

ECONOMIC LEGAL ANALYSIS OF FREE SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAM IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The free meal program for school children is a government policy that aims to improve children's welfare and reduce the economic burden on families. This study analyzes the legal basis that supports the program, the economic impact on families and communities, and its implementation from the perspective of economic law. This study uses a juridical-normative and empirical approach with case studies in several regions. The results show that this program has a strong legal basis, provides significant economic benefits, but faces challenges in implementation. Policy recommendations include increasing regulations, budget transparency, and strengthening oversight mechanisms.

Keywords: *Economic Law, Free Meals, School Children, Public Policy, Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Free school meal programs have been implemented in various countries as part of social welfare policies. In Indonesia, this program aims to improve children's nutrition, support education, and reduce the economic burden on poor families. However, its implementation still faces various challenges, including legal aspects, economic aspects, and effectiveness of implementation in the field. The free nutritious meal program for school children is one of President Prabowo Subianto's main policies during his 2024-2029 leadership period. This program aims to improve the nutrition of Indonesian children and reduce malnutrition and stunting rates. President Prabowo targets all children in Indonesia to have access to free nutritious meals by the end of 2025.

In the initial phase, the program has reached around 3 million beneficiaries in 26 provinces. The government plans to gradually increase the number of recipients to 17 million by the end of 2025. To support the program, a budget of 171 trillion rupiah has been allocated in 2025, with the hope of increasing Indonesia's GDP growth by almost 2 percent. The implementation of this program also involves the Government Goods/Services Procurement Policy Agency (LKPP) which is preparing regulations and guidelines for procurement schemes to ensure transparency, accountability, and on-target implementation. However, this program is not without challenges, including physical and administrative distribution obstacles, as well as the importance of securing funds to prevent misappropriation. President Prabowo is aware of criticism and doubts from various parties, but he emphasized his commitment to realizing this program for the future of Indonesian children.

Thus, this free nutritious meal program is in line with the government's efforts to improve the quality of Indonesia's human resources through improving children's nutrition, which is expected to have a positive impact on health, education, and the welfare of society as a whole. This policy has significant economic law implications, as it relates to budget allocation, efficiency of public fund use, and its impact on the local economic sector. Therefore, it is important to analyze the legal basis supporting this program, its economic impact, and the effectiveness of policy implementation from an economic law perspective.

B. Formulation of the problem

1. What is the legal basis for the free meal program for school children in Indonesia?
2. What is the economic impact of implementing this program on families and communities?

3. How is the implementation of this program from an economic law perspective?

C. Research purposes

1. Analyzing the legal basis of the free meal program for school children in Indonesia.
2. Assess the economic impact of implementing this program on families and communities.
3. Provide policy recommendations regarding free meal programs for school children.

D. Research methods

This study uses a juridical-normative and empirical approach. The juridical-normative approach is carried out by examining the laws and regulations related to the free meal program. Meanwhile, the empirical approach is carried out with a case study of the implementation of the program in several regions. Data were collected through literature studies, interviews with stakeholders, and analysis of government reports related to the implementation of this program.

DISCUSSION

A. Legal Basis for Free Meal Program for School Children in Indonesia

The free school meal program has several legal bases, including:

1. Article 28C and Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution guarantee the right to education and welfare of children.
2. Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which states that the government is obliged to provide appropriate educational services for children, including in the aspect of nutrition.
3. Law No. 36 of 2009 concerning Health, which mandates the government to ensure good nutritional status for school children.
4. Presidential Regulation No. 83 of 2017 concerning Strategic Food and Nutrition Policy, which regulates efforts to improve community nutrition, including through school food programs.

The program is also supported by regional policies that regulate the budget and implementation mechanisms. Several provinces have adopted regional regulations to ensure the sustainability of the program.

B. The Economic Impact of Free Meal Programs on Families and Communities

The implementation of the free meal program has a significant economic impact, both for families and communities.

1. Economic Impact of Free Meal Program on Families and Communities. The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) initiated by the government, especially during the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto, has had a broad economic impact on families and communities. This program not only aims to improve the nutrition of school children, but also provides economic stimulus that can improve the welfare of society as a whole.

a. Impact on Family

1) Reducing the Family's Economic Burden

One of the main benefits of this program is reducing household spending on food for school children. For low-income families, the cost of school lunches can be a significant burden. With the free meal program, families can allocate their funds to other needs, such as health, education, and savings.

For example, if one child needs around Rp10,000 per day for lunch, then in one month (20 school days) the family can save Rp200,000 per child. If there are two children in school in one family, then the savings can reach Rp400,000 per month, which is a significant amount for low-middle income families.

2) Improving Children's Nutrition and Productivity

Access to nutritious food can improve children's health and nutritional status, which contributes to their endurance and learning ability. Children who receive good nutrition tend to have higher concentration, reduce the risk of fatigue and illness, and improve academic achievement. In the

long term, this has the potential to improve the quality of human resources and the competitiveness of the workforce in Indonesia.

3) Increasing School Participation

Many children from poor families often miss school for economic reasons, especially in rural and remote areas. With the free meal program, the incentive to stay in school becomes higher, because children are guaranteed food every day. This can reduce the dropout rate and increase the national education participation rate.

b. Impact on Society

1) Increasing the Income of MSMEs and Local Farmers

One of the main principles in implementing the MBG program is the use of local food ingredients, which means involving farmers, fishermen, and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the food supply chain. With this policy, the program not only meets the nutritional needs of school children, but also provides economic benefits to the surrounding community.

