

## Food and Government; Study of Food Safety Issues in Indonesia

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### Abstract

*The government has a role that can contribute negatively to the emergence of food security problems. As in Sen's analysis, undemocratic government is one of the causes of national food insecurity. This statement uses the term Indonesian territory and not the state of Indonesia, and uses the term famine event and not a famine. This is because the biggest event occurred in the 1800s and not on a national scale that Indonesia had several times of famine. For this reason, it is important for state administrators to ensure the availability and equitable distribution of food to individuals. This realization must also include the availability of food that is good in quality and quantity, safe, diverse, nutritious, and affordable and does not conflict with religion, belief, and community culture, and is sustainable.*

### Keywords

food security; hunger;  
government; Indonesia



## I. Introduction

One of the important issues in the dynamics of the global economy, Food Security presents a debate about the causes of problems and policies in overcoming them. The debate over the issue of food arises in the argument that although the earth appears to be able to consistently meet global food needs through increased production, in reality the rates of hunger and death from malnutrition have never gone away and show an alarming condition.

A study shows that even during the cold war where global conditions were in tension with competing political blocs, the trend of world food production increased along with the increase in global consumption and gave abundant yields to wheat and rice commodities as shown in the green revolution in the 1960s-decade. an. (Sen, 1981: 42).

World Food Program(WFP) explained that the earth still has sufficient production capacity for global consumption which includes materials and processed foods. There is even an overproduction, causing the waste of food in very large quantities. It is known that a third of the approximately 4 billion metric tons of food produced globally is lost or wasted each year (wfp.org, 2019).

The positive trend in global food can also be attributed to the decline in hunger and malnutrition rates, which are declining. FAO records say that there has been a decline in the world's malnutrition rate from 18.6% in 1992 to 10.9% in 2016 (worldhunger.org, 2015). The Welthungerhilfe report states that the hunger index in developing countries has decreased by about 39% since 1990. Even in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Brazil, Ghana, Peru, Angola and Benin, hunger rates have decreased by more than 50% (dw.com, 2015).

However, this reality is not enough to be used as a single fact regarding the earth's capacity to provide food globally. This is due to another fact that famine still occurs in many countries. As evidence, in 2009, the number of hungry sufferers and victims of chronic malnutrition has reached 1 billion (cnnindonesia.com, 2014). This figure is still added to the death of 3.1 million children under five per year due to malnutrition, which is a more subtle

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picture of a condition of hunger. There are also more than 18 million babies born with brain defects due to iodine deficiency (dw.com, 2014).

Responding to this fact, global regimes have made efforts to maintain food security, especially among poor developing countries. Several international organizations were formed in order to fight hunger due to lack of food availability, both naturally and as a result of human activities. Some of them are UN-WFP, UNICEF, MERCY CORPS, Action Against Hunger, and CARE. The pattern of international cooperation and bilateral foreign assistance from developed countries also supports efforts to solve food problems globally. Although global food optimism has been stated with the support of facts and figures, however, food security problems in the form of hunger and malnutrition still occur, especially in poor and developing countries. One of them is Indonesia, which is a large agrarian country.

Food safety issues have also been written in several journals that researchers have compared, namely, in the *Societas* journal entitled *Management of Government Strategies in Increasing Food Security* by Nafisah Ikbar Fadhilah et al who discussed Food security is a condition where food is fulfilled for all people at any time of which quality is guaranteed, nutritious, safe from harmful substances and is evenly distributed and affordable to all. For this reason, the food diversification program is implemented in one of the Women's Farmer Groups (KWT) in Cilewo Village, Telagasari District because KWT is the most active farmer group in Karawang. The purpose of this study was to determine the government's strategic management in increasing food security through food diversification based on local resources by implementing sustainable food gardens(P2L) in Asih Munggaran's Women Farmers Group (KWT) This study uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, namely the type of research that seeks to describe a phenomenon in accordance with what happens in the field which produces descriptive data in the form of words, written documents, and pictures. Data collection techniques used are through literature and field studies (interviews, observation and documentation). Researchers found that the existence of a strategy for diversifying food consumption in Karawang Regency has formed an achievement of diverse food patterns in the community and fostered the spirit of creativity of the members of Asih Munggaran's Women Farmers Group (KWT) from the use of sustainable food yards so that they can help meet household income. farm household. However, the use of yards is still dominated by plantation / agricultural land and has not been maximized for livestock.

