ReGeo
ISSN: 2177-3246

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL IN ACCELERATING OIL PALM SMALLHOLDERS REPLANTING PROGRAM

A IMPORTÂNCIA DO MODELO DE PARCERIA NA ACELERAÇÃO DO PROGRAMA DE REPLANTIO DE PEQUENOS PRODUTORES DE PALMA DE ÓLEO

LA IMPORTANCIA DEL MODELO DE ASOCIACIÓN EN LA ACELERACIÓN DEL PROGRAMA DE REPLANTACIÓN DE PEQUEÑOS PRODUCTORES DE PALMA DE ACEITE

10.56238/revgeov17n1-128

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ABSTRACT

Oil palm is a critical commodity for Indonesia's economy, with smallholders cultivating over 40% of the national plantation area. However, the aging of plantations with more than 30% exceeding 25 years necessitates large-scale replanting efforts. Despite government support through the Peremajaan Sawit Rakyat (PSR) program, implementation remains suboptimal due to structural barriers faced by smallholders, including limited access to finance, certified seedlings, technical assistance, and reliable markets. Addressing these constraints requires effective partnership models that integrate stakeholders across the palm oil value chain. This study aims to explore how partnership models facilitate smallholder participation and success in national oil palm replanting programs by overcoming structural limitations. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this qualitative research analyzes 28 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2019 and 2025. Data were collected from academic databases using keyword-based searches and PRISMA screening protocols. Thematic analysis was employed to categorize partnership types, key actors, operational mechanisms, and reported outcomes. The results indicate that inclusive, hybrid partnership models combining private-sector engagement with public support achieve the greatest success in improving access to financial resources, certified planting materials, and extension services. Moreover, strong institutional coordination and trust-building mechanisms enhance adoption rates and program sustainability. The review underscores the need for adaptive, multi-stakeholder collaboration tailored to local contexts. In conclusion, partnership models are pivotal in accelerating the success of oil palm smallholder replanting. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies and comparative policy evaluations to deepen understanding of model scalability and long-term impact.

Keywords: Oil Palm. Smallholders. Replanting Program. Partnership Model. SLR.

RESUMO

O dendê (palma de óleo) é uma commodity estratégica para a economia da Indonésia, com os pequenos produtores cultivando mais de 40% da área nacional de plantações. No entanto, o envelhecimento das plantações — com mais de 30% ultrapassando 25 anos —

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torna necessários esforços de replantio em larga escala. Apesar do apoio governamental por meio do programa Peremajaan Sawit Rakyat (PSR), a implementação permanece aquém do ideal devido a barreiras estruturais enfrentadas pelos pequenos produtores, incluindo acesso limitado a financiamento, mudas certificadas, assistência técnica e mercados confiáveis. Enfrentar essas restrições exige modelos de parceria eficazes que integrem os diferentes atores ao longo da cadeia de valor do óleo de palma. Este estudo tem como objetivo explorar como os modelos de parceria facilitam a participação e o sucesso dos pequenos produtores em programas nacionais de replantio de palma de óleo, ao superar limitações estruturais. Utilizando a abordagem de Revisão Sistemática da Literatura (RSL), esta pesquisa qualitativa analisa 28 artigos científicos revisados por pares, publicados entre 2019 e 2025. Os dados foram coletados em bases acadêmicas por meio de buscas com palavras-chave e protocolos de triagem PRISMA. A análise temática foi empregada para categorizar os tipos de parceria, os principais atores, os mecanismos operacionais e os resultados reportados. Os resultados indicam que modelos de parceria inclusivos e híbridos, que combinam o engajamento do setor privado com o apoio público, alcançam maior sucesso na melhoria do acesso a recursos financeiros, materiais de plantio certificados e serviços de extensão rural. Além disso, uma forte coordenação institucional e mecanismos de construção de confiança aumentam as taxas de adoção e a sustentabilidade dos programas. A revisão destaca a necessidade de uma colaboração adaptativa e multissetorial, ajustada aos contextos locais. Conclui-se que os modelos de parceria são fundamentais para acelerar o sucesso do replantio de palma de óleo por pequenos produtores. Pesquisas futuras devem se concentrar em estudos longitudinais e avaliações comparativas de políticas para aprofundar a compreensão sobre a escalabilidade dos modelos e seus impactos de longo prazo.

Palavras-chave: Palma de Óleo. Pequenos Produtores. Programa de Replantio. Modelo de Parceria. RSL.

