

INCREASING BUSINESS ACTOR KNOWLEDGE THROUGH FOOD LABEL EDUCATION AS A STRATEGY TO INCREASE PRODUCT COMPETITIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

This activity aims to educate MSMEs about food labels as a way to increase product competitiveness. Food labels play a role not only as product identity but also as a producer's responsibility to consumers. The activity was held on Thursday, August 7, 2025, at the Flamboyan RPTRA, attended by 15 food and beverage business actors. The activity began with a pre-test, material presentation, group discussion, and evaluation in the form of a post-test. From the pre-test, it was apparent that most participants still considered food labels merely decorative on packaging, without understanding their informative function. The results of the activity showed a significant increase in participants' understanding. In terms of knowledge, this activity also had an impact on participants' awareness of the strategic value of food labels in strengthening product competitiveness. Participants realized that labels are not only a regulatory obligation but also a branding strategy that can improve image and consumer trust.

Keywords: Competitiveness, Food Labels, SME.

1. INTRODUCTION

Food labels play a crucial role, not only as product identification but also as a form of producer responsibility towards consumers. Through labels, consumers can learn about nutritional content, ingredient composition, expiration dates, and manufacturer information. Research shows that reading nutritional information on food labels is closely related to the tendency to choose healthier foods; thus, food labels directly contribute to people's consumption behavior (Huda & Andrias, 2018). This means that the better consumers and businesses understand food labels, the greater their impact on public health and business sustainability. This means that the better consumers and businesses understand food labels, the greater their positive impact on public health and business sustainability.

In practice, many small businesses still use simple packaging without adequate labeling. However, packaging and labels serve not only to protect products but also as marketing tools that can increase consumer appeal (Fitriarni et al., 2024). Attractive and informative packaging design can be a differentiating factor in competition, especially when products compete with major brands in the modern market. In other words, food labels are an effective branding strategy for increasing product added value (Fitriarni et al., 2024; Najib et al., 2022; Syamsudin et al., 2016).

In the Menteng Dalam area of South Jakarta, food and beverage businesses still lack understanding of the importance of food labels. Many local culinary products in this area are sold in simple packaging without proper labeling, and some even use plain plastic without nutritional information, ingredients, or expiration dates. This situation makes it difficult for products to compete with similar products in the modern market, which demands higher standards of quality, aesthetics, and regulatory compliance.

Food labels serve not only to comply with regulations but also as a form of producer responsibility to consumers. Nutritional information listed on labels can help consumers make healthier food choices (Huda & Andrias, 2018). Therefore, the absence of labels on food and beverage MSME products in Menteng Dalam not only reduces consumer appeal but also potentially raises concerns about product safety.

Several facts show that home-based businesses tend to neglect labeling due to limited knowledge, even though labeling is mandatory according to the Food and Drug Monitoring Agency (BPOM) regulations (Artaya et al., 2021; Komalasari et al., 2020; Megawati, 2019). Through this community service activity, food and beverage businesses in Menteng Dalam will gain an understanding that food labels are not merely a formality, but rather a branding strategy and product quality assurance. This education is expected to bridge the knowledge gap that has been a barrier for local MSMEs to enter a more competitive market.

This community service activity aims to increase knowledge and awareness among food and beverage businesses in the Menteng Dalam area regarding the importance of food labels as part of a strategy to increase product

competitiveness. Through this education, businesses are expected to understand the basic aspects of food labeling, including nutritional information, composition, net weight, expiration date, and producer identity, in accordance with applicable regulations.

With the growing awareness that food labels are not merely an administrative obligation, but rather a strategic instrument for building consumer trust, strengthening product image, and opening up broader marketing opportunities, it is hoped that with increased business understanding, the quality of packaging and labels on local food and beverage products will improve, enabling them to compete with similar products in modern markets and digital marketplaces. Therefore, this activity is not only oriented towards increasing business literacy but also aimed at sustainably strengthening the competitiveness of Menteng Dalam's MSMEs through the implementation of good food labeling practices.

2. METHOD

This activity's implementation method is designed in a participatory manner so that food and beverage entrepreneurs in the Menteng Dalam area not only receive theoretical material but also are able to apply it in real-world practice. Several stages are used:

1. Training

The initial stage consisted of a training session provided by the community service team. The training materials covered a basic understanding of food labels, applicable regulations, mandatory label components (ingredients, nutritional information, expiration date, manufacturer identity), and examples of good label implementation. In addition to theory, participants were also provided with simple practical exercises on designing labels using basic applications so they could immediately implement them on their own products.

2. Discussion and Question and Answer

Following the training, an interactive discussion was held between the resource persons and business owners. This forum served to identify obstacles faced by businesses regarding label implementation, such as limited knowledge, production costs, or access to regulations. The discussion was intended to provide a forum for sharing experiences and practical solutions that MSMEs can directly implement.



Picture 1. Discussion and Question and Answer

3. Evaluation

Evaluations were conducted to measure participants' understanding before and after the training through short pre- and post-tests. Additionally, sample labels and packaging designs produced by participants after the training were assessed. The evaluation results were used to determine the extent to which participants' knowledge and skills in understanding the importance of food labels had improved.

4. Follow-Up

The follow-up phase focuses on mentoring businesses ready to implement food labels on their products. The team provides recommendations for improving label design to meet standards, assists with simple legal processes (such as including PIRT), and facilitates collaboration with relevant parties such as the Health Department or certification bodies. This follow-up ensures that activities go beyond training and have a tangible impact on the sustainability of MSME businesses in Menteng Dalam.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This one-day community service activity took place on August 7, 2025, at the Flamboyan Menteng Dalam RPTRA. Fifteen food and beverage entrepreneurs, members of the Family Welfare Movement (PKK), attended. The activity began with a pre-test to determine participants' initial knowledge of food labels, followed by a training session that covered the importance of food labels, applicable regulations, and simple practices for designing packaging labels. This was followed by interactive group discussions, label-making practices, and a post-test evaluation.