## II. Review of Literature

Yanuar Fiandana wrote about local government strategy in improving regional food security (study on Malang district) in the journal of public administration, namely *The development of food security is the responsibility of the government as well as the local community*. The joint of those two agents will help to develop the good food security in providing the food for the entire population, especially the food derived from the local production. Besides that, the good food security is expected to provide the food in sufficient number and variety along with concerning the safety and the affordable issue. In order to create that condition, strategy is needed in increasing the food security itself. Local Government of Malang together with the Implementing Food Security and Extension Agency (BKP3) has sought to improve regional food security through the development of the community rice barn, accelerating the variety of food and nutrient, forming the Food Security Council, and applying the *Desa Mandiri* Program food. The result showed that the strategy applied by the local government of Malang in increasing the food security has met the demand of the food security aspects.

### III. Discussion

#### 3.1 Global Food Safety Issues

Food Security is a concept that was born from two combinations of terms consisting of the words food and security. The food security index score using Modified Bloom's cut-off point, was created for the purpose of performing inferential statistics (Naburi, 2020). Food or in Indonesian means food, understood as a noun that refers to food or food in a plural and complex sense. Security or in Indonesian is security, is a term that is simply understood as a state of being free from, or resistant to, all threats. In simple terms, food security is a condition of security against (availability of) food. Associated with growing food needs, the necessary efforts to increase the utilization of crop diversity to meet human needs (Pugalenthi et al in Komarayanti, 2018).

The world food organization, FAO in the 1996 World Food Summit, stated that food security is said to be realized if: all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO Policy Brief, 2006). Important keywords from this FAO definition concern food availability, access to food, and food utilization.

There is a global belief that the earth is still able to meet global consumption through stable and increasing food production. In the last 50 years, world food production has tripled and hunger has decreased globally. Amartya Sen in his book writes that the trend of world food production has increased along with the increase in the amount of global consumption (Sen, 1981: 42). Even Wfp.org in its release said that 1.3 billion tons of food was not consumed due to too much production.

The explanation above enriches the food problem which is described through the terms food loss and food waste. Food expiration and cooking more than required for a meal were the main causes of food waste each accounting for 13% of the causes (Huho, 2020). Food loss is a condition of reduced quality and quantity of food ingredients which causes them to be unable to be processed into finished food so they must be discarded. Income is the most important factor in determining the quality and quantity of food (Umami, 2021). This can occur as a result of the failure of the function of the food supply chain institutionally or because of the system. Meanwhile, food waste is a condition of food that is not consumed, it can be due to a choice by consumers, so that it ends up being wasted (Bellù, 2017: 2).

Although it is said that world food production is increasing, it is also recognized that hunger remains a threat. For example, the global hunger problem that occurred in Bengali (1974), Ethiopia (1973/4), Bangladesh (1974), and the Sahara region (1968/73), Ethiopia (1984/5), Somalia (1991/2), North Korea (1996), Sudan and Congo (1998), and West Africa (2012). Even in the records of FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO, which highlight the relationship of food security problems with conditions of poverty and social inequality, there are approximately 12% of the world's population experiencing severe food security problems in 2020. This figure also represents a number of 928 million people on earth, an increase of 148 million from 2019 (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2021: 4-8).