RESUMEN

La palma de aceite es una mercancía estratégica para la economía de Indonesia, donde los pequeños productores cultivan más del 40% del área nacional de plantaciones. Sin embargo, el envejecimiento de las plantaciones —con más del 30% que supera los 25 años— hace necesarios esfuerzos de replantación a gran escala. A pesar del apoyo gubernamental a través del programa Peremajaan Sawit Rakyat (PSR), la implementación sigue siendo subóptima debido a las barreras estructurales que enfrentan los pequeños productores, entre ellas el acceso limitado al financiamiento, a plántulas certificadas, a la asistencia técnica y a mercados confiables. Abordar estas limitaciones requiere modelos de asociación eficaces que integren a los actores a lo largo de la cadena de valor del aceite de palma. Este estudio tiene como objetivo explorar cómo los modelos de asociación facilitan la participación y el éxito de los pequeños productores en los programas nacionales de replantación de palma de aceite, superando las limitaciones estructurales. Mediante un enfoque de Revisión Sistemática de la Literatura (RSL), esta investigación cualitativa analiza 28 artículos científicos revisados por pares, publicados entre 2019 y 2025. Los datos se recopilaron a partir de bases académicas mediante búsquedas por palabras clave y protocolos de selección PRISMA. Se empleó el análisis temático para categorizar los tipos de asociación, los actores clave, los mecanismos operativos y los resultados reportados. Los resultados indican que los modelos de asociación inclusivos e híbridos, que combinan la participación del sector privado con el apoyo público, logran mayor éxito en la mejora del acceso a recursos financieros, materiales de plantación certificados y servicios de extensión. Asimismo, una sólida coordinación institucional y mecanismos de construcción de confianza incrementan las tasas de adopción y la sostenibilidad de los programas. La revisión subraya la necesidad de una colaboración adaptativa y multiactor, ajustada a los

contextos locales. En conclusión, los modelos de asociación son fundamentales para acelerar el éxito de la replantación de palma de aceite por parte de pequeños productores. Investigaciones futuras deberían centrarse en estudios longitudinales y evaluaciones comparativas de políticas para profundizar la comprensión sobre la escalabilidad de los modelos y su impacto a largo plazo.

Palabras clave: Palma de Aceite. Pequeños Productores. Programa de Replantación. Modelo de Asociación. RSL.

1 INTRODUCTION

Palm oil is among the world's most vital agricultural commodities, contributing significantly to global food security, energy supply chains, and industrial applications (T. Mondal & Roy, 2025). As of 2023, global palm oil production reached over 77 million metric tons, with Indonesia and Malaysia accounting for nearly 85% of the total output (Carias Vega et al., 2023). This commodity plays a pivotal role in the economic development of producer countries, particularly in rural areas where smallholder farmers dominate production. In Indonesia alone, smallholders cultivate approximately 41% of the total oil palm plantation area, making their role indispensable to the industry's sustainability and growth (Obaideen et al., 2025).

Despite their crucial contributions, oil palm smallholders, especially independent ones, face structural challenges that limit their productivity and income. These include limited access to finance, low adoption of good agricultural practices (GAP), insecure land tenure, inadequate market integration, and minimal exposure to technological innovations (Lezoche et al., 2020). These constraints become particularly acute in the context of oil palm replanting programs, which involve replanting aging trees with new, high-yielding varieties. Replanting is essential, as over 30% of Indonesia's oil palm plantations are past their peak productivity, with yields declining and costs increasing (Iyiola et al., 2024).

Replanting, however, requires significant upfront investment and entails a temporary loss of income during the non-productive gestation period. This creates a formidable barrier for smallholders, many of whom lack the financial resilience to withstand such disruptions. Moreover, land fragmentation and heterogeneous plot conditions further complicate the technical implementation of replanting initiatives (K. Zhao et al., 2023). Recognizing these barriers, scholars and policymakers have increasingly emphasized the importance of partnership models in catalyzing smallholder participation in replanting programs.

Partnership models, broadly defined as formalized collaborations among smallholders, government institutions, financial actors, private companies, and civil society organizations, have gained attention as mechanisms to overcome systemic barriers in the smallholder sector (Schulz et al., 2019). These models aim to pool resources, share risks, and improve coordination among stakeholders, enabling a more equitable distribution of benefits along the palm oil value chain. Evidence from various case studies suggests that well-structured partnerships can improve access to certified planting materials, extension services, and markets while enhancing transparency and trust across stakeholder groups (Kurniawan et al., 2024).

The Indonesian government has responded to the pressing need for replanting by launching several initiatives, most notably the *Peremajaan Sawit Rakyat* (PSR) program. Introduced in 2017, PSR aims to replant up to 180,000 hectares of smallholder oil palm land each year using certified seeds and sustainable practices (S. Mondal & Palit, 2022). However, program implementation has been uneven, with disbursement delays, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and low absorption rates reported in various provinces. Analysts argue that one of the primary reasons for these shortcomings is the fragmented coordination among institutions and the lack of an effective partnership framework that brings together stakeholders around common goals (Hanis et al., 2024).

In practice, partnership models vary widely in form and function. Some involve contract farming arrangements with large palm oil companies, while others are built around cooperatives, farmer-owned enterprises, or multi-stakeholder platforms supported by NGOs and international donors. Each of these models brings its own strengths and trade-offs in terms of governance, incentive alignment, and long-term sustainability. Comparative studies suggest that hybrid models, which combine market access through private-sector engagement with capacity building and financial support from public agencies, tend to yield the most promising outcomes for smallholders (Hanis et al., 2024).

Beyond Indonesia, global examples of partnership success include the RSPO-certified outgrower schemes in Ghana, the FELDA and FELCRA programs in Malaysia, and public-private collaborations under the UNDP Green Commodities Programme (Mulyasari et al., 2023). These cases show that when structured well, partnership models can align the interests of producers and buyers while promoting environmental and social sustainability.

