

A LEGAL REVIEW OF FOOD POLICY IN ACHIEVING RICE SELF SUFFICIENCY IN SOUTH LABUHANBATU REGENCY, INDONESIA

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Abstract

The title of this research is “A Legal Review of Food Policy in Achieving Rice Self-Sufficiency in South Labuhanbatu Regency, Indonesia”. This research’s object is the Indonesian legal policy on food. The objective is to analyze food policy from a legal perspective, assess its implementation at the regional level, and formulate adaptive and applicable legal recommendations to support sustainable food self-sufficiency in South Labuhanbatu Regency. This research is also expected to identify legal loopholes and implementation barriers that hinder the achievement of self-sufficiency targets. This paper employed the method of normative legal and sociological approaches. Results show that the South Labuhanbatu Regency Government is working to achieve rice self-sufficiency through various policies and programs. Support from various parties, including the Indonesian National Armed Forces, the Indonesian National Police, and private companies, has also been instrumental in achieving this target. These efforts include increasing the cropping index, optimizing land use, and utilizing agricultural technology. The South Labuhan Batu Regency government has also implemented several policies aimed at food security to increase rice self-sufficiency in the regency. Food policies in South Labuhan Batu Regency are in accordance with the legal principles of food security. However, currently, there is no explicit food policy that leads to rice self-sufficiency in South Labuhan Batu Regency.

Keyword: Food, Self-Sufficiency, Development, Policy, Law.

INTRODUCTION

An innovative solution to grow the national economy and increase social welfare can be achieved by strengthening the legal system and policies that support the achievement of rice self-sufficiency in an area (Rusliyadi, 2023). From the economic, social, and political aspects, food availability is a major component in maintaining national stability (Hamilton-Hart, 2019; Indriastuti, Hara, Patriadi, Trihartono, & Sunarko, 2022). In the context of Indonesia as an agricultural country, food policy has a strategic role in achieving food resilience and independence (Sudaryanto, 2016). The regional government, which is an extension of the central government, has a crucial role in formulating and implementing policies that are able to sustainably guarantee the fulfillment of society’s food needs (Redi, 2022). South Labuhanbatu Regency, which is one of the food producers in North Sumatra Province, has a great potential in supporting the national rice self-sufficiency program (Wright, Rahardjo, & Spratt, 2022). Even so, there are various obstacles from the regulatory and institutional aspects, as well as in the technical implementation in the field (Suhargon & Anggeraini, 2021). The hindrances lead to the suboptimum contribution of this region in fulfilling the self-sufficiency target (Huang & Lin, 2021). This study focuses on the juridical analysis of regional food policies to see how far the existing regulations are aligned with national objectives in the case of food resilience and rice self-sufficiency. The table below shows the development of rice production in South Labuhanbatu Regency from 2018 to 2024:

Table 1. The Development of Rice Production in South Labuhanbatu Regency from Year 2018 to 2024 (Tons)

No.	Year	Rice Production
1.	2024	241.81
2.	2023	254.28
3.	2022	235.67
4.	2021	284.64
5.	2020	377.69
6.	2019	147.5
7.	2018	239.66

The table above shows that from 2018 to 2024, the rice production in South Labuhanbatu Regency experienced fluctuations. In 2018, the rice production was recorded at 239.66 tons and experienced a significant spike in 2020, reaching 377.69 tons, which was the highest in the period. However, after that, the production will gradually decline, reaching 241.81 tons in 2024. Although there are variations from year to year, overall, the rice production in this area tends to be unstable, which can reflect the existence of dynamics in the production system, such as the factors of the weather, land availability, changes in local agricultural patterns, and legal issues. The problems that will be investigated in this research are: 1) What is the food policy in South Labuhanbatu Regency like? 2) Does this policy align with the principles of food law and support the rice self-sufficiency program? 3) What are the supporting and inhibiting factors in the food policy implementation in South Labuhanbatu Regency from the legal aspect?