Quoting Sen's view, famine tends to be caused by factors that fail to realize and implement food policies, which occur in authoritarian or dictatorial countries. On the other hand, this phenomenon does not occur in a democratic country with an open political system and freedom of the press that supports correction of public policy (Sachs, TIME Magazine, 1998). The structure of global food production and trade also influences the world's food distribution model. Even interestingly, it is known that the food crisis in 1972 was not caused by a lack of food availability, because in the 1960s there was an abundance of wheat and rice commodities. This abundance is precisely what causes falling prices and the emergence of an agricultural depression (Sen 1981: 42).

Towards the end of the Cold War and entering the era of globalization, hunger still occurs in several countries. From 1983 to the 2000s, there have been eight natural disasters that have hit the majority of Africa and North Korea. The main characters that cause famine in Africa are low governance capabilities, horizontal conflicts, civil wars, poverty, and spread of disease, violence, and military activities. Another cause characteristic is environmental factors such as the impact of extreme climate change, and drought. Meanwhile in North Korea, the famine was caused by the failure of the government due to military policies and flooding problems.

Not only reflecting on the history of global hunger, future predictions also believe that the earth will still face food availability problems due to the degradation of the quantity and quality of land due to urbanization and industrialization, plus global warming, soil erosion, and lack of irrigation systems. It is said that between 1990 - 2030 there will be a shortage of grain production of about 20%, which is equivalent to a loss of 216 tons of grain. (Brown, 2008: 669)

If it is concluded from the description above, the food problem will be reflected in the situation of the Food Availability Decline - FAD concept (Osmani, 1993: 16, Sen, 1981:162), which is then translated into the situation there is no food to buy and people can't pay for food. Both of these situations emphasize the problem of production and distribution barriers. Production barriers are conditions where food fails to be produced due to natural factors or due to human activities that have an impact on environmental damage (war, land conversion, waste, and others). Meanwhile, distribution barriers are conditions in which food is not available due to a break in the food distribution chain, either due to unilateral actions of distributors or due to policies implemented, which can lead to scarcity and price increases.

There are 3 (three) factors that encourage the occurrence of FAD – FED, namely environmental factors, governance and global food mechanisms, which are explained as follows:

#### **a. Environment**

Providing food needs is very dependent on natural conditions. Although environmental manipulation technology has been widely developed, this kind of technology has not been enjoyed by many countries, especially poor/developing countries. This is due to high operating costs. In other words, poor/developing countries really depend on the quality of nature to support national food production.

The experience of famines in Africa and Asia shows that the general character of the causes of famine are environmental factors that are represented by prolonged droughts. From the mid-1980s to 2010 Africa experienced severe drought due to low rainfall. At its peak, all of East and West Africa experienced droughts that killed food production and exacerbated the spread of disease. Meanwhile, outside the African zone, Indonesia and Haiti are experiencing climate change due to the El Nino storm which also causes drought.

When the weather changes to extremes, there is a tendency for crop failure to occur. Losses are doubled. First, farmers experience job losses and operational costs include tools and seeds. Second, crop failure forces farmers to sell assets and minimal yields of agriculture, gardens, and livestock at low prices to survive after the harvest season. Meanwhile, this condition opens up opportunities for middlemen to play with prices, which means that farmers pay high prices for the production they sell cheaply. The same will be experienced by consumers. For example, the drought in Ethiopia forced farmers to sell agricultural assets, while the scarcity of food production caused prices to skyrocket and people were in debt to survive (ERCS, 2003: 1).

## **b. Governance**

Description of the condition of the state government in administering the government and ensuring food security and security. Since the beginning of the discussion, this article has touched on the importance of the government's role in ensuring food safety. The government through the constitutional mandate is obliged to organize a healthy government to support the running of the national food program. This is in line with what Sen has stated, political stability and democracy are important factors that determine the direction of food policy.

Political instability marked by rampant political violence and civil war will clearly hinder food development programs. This is because political upheaval will force the defensive government to focus on the policy of defending the government and resisting the revolution. North Korea's Military First policy is an example. The government is forced to spend more on military and defense spending, so that food and health priorities will be ignored. The same experience also happened to the authoritarian regime of the Soviet Union which forced the people to give up food stocks for supporting purposes during the war. The government also forced the conversion of land ownership from the people to the government under a policy of collectivism.