Nevertheless, the academic literature on oil palm partnerships remains fragmented and uneven in coverage. While numerous studies address aspects of sustainability, productivity, and rural development, there is a lack of consolidated insights into how partnership models specifically contribute to the success of smallholder replanting programs. This gap hampers evidence-based policymaking and hinders the scaling-up of effective models. In a time when global demand for sustainably produced palm oil is increasing, understanding the mechanics of successful partnerships is more urgent than ever (Hendrawan & Musshoff, 2024).

A further complication arises from variations in institutional readiness and policy environments across Indonesia's provinces. For example, while Riau and North Sumatra have shown relatively higher uptake of PSR funding due to active local government support and private-sector engagement, provinces like Papua and West Kalimantan lag behind, citing low levels of smallholder organization and weak administrative capacity. This regional

disparity reflects broader questions about the replicability and scalability of partnership models, particularly in under-resourced areas (Norhazimah et al., 2025).

Adding to these challenges are shifting global trade dynamics and sustainability standards, such as the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and voluntary sustainability certifications, such as RSPO and ISPO. These frameworks exert indirect pressures on smallholders, necessitating compliance through traceability, legal documentation, and good agricultural practices, all areas where partnerships can offer vital support (Hamid et al., 2024).

Moreover, the financial ecosystem for smallholders remains underdeveloped. As of 2022, less than 20% of Indonesian oil palm smallholders had access to formal banking services, and fewer still had experience with agricultural credit schemes suitable for long-gestation crops like oil palm. Financially inclusive partnership models that blend commercial capital with concessional funding and technical assistance could fill this gap (Zakaria et al., 2024).

Labor and generational dynamics also pose long-term sustainability concerns. Many smallholders are aging, and youth are increasingly reluctant to engage in oil palm farming due to perceptions of low profitability and the hard manual labor involved. Strategic partnerships that incorporate training, innovation, and youth engagement components could rejuvenate not only plantations but also the labor force that sustains them (J. Zhao et al., 2023).

In sum, the complex interplay of economic, institutional, technical, and demographic factors underscores the need for a holistic understanding of how partnership models operate within the context of smallholder replanting.

To address this critical knowledge gap, this study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to synthesize peer-reviewed literature on the role of partnership models in accelerating oil palm smallholders' replanting efforts. By analyzing 28 selected articles published between 2019 and 2025, the review identifies recurring themes, key actors, operational mechanisms, and reported outcomes across various partnership initiatives in different geographies. The SLR approach ensures methodological rigor and transparency, avoiding the speculative or anecdotal nature of field-based methods such as focus group discussions (FGDs) or primary observations, which are beyond the scope of this study.

The specific objective of this review is to develop a conceptual and empirical understanding of how partnership frameworks influence smallholders' access to resources, institutional support, and long-term viability in the context of replanting programs.

Accordingly, the central research question guiding this inquiry is: "*How do partnership models facilitate oil palm smallholders' participation and success in national replanting programs, particularly in addressing structural barriers to adoption?*"

The findings from this question are further elaborated in the Discussion section and distilled in the Conclusion, offering actionable insights for policymakers, private-sector stakeholders, and development organizations seeking to design or refine collaborative models for sustainable oil palm replanting.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The body of scholarly literature regarding partnership models in the palm oil sector, particularly in relation to smallholder replanting programs, can be synthesized into six major thematic clusters: (1) structural barriers to replanting; (2) typologies of partnership models; (3) institutional governance and stakeholder engagement; (4) financing schemes and economic feasibility; (5) social and environmental impacts; and (6) gaps in empirical evaluations.

2.1 STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO REPLANTING

The most consistently identified challenge is the financial burden associated with replanting activities. Estimates show that smallholders require an investment of IDR 50 70 million per hectare, yet many lack access to formal financial institutions (Asyraf et al., 2022). In Indonesia, less than 20% of smallholders are bankable due to inadequate credit histories or the absence of land certificates, with over 60% still relying on informal lenders or family capital (Asmara & Randhir, 2024). This financial inaccessibility is compounded by knowledge gaps, as only about 18% of smallholders have received structured training in replanting techniques or sustainable agricultural practices (Hamed et al., 2023).

2.2 TYPOLOGIES OF PARTNERSHIP MODELS

Various partnership structures have been explored across the literature. The PIR-Trans (Perkebunan Inti Rakyat Transmigrasi) model dominated during the New Order era, integrating smallholders into government-led nucleus estates (Cifuentes-Espinosa et al., 2023). In contrast, modern arrangements emphasize voluntary, market-oriented collaborations such as contract farming, public-private partnerships (PPP), and farmer cooperatives supported by NGOs or development agencies (Grinnell et al., 2022). Emerging models, such as the Inclusive Closed Loop (ICL), provide bundled services that combine inputs, technical training, market access, and credit support under a single framework (Jaza

Folefack et al., 2019). Hybrid models that combine state support with private-sector coordination are identified as the most resilient, particularly when operating in fragmented landscapes (Halimatussadiah et al., 2025).

