

## *Nilam* development – from nursery to patchouli oil

Napal Licin 12. – 13.01.2016



(Source: BIOCLIME)

One component of BIOCLIME involves improving the livelihoods of local communities living in and around protected forest areas in South Sumatra. In this regard BIOCLIME is supporting the development and cultivation of *nilam* and its further processing to produce patchouli oil (*minyak atsiri*) in the village of Napal Licin.

Based on information from an open-ended Interview with village farmer group member, Amir during the “Group Organization Training” on the 12 January 2016, *nilam* cultivation in Napal Licin has shown significant progress. Without knowing whether the climatic conditions or soil in Napal Licin were suitable for growing *nilam*, since its introduction in 2014, production has proved profitable. Amir bought his first seeds from a supplier in Bangko subdistrict in Jambi province, where he had seen *nilam* being cultivated. After some time, and with the support of BIOCLIME, the community established a *nilam* nursery and villagers began planting the seedlings it

produced. Cultivation commonly involves a mixed crop system, which the community considers the most profitable arrangement. *Nilam* is intercropped with coffee, rubber and rice as it does not interfere with the cultivation of other crops. Furthermore, rubber is seen as a long-term investment, coffee as medium-term, and *nilam* as short-term as it needs only 6 months for the first harvest. No special irrigation system is used, and neither are fertilizers and pesticides. After harvesting, the plants have to be shade dried for 10 to 12 days before the distillation process can commence. Distillation currently takes place in an upland area with plentiful water, which the process requires.

As the current distillation process is time consuming and requires a lot of effort from the villagers, BIOCLIME’s support will involve supplying modern equipment to facilitate the process. Villagers sell their patchouli oil directly to Bangko subdistrict where 1 kg can fetch from IDR 700,000 to 720,000.

## Remaining challenges

A number of challenges to *nilam* cultivation remain in the village. At present only a few villagers cultivate *nilam*. Its recent introduction means *nilam* is still a relatively new crop for the community. Villagers think they can only cultivate *nilam* when in possession of distillation machines, which they associate with high costs (IDR 2,500,000). In fact, villagers could also sell dried *nilam* leaves, which can still generate reasonable earnings. Market access is another challenge; firstly the only accessible market for *nilam* is in Bangko subdistrict, which results in a monopoly price; secondly, Bangko subdistrict is quite far away and takes at least 5 hours to reach.

## Conclusion and future outlook

The community still requires further encouragement to cultivate *nilam*. As it is a suitable intercrop<sup>1</sup>, *nilam* production can provide an advantage and improve villagers' incomes. The community's knowledge of cultivation processes is advanced and training seems to have been fruitful. What is needed is better equipment, and a drip irrigation system<sup>2</sup> should be a consideration. Encouragingly, young people seem interested in being involved in *nilam* cultivation (see the following picture). They were enthusiastic during training and show high levels of commitment to furthering *nilam* development.



(Source: BIOCLIME)

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[https://www.nabard.org/english/medical\\_patchuoli2.aspx](https://www.nabard.org/english/medical_patchuoli2.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> ibid