Food fraud can also occur in the form of food control by the authorities. In addition, foreign food aid will be difficult to deliver directly to victims due to access controlled and controlled by militant groups. It is not uncommon for food fraud to be carried out by militant groups who actually hide food aid by foreign aid agencies, such as in the Ethiopian conflict (Jackson, 2014). Agriculture is not working, food aid is being misused. Prolonged conflict also closes the production space because people tend to prioritize protection over farming activities.

The government's failure is also seen from how the government's policies tend to import rather than encourage national production. Imports are a quick response to extreme climate change and maintain stock for the sake of stability in national food prices. However, the state should be able to implement a national food production program, and not rely on imports, which can actually jeopardize the availability and prices of food.

If then poor countries in general do not have the opportunity to import due to acute poverty, some countries with a fairly stable trade balance actually import, although at the same time national production can still be carried out. The reason is because the trade balance surplus is still considered sufficient for import costs. Imports are also often considered necessary to ensure availability and price stability.

In the long term, imports will lead to national dependence on foreign supplies. On the other hand, domestic production has not developed as the food supply has been controlled by foreign producers. When there is a supply bottleneck that causes food shortages, the prices of available commodities will skyrocket uncontrollably. Meanwhile, the supply from domestic production is inadequate. Not to mention the game by the business cartels. Mistakes in policy choices in this kind of import-led policy mechanism will clearly have an impact on the possibility of food security and hunger problems.

## **c. Global Mechanism Related to Food Security**

The dynamics of the global economy, which is characterized by the increasingly open relationship and communication between governments and between communities, is considered capable of providing various approaches to food policy on the one hand, but on the other hand it can actually encourage food safety problems. Some critics say that trade liberalization can increase the risk of problems with food security, in the form of job degradation in agriculture. This is illustrated by the battle between the agricultural performance of developed countries and developing countries which is generally won by

developed countries. Often, agriculture in developing/poor countries is forced to close due to fertilizer and seed subsidy policies which have been abolished as a consequence of liberalization, as well as global price games that have also put pressure on agriculture in poor countries.

Therefore, the WTO encourages re-negotiation and evaluation by developing countries on the issue of trade tariffs as a response to protecting domestic agricultural production from agricultural attacks from developed countries in developing countries.

However, the WTO mechanism is still often considered a threat to food security due to liberalization in the vulnerable food sector. Export-import liberalization to a certain extent can actually hamper the development of the food industry in poor/developing countries and often creates dependence on supply. If left unchecked, it will open up opportunities for global corporations to play commodity prices for profit. Not to mention the problem of different food standards around the world. Dream trade under liberalization rules will encourage the entry of types of food that are not really needed (because they are not basic types of consumption) in certain countries freely. This means that there are many types of food that cannot be consumed widely. This kind of food liberalization is completely useless.

### **3.2 Food Safety Issues in Indonesia and the Government's Role in overcoming them**

It has been mentioned previously that the government has a role that can contribute negatively to the emergence of food security problems. As in Sen's analysis, undemocratic government is one of the causes of national food insecurity. Thus, the government also has an important role in overcoming it.

As one of the countries with the largest democratic system in the world, Indonesia is not free from the problem of hunger. Historical records show that the territory of Indonesia has experienced several famine events. This statement uses the term Indonesian territory and not the state of Indonesia, and uses the term famine event and not a famine. This is because the biggest event occurred in the 1800s and not on a national scale. In addition, according to FAO records until 2021, the category of famine is still concentrated in the African region (FAO, 2021).

Even though it is not included in the list of the biggest disasters in recorded history (worldatlas.com, 2021; smh.com, 2021), Indonesian territory has experienced several famine events. Among them are after the Tambora eruption, which caused 10 thousand deaths in 1815. Then what happened in Cirebon (1843), Demak (1849), and Grobogan (1850) (Nurcholis, Sindonews, 2015) with approximately 83 thousand victims.