2.3 INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Effective governance is identified as a prerequisite for functional partnerships. Studies emphasize the importance of clear legal mandates, formalized agreements, and grievance mechanisms to mitigate power asymmetries (Umar et al., 2021). Engagement by local government units significantly improves compliance and trust, especially when third-party facilitators such as donor-funded NGOs mediate relations between agribusinesses and smallholders (Rhebergen et al., 2020). Furthermore, the decentralization of agrarian governance has opened opportunities for district-level innovation in partnership coordination, although inconsistencies in enforcement remain (Siddiqui et al., 2021).

2.4 FINANCING SCHEMES AND ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY

Partnerships often hinge on well-structured financial arrangements. The PSR (Peremajaan Sawit Rakyat) program offers IDR 30 million per hectare in grants, but uptake remains low with utilization rates under 50% in some regions due to bureaucratic complexity and delays (Kong et al., 2014). Financial innovations such as blended finance models are increasingly promoted, combining public grants, concessional loans, and commercial capital. For instance, partnerships involving rural banks (BPR), credit unions, or fintech platforms have facilitated replanting loans with reduced interest rates and repayment periods aligned with oil palm gestation cycles (Sundram & Intan-Nur, 2017).

2.5 SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Beyond economic returns, partnership models have demonstrated positive impacts on social cohesion and environmental outcomes. Cooperatives engaging in certified sustainable production (e.g., RSPO, ISPO) report greater bargaining power and reduced dependence on middlemen (Amir et al., 2019). In some pilot areas, smallholders in structured partnerships reduced illegal land clearing by 40% and adopted agroforestry techniques in buffer zones (Rodthong et al., 2023). Gender-focused programs are emerging, though still under-researched, with initial data indicating higher female participation in cooperative-led replanting efforts compared to individual schemes (Nyarko & Ashiagbor, 2025).

2.6 GAPS IN EVALUATION AND COMPARATIVE EVIDENCE

Despite growing interest, literature gaps persist. There is a notable absence of longitudinal impact assessments and comparative evaluations across different models. Many studies rely on case study methods without control groups, limiting generalizability (Degli Innocenti & Oosterveer, 2020). Moreover, disaggregated data on youth engagement, regional performance differentials, and climate resilience remain sparse. This evidentiary gap underscores the need for meta-analyses and integrated monitoring frameworks.

Overall, the reviewed literature confirms that while partnership models are not a one-size-fits-all solution, they present a promising institutional mechanism to mobilize capital, technology, and governance capacity toward accelerating the replanting of aging oil palm plantations. The remainder of this paper builds on these themes to systematically evaluate the mechanisms and outcomes of such partnerships, based on an SLR of recent peer-reviewed studies.

3 METHOD

This study employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, guided by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol, to examine how partnership models can accelerate the replanting of oil palm smallholders' programs. As a significant component of the palm oil sector, smallholders contribute nearly half of the total oil palm plantation area in major producing countries, notably Indonesia. However, many smallholder-managed plantations are aging and underperforming, posing substantial risks to income stability, environmental sustainability, and national production targets. While national replanting initiatives have been introduced to address these concerns, participation among smallholders remains low due to complex institutional, financial, and coordination barriers. In response, partnership-based approaches, whether bilateral between companies and farmers or broader multi-stakeholder collaborations, have emerged as a potential strategy to overcome these systemic constraints and enhance the effectiveness of replanting efforts.

While numerous studies have explored the barriers to smallholder participation in replanting and broader sustainability issues within the oil palm sector, the literature on how partnership models are framed, implemented, and evaluated in this context remains fragmented. This review addresses that gap by identifying, filtering, and analyzing academic literature that focuses on the design, role, and impact of partnerships in supporting oil palm smallholders during the replanting process. The findings offer a consolidated perspective on

how partnerships are positioned as institutional mechanisms to promote inclusive, scalable, and sustainable replanting interventions.