The results of the training showed a significant increase in participants' understanding. The pre-test revealed that most participants still viewed food labels as mere decoration on packaging, without understanding their informative function. However, after the training, the majority of participants were able to identify important components of a food label, such as the product name, ingredients, nutritional information, net weight, expiration date, and manufacturer identity.

In this training, partners, namely food and beverage entrepreneurs from the Menteng Dalam Family Welfare Movement (PKK) women's group, played a central role in determining the program's success. Partners were not merely passive participants but actively participated throughout the process. First, the partners' role was evident from the initial stage, identifying the challenges they faced, particularly the lack of knowledge and skills in labeling food products. Partners reported that most products were still packaged simply without including important information such as composition, expiration dates, or producer identity. This information served as the basis for developing more applicable materials tailored to their needs.



Picture 2. Educational Activities

Second, during the training and discussion sessions, partners actively participated by asking questions and sharing experiences. For example, several participants expressed financial constraints in printing labels and limited access to regulatory information. This active participation helped the implementation team provide practical solutions, such as the use of simple design applications and affordable label printing alternatives. Third, partner participation was very evident in the labeling practice. Participants were guided to design their own product labels, from determining the product name and ingredients to providing basic information required by regulations. Several participants successfully designed labels for dry and wet cakes, as well as traditional snacks.

The partners' enthusiasm demonstrated their high motivation to apply this new knowledge to their business products. Fourth, during the evaluation phase, partners contributed by participating in pre- and post-tests, which demonstrated significant improvements in understanding. They also provided feedback in the form of suggestions for continuing the training with ongoing mentoring, particularly in creative design and business legality. Thus, the partners' active role and participation in this activity extends beyond attendance to contributing ideas, engaging in practical activities, and committing to implementing the training findings in their businesses.

Education on reading food labels effectively increases public understanding of packaging contents and product safety, providing important insights because food labels function not only as an information medium but also as an instrument for building consumer trust (Megawati, 2019). (Fitriarni et al., 2024; Irwandi et al., 2024; Nurwidiana et al., 2019) revealed that assistance provided to small industry players in improving product labels has increased consumer trust and improved sales. This is evident from the results of the training in Menteng Dalam, where participants realized that complete food labels can strengthen their product image and increase marketing potential, especially in modern markets and digital platforms.



Picture 3. Educational Activities

In addition to the knowledge aspect, this activity also impacted participants' awareness of the strategic value of food labels in strengthening product competitiveness. Participants recognized that labels are not only a regulatory obligation but also a branding strategy that can improve consumer image and trust. Training on compiling information on labels increased MSMEs' understanding and opened up opportunities for marketing development in the digital era (Kuntolaksono et al., 2024; Kusnandar et al., 2021). Overall, the food label education activity in Menteng Dalam successfully increased business actors' understanding and awareness of the importance of labels as an instrument of quality, transparency, and competitiveness. These results reinforce the finding that product label mentoring activities have been proven to improve MSME branding and sales.

Overall, the results of this activity demonstrate that food labeling education not only enhances theoretical knowledge but also fosters practical awareness among local food and beverage businesses. If followed up with mentoring, good labeling practices will promote business sustainability and expand market reach.

4. CONCLUSION

The training, held on August 7, 2025, at the Flamboyan Menteng Dalam RPTRA, with 15 food and beverage entrepreneurs from the Family Welfare Movement (PKK) participating, had a positive impact on improving knowledge and skills related to food labeling. Evaluation results showed a significant increase in participants' understanding of the function of food labels, including nutritional information, composition, expiration dates, and producer identification.

In addition to increasing knowledge, this activity also raised participants' awareness that food labels are not just a regulatory requirement, but also a crucial strategy for increasing product competitiveness, strengthening branding, and building consumer trust. The partners' active participation in discussions and labeling practices demonstrated their strong motivation to apply the training findings to their respective businesses.

Thus, this activity can be concluded as an effective initial step to strengthen the competitiveness of food and beverage MSMEs in Menteng Dalam through food labeling education. These results align with various previous community service activities, which confirmed that improving labels and packaging can improve branding, marketing, and expand market access for local products.

The results of the activity revealed several points that require attention for further development. First, food label education training should not stop at a one-time briefing, but should be followed by ongoing mentoring so participants can truly apply the knowledge gained to their business products. This mentoring could include consultations on label design, developing simple nutritional information, and even aligning with applicable regulations.

Second, encouragement is needed for food and beverage businesses in Menteng Dalam to complete business legalities such as PIRT and halal certification. This is crucial for expanding marketing access, particularly to modern markets with stricter distribution standards. Third, similar training can be supplemented with digital marketing materials,

allowing products with standardized labels to be promoted through social media and marketplaces. This way, the impact of the activities goes beyond production and contributes to increased sales.

Fourth, the success of this activity demonstrates that food labeling education provides tangible benefits for MSMEs. Therefore, similar programs are recommended for replication in other regions, particularly in culinary MSME centers that still face similar challenges with packaging and labeling. With ongoing follow-up, it is hoped that local products from food and beverage businesses in Menteng Dalam will be more competitive, meet quality and food safety standards, and increase consumer confidence in an increasingly competitive market.

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