Before and after the independence of the republic, Indonesia was connected to at least three food crises, during the Soekarno era. The first was the food crisis of 1932-1933 when he was still a political activist. The second was when Soekarno tried to make sense in dealing with the Japanese action that took the people's rice for war logistics. Soekarno's efforts were considered by the non-nationalist collaboration (Maryoto, 2009: 123-126). The food crisis continued during the Japanese occupation on the island of Java in 1944-1945 which resulted in as many as 2.4 million victims (van der Eng, 2008). The third was towards the end of Soekarno's leadership in the 1960s. The food crisis this time was claimed by Soekarno as a result of the imbalance between food production capacity and population growth (Maryoto, 2009: 127).

The New Order era seems to have succeeded in dealing with the legacy of the food crisis of the Old Order. Moreover, during the 32 years of the New Order regime, the government claimed that Indonesia had succeeded in achieving food self-sufficiency in the form of rice in 1983 (Maryoto, 2009: 138). Food issues are a priority development program that is implemented through the Five-Year Development Plan (Repelita) which includes

strengthening infrastructure such as capital, cooperatives, irrigation, warehousing, and transportation.

Nevertheless, famine events still occurred until the post-New Order era. Some of the recorded hunger in Lombok, NTT due to drought and rice trade restrictions in 1966-7 (Van der Eng, 2012), which happened again in mid-2015. Then the most recent occurred in Maluku in 2018.

The characteristics of food security problems and famine events in the archipelago since before the era of independence until the era of the republican government were quite a lot caused by natural factors, especially the problem of drought. The characteristics of volcanic soils raise the threat of eruptions and droughts such as the Tambora eruption in 1815, which caused a decrease in global temperature and crop failure due to climate change for the next 3 years (Dzulfaroh, Kompas, 2020). This incident has also caused famine in Asia, Europe, and America. Drought is the cause of crop failure in the Demak and Grobogan areas. It is the same with the famine that occurred in Maluku in 2018 due to crop failures caused by the invasion of rats and pigs in corn and rice fields. Pest attacks are also believed to have arisen as a result of fires that hit a number of areas on Seram Island about three years earlier, and caused the need for supporting materials such as bamboo to build fences to protect gardens could not be obtained (Affan, BBC, 2018).

Apart from natural factors, interventions in food policy have also contributed to the emergence of food and hunger problems in several regions in Indonesia. The importance of intervention in proper food policy is illustrated by Kinasih, in a summary of agricultural protection policies carried out by the United States, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, China, plus the European Union and Syria. Of the nine countries, eight of them are large and developed countries. An important argument from the summary is that even developed countries that encourage free trade, including food, actually apply protection that is contrary to the WTO. It is important for the government to guarantee national food security (Kinasih, et.al, 2012: 9-11).

Experience in Indonesia actually shows the application of wrong policies, both domestically and when dealing with the international system. Soekarno for example. When there was a decline in the productivity of agricultural land, Soekarno was said to be busy building rhetoric to maintain his leadership. The spirit of rejection of imports is not accompanied by efforts to build real food self-sufficiency. The people were instead given an encouraging speech, which was referred to as food for the soul rather than food for the stomach (Maryoto, 2009: 128-129).

The food policy of the Suharto era appears to have produced positive results in the form of national rice self-sufficiency. However, the policies adopted have been criticized because they were built under an authoritarian system and trapped in dependence on foreign investment, which has an impact on debt. Imports made to respond to the drought in the 1970s actually created a disincentive to the rice business. This is still coupled with the application of the Javanese rice cropping pattern which kills food diversification, due to differences in soil and climate characteristics outside Java. (Maryoto, 2009: 137-141).