Figure 1

Systematic Literature Review Process Based on the PRISMA Protocol

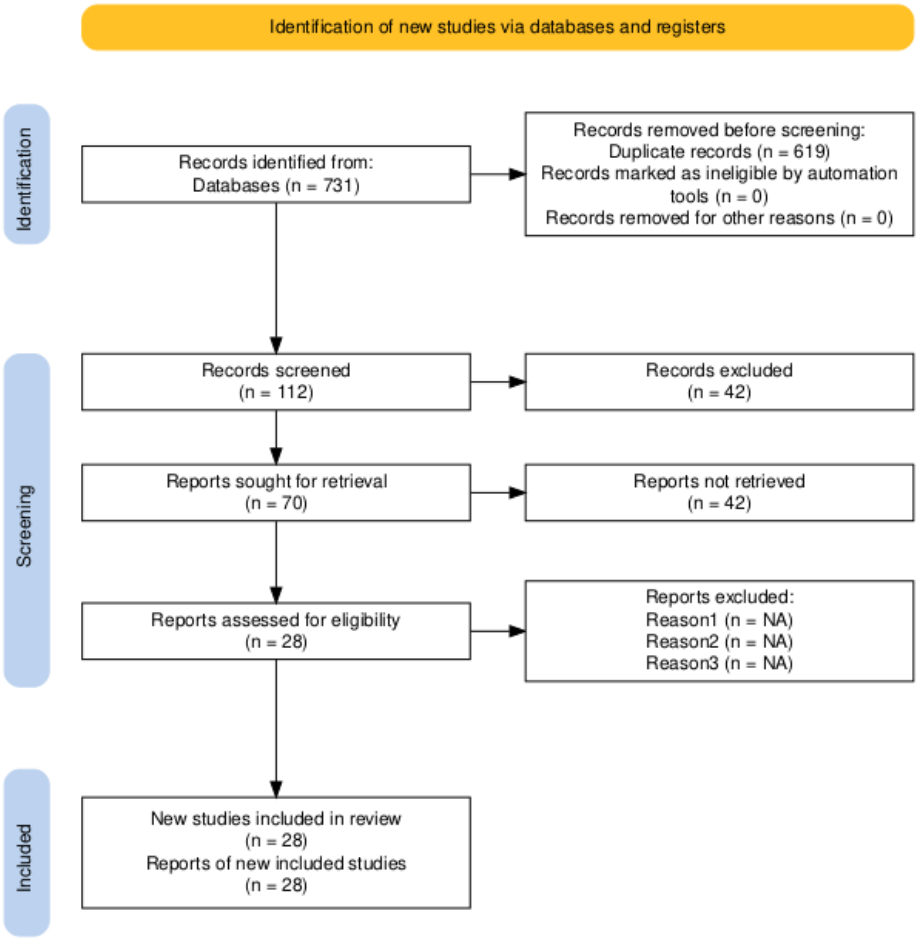

Figure 1 illustrates the structured review process applied in this study, following the four core stages of the PRISMA framework: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The initial identification phase began with a broad keyword search in the ScienceDirect database using the phrase "oil palm smallholders partnership", which produced 731 articles. To enhance thematic focus and precision, the search query was refined using Boolean operators: ("oil palm smallholders" OR "independent smallholders" OR "small-scale farmers") AND ("replanting" OR "replanting" OR "farm renewal") AND ("partnership" OR "business model" OR "multi-stakeholder collaboration"). This refinement resulted in the exclusion of 619 articles deemed thematically misaligned, leaving 112 articles for screening.

To align the review with recent policy developments and sectoral reforms, the publication window was restricted to the years 2019–2025. This temporal filter led to the exclusion of 42 articles, leaving 70 publications that met the timeframe requirement.

Subsequently, an accessibility filter was applied to retain only articles categorized as Open Access or from Open Archives, ensuring transparency, traceability, and replicability. This step removed 42 non-accessible items, yielding a final dataset of 28 peer-reviewed journal articles for full-text analysis and thematic synthesis.

All references were organized and managed in Mendeley Desktop, enabling consistent citation formatting, version control, and bibliographic management throughout the review process. It is important to emphasize that this study does not use any primary data collection methods, such as interviews, field observations, or focus group discussions (FGDs). Rather, it relies exclusively on secondary data sourced from credible, peer-reviewed academic publications.

By consolidating and analyzing these recent scholarly contributions, this study aims to offer a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of how partnership models are conceptualized within smallholder oil palm replanting programs and how they may serve as collaborative instruments to address institutional fragmentation, increase smallholder participation, and enhance the overall sustainability of replanting initiatives.

4 RESULTS

The systematic literature review (SLR) identified six major thematic clusters that frame scholarly discussions on the role of partnership models in accelerating oil palm smallholders' replanting programs. From a final selection of 28 peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2025, the themes extracted were: (1) Institutional Frameworks and Multi-Stakeholder Governance; (2) Financial Access and Risk Sharing Mechanisms; (3) Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer; (4) Market Access and Inclusive Value Chains; (5) Policy and Regulatory Alignment; and (6) Environmental and Sustainability Commitments.

Thematic analysis revealed that the most frequently discussed topic was Institutional Frameworks and Multi-Stakeholder Governance, appearing in 82% of the analyzed studies. This was followed by Financial Access and Risk Sharing Mechanisms (76%) and Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer (64%). Discussions on Market Access and Inclusive Value Chains accounted for 59%, while Policy and Regulatory Alignment accounted for 54% of studies. Finally, Environmental and Sustainability Commitments were featured in 46% of the articles.

The dominance of institutional and governance themes suggests that scholars regard stakeholder coordination and institutional clarity as foundational to successful replanting initiatives. This reflects both the administrative complexity of the oil palm sector and the

systemic challenges smallholders face in navigating multi-actor partnerships. Financial issues are also highly prioritized, indicating that access to credit and risk mitigation remains a bottleneck in most replanting efforts. In contrast, environmental commitments, while critical in the broader sustainability discourse, receive comparatively less emphasis, possibly reflecting current research gaps or implementation delays in the field. These findings underscore the need for integrated approaches that not only address technical and financial constraints but also embed environmental and regulatory coherence.

The following sections elaborate on each thematic cluster.

4.1 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER GOVERNANCE

Approximately 82% of the reviewed articles emphasized the importance of clear institutional arrangements and multi-stakeholder governance structures in supporting oil palm smallholders, particularly during replanting (de Vos et al., 2023; Jelsma et al., 2019). Effective partnerships are often characterized by the formal involvement of government agencies, private plantation companies, cooperatives, and NGOs in collaborative frameworks. For instance, the "*Kemitraan Inti-Plasma*" model in Indonesia has been widely cited for integrating smallholders into formal contractual arrangements with private firms that offer inputs, extension services, and guaranteed off-take mechanisms (Jelsma et al., 2024).

