili and tomatoes, which are highly sensitive to environmental fluctuations [9]. This correlation supports the hypothesis that access to timely and accurate environmental data enables better resource management and improves productivity. Furthermore, the time-series analysis of sensor data over the three months showed that soil moisture levels were more consistently maintained within the optimal range (20%–35%) after the introduction of the IoT devices, reducing the risk of over- or under-watering, which was previously a frequent problem among farmers.

In addition to quantitative improvements, qualitative data collected through interviews and focus group discussions showed a shift in farmers' attitudes toward technology. At the program's start, many participants expressed skepticism and uncertainty about their ability to understand or benefit from digital tools [10]. However, by the end of the project, over 85% of participants reported feeling more confident in using the IoT dashboard and could independently interpret the data it provided. The interview transcripts' thematic analysis revealed themes of empowerment, curiosity, and a sense of modernization in their farming identity. Farmers shared how being able to "see" what was happening in their soil in real time helped them make decisions faster and with greater confidence.

Another important finding was the increase in collaborative behavior among participants. The introduction of technology catalyzed peer learning and group problem-solving. Farmers began to exchange experiences and discuss sensor readings together, often organizing informal group consultations before deciding on pest control methods or irrigation [11]. This communal interaction not only strengthened the sense of ownership of the technology but also fostered a knowledge-sharing culture that had previously been limited. In many ways, the program created a platform for community-based innovation, where farmers

experimented with the technology and adapted it to suit their unique farming contexts [12].

Monitoring reports also indicated that the technology positively impacted farmers' ability to anticipate and respond to environmental challenges. For instance, during an unseasonal dry spell in August, farmers who relied on sensor data could implement water-saving irrigation techniques more effectively than those who still used manual observation. This real-world application highlighted the practical resilience that smart agriculture practices can bring to smallholder farming, especially in the face of climate variability [13]. It was also observed that farmers who adopted the technology early on became informal mentors to others, gradually expanding the program's impact beyond the original target group.

The program demonstrated that IoT-based smart agriculture solutions can significantly improve farming efficiency, productivity, and sustainability through a participatory and community-driven approach. The combination of quantitative outcomes, such as improved yields and optimized water usage, and qualitative changes, like increased confidence, cooperation, and technological literacy, underscores the holistic value of integrating digital tools in rural agricultural settings [14]. These findings suggest not only the effectiveness of the intervention in the short term and its potential for long-term scalability and replication in similar communities.

Table 1: Impact of IoT-Based Smart Agriculture Practices

Farming Variable	Before Intervention	After Intervention	Percentage Change
Water Usage (Liters/day)	1500	1150	-23%
Crop Yield (kg/hectare)	5,000	5,900	+18%
Farmer Confidence in Technology (%)	35%	85%	+50%

This table presents the quantitative outcomes of the project involving IoT-based smart agriculture practices in Desa Sukamaju. Before the intervention, farmers used approximately 1500 liters of water per day per hectare, resulting in inefficient water usage. Post-intervention, with the implementation of IoT sensors, water usage decreased by 23%, amounting to 1150 liters per day per hectare. Regarding crop productivity, the introduction of real-time environmental data enabled farmers to optimize irrigation and fertilizer application, resulting in an 18% increase in crop yields, from 5,000 kg per hectare to 5,900 kg per hectare. Furthermore, there was a substantial increase in farmer confidence, with 85% of participants feeling more confident using the technology than just 35% at the program's start. These results indicate that the adoption of IoT technology in farming not only led to better resource management but also contributed to enhanced productivity and greater technological acceptance among farmers.



Figure 1. Assisting Local Farmers with Smart Agriculture Practices

The results of this community service program demonstrate a clear advancement in the application of smart agriculture practices using IoT technology, particularly when compared to similar community-based interventions in previous studies. In analyzing the outcomes, it is important to juxtapose them with findings from prior community service projects in rural agriculture and with relevant theoretical frameworks that support the integration of technology in farming.

One of the most significant results of this initiative was the 23% reduction in water usage, paired with an 18% increase in crop yields. This finding aligns with previous studies that have demonstrated the potential of IoT technologies to optimize resource use and improve crop productivity. For instance, a study by [15] highlighted how sensor-based irrigation systems could reduce water consumption by up to 30%, thereby supporting the sustainability of farming operations in water-scarce regions. The improved irrigation practices in this program suggest that smallholder farmers, even those with minimal technological experience, can effectively adopt data-driven decisions to enhance the efficiency of their farming systems. This result is consistent with theories of precision agriculture, which argue that the application of real-time environmental data allows farmers to make more informed and efficient decisions regarding resource allocation. The findings from this project also confirm the broader application of smart farming as an accessible and impactful solution for small-scale farmers [16].