For example, if the government buys rice, vegetables, eggs, and fish from local farmers and livestock breeders to meet program needs, then demand for these products will increase, which will ultimately drive increased income for business actors in the agriculture and fisheries sectors.

2) Creating New Jobs

The program also opens up new job opportunities, both in food production, distribution, and logistics management. For example, additional workers are needed to cook, pack, and distribute food to schools across Indonesia. This especially benefits housewives, freelancers, and small business owners involved in providing food.

In countries that have successfully implemented similar programs, such as India and Brazil, the involvement of local communities in providing school meals has created thousands of new jobs, while increasing local economic stability.

3) Encouraging Investment in the Food and Nutrition Sector

With a large budget allocated for this program (estimated to reach IDR171 trillion by 2025), the food sector and related industries are predicted to experience significant growth. Companies engaged in food production, food distribution, and catering services will see this as an opportunity to invest more in healthy and sustainable food production.

In addition, increasing demand for high-quality food ingredients can drive innovation in the agricultural and food processing sectors, including the adoption of new technologies in more efficient and environmentally friendly food production.

c. Challenges and Potential Economic Problems

Although the free meal program brings various economic benefits, there are several challenges that need to be considered so that its implementation does not become a burden on the country's economy:

1) Budget Efficiency and Transparency

With such a large budget allocation, the government needs to ensure that the funds are used efficiently and that there are no leaks due to corruption or inefficiencies in food procurement and distribution. Strict audit mechanisms, transparency in budget management, and an accountable reporting system must be implemented.

2) Availability of Infrastructure and Food Distribution

One of the biggest challenges in implementing this program is ensuring that food distribution runs smoothly throughout Indonesia, especially in remote areas with limited infrastructure. If not managed properly, this program can experience delays in food delivery or even inequality in food allocation between regions.

3) Impact on Food Inflation

If demand for food increases drastically due to this program without being balanced by increased production, food prices in the market may increase, potentially causing food inflation. Therefore, a balanced food production and distribution strategy must be implemented so that prices remain stable and affordable for the general public.

C. Program Implementation from an Economic Law Perspective

From an economic law perspective, the success of a free meal program depends on several factors:

1. Budget Allocation Efficiency
This program requires large funds, so transparency in budget management is very important. Fiscal policy must ensure that budget allocations do not burden the APBN/APBD excessively and remain in accordance with the principle of effectiveness.
2. Monitoring and Accountability Mechanism
The government must implement strict monitoring mechanisms to prevent misappropriation of funds. One solution is the implementation of a digitalization system in recording food distribution and budget reporting.
3. Private Sector and Community Engagement
Involving the private sector in food provision can improve efficiency and quality of service. Partnerships between government, the private sector, and local communities will strengthen the sustainability of the program.
 - a. Private Sector Involvement
The government encourages active participation of the private sector in supporting the MBG program. For example, technology companies such as Grab and Ovo are involved in this program. However, their involvement raises questions about the motives behind their participation, whether it is purely based on corporate social responsibility or related to certain business interests. Therefore, transparency in this collaboration is very important to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure that the program runs according to its main objectives.
 - b. Community Involvement
The MBG program also seeks to empower local communities, including farmers and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The government ensures that the food ingredients used in this program are sourced from local products, so that they can improve the regional economy and support national food security. In addition, the establishment of healthy kitchens through the Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit (SPPG) involves workers from the local community, creates new jobs, and opens up market share for local products.

Although collaboration between government, the private sector, and communities has great potential, there are challenges that need to be overcome. One of them is ensuring that the allocated budget is sufficient to provide a menu that meets nutritional standards, especially in areas with high staple food prices. In addition, transparency and accountability are needed in program implementation to avoid potential conflicts of interest and ensure that the main objectives of the program are achieved. With close cooperation between all stakeholders, the Free Nutritious Meal Program is expected to improve the nutritional status of Indonesian children and have a positive impact on the health, education, and welfare of the community as a whole.

CLOSING

A. Conclusion

The Free Nutritional Meals Program has a broad economic impact and potential to improve family welfare and drive economic growth at the local and national levels. Key benefits of the program include:

1. For Families:
 - a. Reducing the economic burden on the family.
 - b. Improving children's nutrition and productivity.
 - c. Encourage children's educational participation.
2. For the Community:
 - a. Empowering local farmers and MSMEs through food demand.
 - b. Creating new jobs in the food and food distribution sector.
 - c. Encouraging investment and innovation in the food and nutrition sector.
3. The free meal program for school children has a strong legal basis in various national and regional regulations.
4. This program has a positive economic impact on families and communities, but still faces challenges in

budget efficiency and implementation in the field.

5. Implementation of this program requires an economic law approach that takes into account budget efficiency, transparent monitoring mechanisms, and the involvement of various stakeholders.

However, in order for this positive impact to be achieved optimally, the government needs to overcome existing challenges by increasing budget transparency, improving the distribution system, and ensuring food policies that support the sustainability of the program. On the other hand, if management is not carried out transparently, economic challenges such as potential budget inefficiency and the risk of corruption in the management of this program's funds will arise.

B. Suggestion

1. Strengthening Regulations: The government needs to clarify regulations regarding nutritional standards, distribution, and program evaluation.
2. Budget Transparency: There needs to be an audit system and open reporting on the use of this program's funds to prevent corruption.
3. Optimizing Partnerships: Increasing the role of the private sector and communities in food provision and program management.
4. Monitoring And Evaluation Sustainable: Forming team independent For evaluate program effectiveness periodically.

With these recommendations, it is hoped that the free meal program for school children can run more effectively, sustainably, and provide maximum benefits for Indonesian children and the national economy.

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