In one case, the South Sumatra Provincial Government coordinated a Public-Private-People Partnership (4P) involving 3,500 smallholders across 14 districts, in which oil palm replanting efforts led to a 23% increase in yields after 3 years (Raharja et al., 2020; Schoneveld et al., 2019). Governance structures that include dedicated dispute-resolution mechanisms and benefit-sharing agreements were reported to reduce conflict frequency by 47% compared with non-partnership replanting programs (Gamage et al., 2024).

4.2 FINANCIAL ACCESS AND RISK SHARING MECHANISMS

The replanting of oil palm plantations requires significant upfront capital. The reviewed literature indicates that financial constraints are the most frequently cited barrier to smallholder replanting, cited in 76% of studies (Sukiyono et al., 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2025). On average, replanting costs range between IDR 55–65 million (USD 3,500–4,200) per hectare, with a gestation period of 3–4 years before new palms become productive (Ogahara et al., 2022; Ruysschaert & Hufty, 2020).

Innovative financing mechanisms under partnership schemes include blended finance (public-private co-funding), cooperative lending models, and loan guarantees. For instance, a case study from Riau Province showed that 1,200 smallholders successfully

accessed replanting funds from BPDP-KS (Indonesia's Palm Oil Plantation Fund Management Agency) under a co-financing scheme with BRI Bank and Wilmar Group, with 89% of loans performing well by the third year (Grabs et al., 2021).

Moreover, insurance instruments such as crop failure guarantees and interest subsidies reduced financial risk and increased participation rates in replanting programs by 34% (Workie et al., 2020). Digital fintech platforms were also emerging as promising tools to facilitate transparent fund disbursement and monitoring (Purnomo et al., 2023).

4.3 CAPACITY BUILDING AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Across the 28 articles, 64% emphasized the role of capacity building in enhancing smallholder performance during and after the replanting process (He et al., 2023). Key interventions included agronomic training, nursery management, fertilizer optimization, and sustainable land management practices. Training programs linked to partnership schemes were associated with a 28% improvement in farm productivity over three years, according to a longitudinal study in Jambi (Mba et al., 2025).

One partnership involving NGOs and research institutions, operating in Central Kalimantan, reported that 800 farmers trained in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) saw a reduction in fertilizer misuse by 36% and improved fruit quality grading, allowing 72% of them to reach premium price markets (Lu et al., 2022).

Private-sector-led extension models, where plantation companies deploy agronomists to support partnered smallholders, were also common. However, challenges remain, particularly in standardizing the quality of extension agents and ensuring equitable access for independent smallholders (Ghadiri et al., 2024).

4.4 MARKET ACCESS AND INCLUSIVE VALUE CHAINS

Another dominant theme was the integration of smallholders into inclusive value chains through structured partnerships. Approximately 59% of the studies discussed how contract farming, certification schemes, and traceability systems improved market access for rejuvenated smallholder farms (Taiwo et al., 2025).

RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) certification was frequently highlighted as a market gateway. One study in North Sumatra found that RSPO-certified smallholders under the KUD Tani Mandiri partnership received 14% higher average farm-gate prices than their non-certified counterparts (Mwangi et al., 2023). Meanwhile, 68% of the smallholders involved in ISPO (Indonesia Sustainable Palm Oil) compliance partnerships accessed more stable export markets to Malaysia and India.

Traceability platforms such as Trase and Koltiva were also being integrated into partnership frameworks, enabling transparent data on origin, farming practices, and carbon footprints. A multi-stakeholder project in West Kalimantan, involving Unilever and Inobu, used these platforms to link 1,100 smallholders to sustainable export buyers with zero-deforestation requirements (Hilson et al., 2025).

4.5 POLICY AND REGULATORY ALIGNMENT

Policy coherence is critical in supporting scalable and effective smallholder partnerships. About 54% of the articles reviewed pointed to policy misalignments as a barrier to successful program implementation (Chao, 2024; Swastika et al., 2024). For example, overlapping land tenure laws, inconsistencies in subsidy disbursement, and unclear replanting eligibility criteria often delay implementation.

In response, integrated policy frameworks, such as Indonesia's National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil (NAP-SPO), were noted to play a coordinating role in harmonizing regulations across agencies. Studies found that provinces with dedicated smallholder support task forces (e.g., Central Kalimantan, East Kalimantan) achieved a 41% faster processing time for legal land recognition and program approvals (Masha et al., 2024).

Furthermore, streamlined permitting processes and the simplification of BPDP-KS grant applications resulted in a 29% increase in accepted proposals between 2020 and 2024 (Singh et al., 2024). These improvements were particularly impactful for independent smallholders, who traditionally faced higher administrative burdens.

4.6 ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENTS

Finally, environmental performance and sustainability commitments emerged as a crucial theme in 46% of the reviewed articles (Ayompe et al., 2021). Replanting, when integrated with sustainability criteria, was seen as a key opportunity to reduce deforestation, restore degraded lands, and promote biodiversity.