However, the participatory approach, which fostered collaboration and peer learning among farmers, sets this initiative apart from previous community service efforts. In contrast, many earlier interventions in rural areas focused on distributing resources or providing short-term training sessions without sustained follow-up. The success of this project in creating a collaborative learning environment underscores the importance of community-based action research (CBAR) in agricultural development [17]. Research by [18] supports this, showing that community-driven technological adoption leads to more sustainable outcomes because local farmers are actively involved in the decision-making and problem-solving. Through this approach, the technology became more accepted and more effectively adapted to local needs and conditions. The shift from skepticism to confidence among farmers can be explained by

the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are critical factors influencing the adoption of new technologies [19]. The hands-on training and continuous support provided during the program helped reduce barriers to understanding and increase farmers' perceived usefulness of the IoT system.

Regarding the impact on crop yields, the 18% increase reported is consistent with findings from similar projects, such as those by [20], who observed a 15-20% increase in crop productivity when IoT systems were implemented in smallholder farms. This confirms that, under optimal conditions, IoT systems can directly contribute to higher yields by enabling more precise and timely management practices. However, what distinguishes this study is the contextualization of technology to fit the specific needs and challenges of the participating farmers [21]. Unlike generalized technology rollouts, this project tailored the system to monitor environmental variables directly impacting the local crops (e.g., moisture levels for rice and vegetables). This speaks to the importance of local adaptation in agricultural interventions.

Moreover, the improved capacity of farmers to interpret and act on the data provided by the IoT system can be connected to the broader theoretical framework of knowledge empowerment. According to the work of [22] on participatory development, when farmers are provided with tools to collect and analyze data, they experience greater agency over their farming decisions, strengthening their ability to adapt to external challenges such as climate change or fluctuating market conditions. The increased self-efficacy observed in the farmers in this study, where 85% of participants felt more confident in using the technology, supports this theory and highlights the power of information in transforming agricultural practices [23].

The analysis of the results from this program also points to several key gaps that need to be addressed in future community-based IoT initiatives. While improving crop yields and resource efficiency is promising, the program's long-term success will depend on the farmers' ability to maintain the technology and continue using the system independently once the initial intervention phase is over [24]. Future studies should focus on the sustainability of IoT-based farming systems, especially concerning maintenance costs, technical support, and the integration of farmers' feedback into the system's ongoing development. Research by [25] on the longevity of agricultural technology adoption suggests that post-intervention support, including periodic training and system upgrades, is essential for ensuring the technology remains relevant and effective.

This community service project's findings provide empirical evidence for the positive impact of IoT technology in enhancing agricultural productivity and resource efficiency and underline the importance of a participatory approach that empowers local farmers. By comparing these results to previous community service efforts and theoretical frameworks, it is clear that integrating technology into smallholder farming through active community involvement and tailored solutions can lead to sustainable, long-term improvements in agricultural practices. However, further research is needed to explore the scalability of these solutions and address the ongoing challenges of technology maintenance and adaptation in

rural contexts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this community service initiative demonstrated that IoT technology can effectively assist smallholder farmers in improving their agricultural practices, particularly in resource management and crop productivity. The integration of real-time data collection and analysis led to more informed decision-making, which resulted in reduced water usage, higher crop yields, and increased farmer confidence in technology adoption. As researchers, we were initially concerned about the feasibility of introducing such technology to farmers with limited digital literacy and resources. However, the positive outcomes, including farmers' active participation and growing proficiency in using the technology, alleviated these concerns. This suggests that with proper training and community engagement, IoT can be valuable in smallholder farming, even in rural, resource-constrained settings.

However, the program also revealed several limitations. One major challenge was ensuring the long-term sustainability of the technology beyond the intervention period. While the program's initial success was encouraging, the maintenance of IoT systems, along with the continuous need for farmer education and support, presents a potential barrier to long-term impact. Additionally, while data from the project showed increased efficiency and productivity, scaling this initiative to a larger number of farmers or other regions could require substantial investments in both infrastructure and ongoing support. Future community service efforts should address these challenges by developing low-cost, scalable solutions and exploring partnerships with local governments or organizations that can provide technical support and resources for the continued use of IoT systems.

For future interventions, it is recommended that the project be expanded to include a more comprehensive sustainability plan. This could involve integrating local technicians who can assist with the maintenance of IoT devices and developing partnerships with agricultural extension services to ensure that the technology continues to be accessible. Furthermore, future research could explore the potential for digital financial models, such as micro-financing or pay-per-use systems, enabling smallholder farmers to afford the initial cost of IoT devices and sensors. Lastly, future studies should consider integrating climate-resilient technologies to address the challenges posed by climate change, ensuring that farmers can remain adaptable in the face of unpredictable environmental shifts.

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