Reflecting on the experience of food intervention management that has been carried out in the past, nowadays efforts to handle crises and maintain food security must be carried out by prioritizing synergies between national approaches that are combined with effective and efficient global approaches. Several things that must be done by the government to maintain national food security and security as well as to respond to global food problems include:

1. Governments must be sensitive to the global response to food safety disasters, both between governments and between global societies,

2. The government must pay attention to global infrastructure as a bridge for intervention humanity in a food emergency,
3. The government should create a model of cooperation between international aid agencies with global governments, in terms of response to food disasters and development of science in predicting and preventing possible disasters food,
4. The government must cooperate in developing disaster prevention technology food made in the form of; cropping technology and agricultural land and livestock, a just global market mechanism, which guarantees production get the market so as to provide results for the country and farmers, improvement of the system international trade and international trade facilitation, as well as elimination policies debt, especially for poor countries to encourage production.

An important approach in handling national food problems must also adhere to the rules in Law No.18/2012 on Food. This regulation emphasizes the importance of state administrators' obligations to ensure the availability and equitable distribution of food to individuals. This realization must also include the availability of food that is good in quality and quantity, safe, diverse, nutritious, and affordable and does not conflict with religion, belief, and community culture, and is sustainable (Bulog.co.id).

Therefore, in order to respond to global food problems that also have an impact on national food, there are several steps that the Indonesian government can consider:

1. Forming a national food policy in the form of self-sufficiency by utilize the distribution of garden and farmer areas nationally, supported by a system of national granaries and additional production points, (production incentives);
2. Breaking the long and expensive national food distribution chain, by provide a special mode of transportation organized by the government for support safe, cheap, and fast distribution (distribution incentives);
3. Reducing food dependence on food trade mechanisms internationally and shape long-term policies by providing markets domestic for local commodities so that the national production cycle can continue to rotate;
4. Strengthening the bargaining position in the global space by leveraging relationships with other developing country powers such as the ASEAN group of countries, China, and India, for formal negotiations in the WTO mechanism so that food commodities can be covered by a just international policy.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Food Security is a concept that was born from two combinations of terms consisting of the words food and security. The world food organization, FAO in the 1996 World Food Summit, stated that food security is said to be realized if: all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO Policy Brief, 2006). The government through the constitutional mandate is obliged to organize a healthy government to support the running of the national food program. Political instability marked by rampant political violence and civil war will clearly hinder food development programs. The same experience also happened to the authoritarian regime of the Soviet Union which forced the people to give up food stocks for supporting purposes during the war. Food fraud can also occur in the form of food control by the authorities. In addition, foreign food aid will be difficult to deliver directly to victims due to access controlled and controlled by militant groups.

The government's failure is also seen from how the government's policies tend to import rather than encourage national production. If then poor countries in general do not

have the opportunity to import due to acute poverty, some countries with a fairly stable trade balance actually import, although at the same time national production can still be carried out.

On the other hand, domestic production has not developed as the food supply has been controlled by foreign producers. When there is a supply bottleneck that causes food shortages, the prices of available commodities will skyrocket uncontrollably. Global Mechanism Related to Food Security. The dynamics of the global economy, which is characterized by the increasingly open relationship and communication between governments and between communities, is considered capable of providing various approaches to food policy on the one hand, but on the other hand it can actually encourage food safety problems. This is illustrated by the battle between the agricultural performance of developed countries and developing countries which is generally won by developed countries. Therefore, the WTO encourages re-negotiation and evaluation by developing countries on the issue of trade tariffs as a response to protecting domestic agricultural production from agricultural attacks from developed countries in developing countries. Not to mention the problem of different food standards around the world. This means that there are many types of food that cannot be consumed widely.

Food intervention management experiences that have been carried out in the past, as an effort to handle crises and maintain food security should be carried out by prioritizing synergies between national approaches that are combined with effective and efficient global approaches. An important approach in handling national food problems must also adhere to the rules in Law No.18/2012 on Food. This rule emphasizes the importance of the obligation of state officials to ensure the availability and equitable distribution of food to individuals.

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