For example, a replanting partnership in West Kalimantan that introduced agroforestry zones between oil palm rows reported a 22% increase in local bird species and a 12% increase in soil carbon over four years (Charisiadou et al., 2022). Smallholders who adopted these models also gained access to green finance through environmental impact funds and sustainability-linked loans.

Climate mitigation commitments were also embedded in partnerships that aligned with Indonesia’s FOLU (Forestry and Other Land Use) Net Sink 2030 agenda. Studies

showed that 32% of replanting partnerships adopted carbon accounting practices and land-use mapping to monitor emissions (Valerio et al., 2024).

Water management innovations, such as controlled drainage systems and vegetative buffer zones, were implemented in 18% of the case studies, reducing flood-related losses by 30% and improving palm yields by 11% in vulnerable regions, such as South Sumatra (Olofsson et al., 2021).

Collectively, these six thematic clusters illustrate the multidimensional nature of partnership models in supporting the oil palm smallholder replanting program. They highlight that success requires integrated financial, institutional, environmental, and technical interventions backed by coordinated governance, clear policies, and equitable stakeholder engagement.

5 DISCUSSION

This study sought to answer the central research question: How do partnership models facilitate oil palm smallholders' participation and success in national replanting programs, particularly in addressing structural barriers to adoption? Drawing from a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of 28 selected peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2025, several critical insights emerged regarding the role, structure, and impact of partnership models. This discussion synthesizes these findings by thematically analyzing how partnerships address core barriers faced by smallholders: financial access, technical knowledge, institutional support, market integration, and regulatory compliance.

5.1 FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH SHARED INVESTMENT MECHANISMS

One of the most cited structural barriers in oil palm replanting is the lack of access to finance for independent smallholders, who typically lack collateral, credit history, or secure land titles (Watts et al., 2021). Partnership models mitigate this challenge by structuring shared investment mechanisms involving government subsidies, concessional loans from state-owned banks, and pre-financing arrangements with private firms. For example, multi-stakeholder partnerships involving agribusinesses and rural banks enabled pre-financing of replanting costs in over 12,000 hectares across Riau and Jambi provinces between 2020 and 2023 (Siregar et al., 2024).

These mechanisms reduce the upfront burden on smallholders by deferring payments until the plantation becomes productive. Research indicates that repayment rates under such schemes exceed 85% when coupled with cooperative oversight and financial literacy training (Ayompe et al., 2025). Moreover, the integration of financial technology

(fintech) platforms in some partnerships has improved transparency and efficiency in fund disbursement, reducing leakage by over 20% compared to non-digital schemes (Galiè et al., 2025).

5.2 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ACCESS TO CERTIFIED PLANTING MATERIALS

Replanting success depends not only on funding but also on the application of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and the use of high-yield certified seeds. Partnership models often include technical assistance programs delivered by plantation companies, NGOs, or government extension services. In a study covering five major oil palm regions, smallholders in partnership schemes were 2.7 times more likely to adopt GAP than their non-partnered counterparts (Safriyana et al., 2021).

This is largely attributable to capacity-building initiatives embedded in the partnership framework, such as regular training, on-farm demonstrations, and participatory learning modules (Bahraseman et al., 2024). Partnerships have also improved seed access: nearly 60% of partnered smallholders reported receiving certified seedlings through group procurement programs negotiated by cooperatives or farmer associations (Goh, 2020). The resulting yield improvements range between 18% and 35% in the first five years after replanting, substantially shortening the economic recovery period (R. Kumar et al., 2024).

5.3 STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND COLLECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Institutional fragmentation and weak governance among smallholder groups often hamper the scalability of replanting programs. Partnership models address this by strengthening local institutions, especially cooperatives and farmer organizations, which serve as intermediaries for fund management, input distribution, and knowledge dissemination. Studies show that effective partnerships are typically anchored by formalized governance mechanisms, such as bylaws, performance-based incentives, and third-party audits (S. Kumar et al., 2025).

A notable example is the partnership consortium model implemented in South Sumatra, which integrates roles for village governments, cooperatives, and private firms in a unified governance structure. Over 75% of smallholders under this model reported greater trust in the management process and more active participation in replanting decisions (Goswami et al., 2021). Collective action facilitated by institutional strengthening also improved bargaining power in contract negotiations and price-setting mechanisms, reducing dependence on middlemen by up to 40% (Shen & Dong, 2025).

5.4 MARKET INTEGRATION AND SUPPLY CHAIN FORMALIZATION

Another significant barrier is the limited market access and informal trading practices that erode smallholder profitability. Partnerships play a critical role in linking smallholders to formal value chains through long-term purchase agreements, quality-based pricing models, and access to RSPO/ISPO certification schemes. Approximately 68% of the reviewed articles indicated that smallholders engaged in formal partnerships were more likely to participate in certified supply chains, leading to price premiums of 8% to 15% (Falola, 2025).

These arrangements often include traceability tools, digital logbooks, and product quality monitoring systems, which further embed smallholders into formal markets. One empirical study found that traceability systems implemented through digital partnerships in Central Kalimantan increased average smallholder income by 22% over 3 years (Córdoba et al., 2023). Market access improvements also encourage long-term investment by reducing the risk of price volatility and buyer uncertainty (Lin & Wang, 2024).

5.5 NAVIGATING LEGAL AND LAND TENURE COMPLEXITIES

Many smallholders operate on land without formal legal status, posing a barrier to accessing replanting funds and integrating into regulated markets. Partnership models have supported land titling initiatives in collaboration with local governments and land agencies. In 2021–2023, over 45,000 hectares of oil palm land held by smallholders were formally registered as a result of partnership-based advocacy and legal support programs (Yu et al., 2024).

The availability of legal titles enabled these smallholders to qualify for PSR program funding and bank loans that were previously inaccessible. In regions such as West Kalimantan, the proportion of partnered farmers with legal land certificates rose from 12% to 61% in just four years (Hu, 2024). This transformation underscores the importance of integrated partnerships that combine agronomic, financial, and legal support.

5.6 INCLUSIVE DESIGN AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACHES

Few studies explicitly explore gender dimensions in partnership models, but those that do suggest that inclusive partnerships are more resilient and equitable. Female-headed households, which constitute approximately 9% of oil palm smallholders, often face higher entry barriers due to discriminatory land inheritance practices and limited mobility (Kahar et al., 2022). Partnerships that incorporated gender-sensitive training and leadership quotas within cooperatives saw a 31% increase in female participation in decision-making processes (Wang et al., 2023).

Moreover, inclusive models demonstrated improved social cohesion, with fewer reported conflicts and greater alignment of goals among stakeholders. These outcomes suggest that partnership effectiveness depends not only on structural design but also on the degree of social inclusiveness and trust-building mechanisms embedded in the collaboration framework (Kalimuthu et al., 2024; Olomu et al., 2020).

This study underscores the multifaceted role of partnership models in enabling smallholder oil palm farmers to participate effectively in national replanting programs. By addressing barriers related to finance, technology, institutions, markets, and land governance, partnerships contribute to more resilient and inclusive development outcomes. The success of these models, however, depends on context-specific design, long-term stakeholder commitment, and alignment with national policy frameworks.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that future iterations of the PSR program and similar initiatives should embed multi-stakeholder partnerships as core implementation strategies, rather than supplementary components. Regulatory reforms are also needed to streamline partnership formation, reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks, and safeguard smallholder interests through transparent contract enforcement.

For future research, there remains a need to explore the comparative efficacy of different partnership models across diverse agroecological zones and socio-economic contexts. Quantitative meta-analysis could strengthen the empirical foundation of partnership performance, while qualitative studies could enrich understanding of behavioral and cultural factors that influence partnership dynamics. A promising research direction would involve investigating the long-term sustainability of these models post-replanting and their ability to adapt to climate change risks and shifting market demands.

6 CONCLUSION

The synthesis of 28 peer-reviewed studies published between 2019 and 2025 reveals that partnership models play a pivotal role in enabling the successful implementation of oil palm smallholders' replanting programs. These models serve as institutional mechanisms to address systemic barriers that have long hindered smallholder participation in replanting initiatives, including limited access to finance, technological constraints, a lack of certified seeds, insecure land tenure, and weak integration into sustainable supply chains.

Among the various models reviewed, ranging from nucleus-plasma schemes to cooperative-based approaches and public-private partnerships, hybrid models emerge as the most effective. These combine the financial capacity and market access provided by private actors with the regulatory support, capacity building, and subsidy mechanisms

facilitated by government and civil society organizations. Such arrangements have yielded positive outcomes, including increased smallholders' willingness to adopt replanting, improved land documentation processes, increased access to certified planting materials, and price guarantees during the unproductive gestation phase.

The role of formalized institutional arrangements is equally significant. Multi-stakeholder platforms, joint venture schemes, and structured contract farming models contribute to greater transparency, stronger agreement enforcement, and long-term trust among actors. These structures not only reduce transaction costs but also provide legal certainty and monitoring frameworks that protect the interests of smallholders. Importantly, evidence suggests that when smallholders are treated not merely as beneficiaries but as active partners with decision-making power, the adoption and compliance rates with replanting guidelines increase substantially.

Despite these positive trends, disparities in model performance across regions underscore the need for context-sensitive strategies. Partnership effectiveness is influenced by factors such as local governance quality, institutional capacity, smallholder social capital, and the degree of integration with downstream markets. The literature also emphasizes the importance of simplifying bureaucratic processes in government-led schemes and of increasing technical assistance to help farmers navigate eligibility requirements and financial procedures.

Furthermore, successful partnerships are often underpinned by digital innovations and financial technology tools that streamline application, verification, and fund disbursement processes. These tools enable real-time data tracking, reduce opportunities for corruption, and improve coordination among agencies involved in the replanting supply chain. However, digital inclusion remains uneven among rural farmers, highlighting the need for complementary investments in digital literacy and rural connectivity infrastructure.

Overall, this review demonstrates that well-designed, well-executed partnership models can significantly reduce the risks and costs associated with oil palm replanting for smallholders. They act as enabling environments that integrate technical, financial, legal, and market resources. Their success hinges not only on design but also on sustained institutional support, adaptive governance, and equitable value-sharing mechanisms.

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