This study is highly urgent, considering that rice self-sufficiency is one of the pillars of national food security. It is very crucial, especially in areas such as South Labuhanbatu Regency, where the rice production is still fluctuating and relatively low. A juridical review of food policy becomes important to assess how far the regulations and implementation of regional policies are able to encourage sustainable increases in rice production (Zahra & Ramadani, 2023). Besides that, this study can identify existing weaknesses in the available regulations and provide recommendations for policy improvements in order to create a food system which is more effective, fairer, and supports local farmers. Therefore, this study is expected to give contribution in supporting the efforts to achieve rice self-sufficiency at the regional and national levels. This study offers significance as it provides an input based on legal studies on the implementation of food policies at the regional level. It is hoped that the results of this research may be used as a basis to evaluate and recommend regulatory improvements. This is so that the applicable regulations can be more effective in encouraging rice self-sufficiency and improving the welfare of local farmers. This is to increase the regional contribution in supporting the national food resilience.

METHOD

This research employed the normative and empirical juridical approaches. The normative juridical approach is used to analyze laws and regulations related to food policy and rice self-sufficiency, both at national and regional levels, in order to assess their compliance with applicable legal principles. Meanwhile, the empirical juridical approach is used to examine the implementation of the policy in the field through a case study method in South Labuhanbatu Regency, Indonesia. This was carried out by collecting data from interviews, observation, and related documents. As a strategy to resolve the research problems, the authors carried out several strategies, such as analyzing regulatory gaps, identifying the obstacles which hinder the implementation of policies, as well as assessing the effectiveness of coordination between related institutions. Furthermore, the results of the analysis were used as a basis to formulate a recommendation to improve the legal policies which can support the sustainable achievement of rice self-sufficiency in the area. In this research, the authors conducted a legal review of food policies to achieve rice self-sufficiency in South Labuhanbatu Regency. The authors collected data from relevant primary and secondary legal materials, including food policies and regulations on agriculture in South Labuhanbatu Regency. The data were collected from legal documents from the national and regional levels, technical policies from the Department of Agriculture, as well as interviews with stakeholders, such as local government officials, extension workers, and food policy makers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Food resilience is a condition where a country's need for food is fulfilled up to the individual level. This is reflected in the availability of sufficient food in terms of its quantity, quality, safety, diversity, nutrition, even distribution, and affordability. Apart from that, the available foods must not conflict with the religion, beliefs, and culture of the community. This is so that society can live a healthy, active, and productive life in a sustainable manner

(Abidin, 2015). The development of food and nutrition resilience is carried out systematically by involving cross-sectors (Marpaung, Bakti, & Suhargon, 2021). This approach is aimed at ensuring adequate food availability through domestic food production and trade; achieving stable food availability and access at the macro, meso and micro levels; and ensuring adequate quality (food diversity and safety) and quantity of food consumption, which is supported by improved infrastructure (Budiman & Santu, 2024). To realize these conditions, macroeconomic policy support that is capable of realizing economic stability and guaranteeing the stability of food supply and prices is needed. In order to determine the level of food security of a region and its supporting factors, an assessment system has been developed in the form of the Food Resilience Index, which refers to the definition of food security and the subsystems that form the food security system (Fadah, Lutfy, & Amruhu, 2023). The Food Resilience Index compiled by the Food Security Agency, the Republic of Indonesia's Ministry of Agriculture, is an adjustment of existing indexes based on the availability of data at the district/city and provincial levels (Annaji, Pratama, Wenry, & Lelangrian, 2025). The nine indicators used in compiling the Food Resilience Index are derived from three aspects of food security: food availability, affordability, and utilization. The selection of indicators used in the Food Resilience Index is based on: (i) a review of the global food security index; (ii) the level of sensitivity in measuring food security and nutrition; (iii) the representation of the three pillars of food security; and (iv) the availability of routine data for a specific period (annually) and covering all districts/cities and provinces. The South Labuhanbatu Regency Government is working to achieve rice self-sufficiency through various policies and programs (Faisal, Faisal, & Kamaruzaman, 2024). Support from various parties, including the Indonesian National Armed Forces, the Indonesian National Police Force, and private companies, also plays a significant role in achieving this target. Some of these efforts include increasing the cropping index, increasing the land optimization, and utilizing agricultural technologies. Some of the policies and efforts that the South Labuhanbatu Regency Government have made to achieve rice self-sufficiency include:

1. Increasing the planting index: It encourages farmers to increase the frequency of rice planting from once to two or three times a year.
2. Land optimization: It encourages the utilization of plantation land and other land for agricultural activities, including planting corn.
3. Using supportive agricultural technologies: It provides assistance by providing agricultural tools and machinery. It organizes training for farmers to increase productivity.
4. Intensive supervision: It conducts intensive supervision to ensure that the land management runs according to plan.
5. Cross-sector synergy: It builds a strong cooperation between local governments, the Indonesian National Armed Forces, the Indonesian National Police Force, private companies, and communities to support food resilience programs.
6. Formation of cooperatives: It establishes the Red and White Cooperative as a follow-up to the "One Village One Hectare" program to support regional food independence.
7. Reporting coordination: It improves the coordination in crop reporting for further program evaluation and planning.

In addition to corn, the government also encourages the diversification of food crops, such as rice, chilies, vegetables, as well as livestock and fish farming through Village-Owned Enterprises. Concerning the utilization of village funds for food security, the Labuhanbatu Regency Government has set a minimum allocation of 20% of village funds for food security programs in an inclusive, accountable, collaborative, and sustainable manner. This is in accordance with the direction of the 2024–2025 Ministerial Regulation on Villages (Harahap, 2024).

In addition, the South Labuhanbatu Police Force also plays an active role in supporting the food self-sufficiency program, including inaugurating food security areas and providing oversight for the distribution of harvested produce. The local government also works to address potential challenges, such as weather and infrastructure issues, through discussions and solutions with various relevant parties. With integrated efforts and support from various elements of society, it is hoped that South Labuhanbatu Regency can achieve rice self-sufficiency and contribute to national food security (Firmansyah, 2025; Ita, 2012).

According to Law No. 18 of 2012 on Food, food management in Indonesia must prioritize seven main principles: sovereignty, independence, resilience, security, benefits, equity, sustainability, and justice. Nationally, several initiatives, such as Presidential Decree No. 6 of 2025 on the Reformation in the Distribution of Subsidized Fertilizer, are designed to be more efficient and targeted. Such initiatives are also aimed at supporting food sovereignty and farmer welfare. The establishment of the National Food Agency in 2021 aimed to strengthen food coordination and policies—covering food availability, price stabilization, security, and diversification—demonstrating strong formal steps in implementing various aspects of food law in terms of the national food law.

Such a policy has been designed to be in accordance with applicable principles. However, its effectiveness heavily depends on implementation and oversight in the field. Food law principles—such as sovereignty, safety, benefit, equity, and justice—must be reflected in the implementation of regulations in the field. In South Labuhanbatu Regency, the implementation of the policies that are aligned with these principles is evident in controlling food prices in traditional markets. Food price control policies stabilize prices and increase people's purchasing power. Although the profit margins of trades decline, consumers feel financially supported—in line with the principles of justice and social welfare from an Islamic economic perspective. This shows that the aspect of equality and justice in food access receives serious attention. Regarding the food policy that is directed at the rice self-sufficiency program, it has not explicitly been directed at rice self-sufficiency but is still directed at other food aspects, such as corn and general non-rice food security (Nasution, 2020).

The legal supporting factors for the implementation of food policies in South Labuhanbatu Regency are: a) Legal and clear budget allocation: The policy has been legalized through the Regent's Regulation, and the Village Fund allocation scheme is clear ($\geq 20\%$) for food security, b) Support from the central and local governments: Distribution of agricultural machinery by the Ministry of Agriculture and intensive coordination support implementation in the field, c) Institutional structure (Village-Owned Enterprises): Village-Owned Enterprises are obliged to be involved as implementers of food security, which helps the established legal structure (Fadhlurrahman, 2025). In addition to supporting factors, there are also inhibiting factors, namely: a) A lack of effective implementation at the village level: Some villages are not yet productive or have not been able to implement food security programs sustainably, b) Local coordination and socio-cultural constraints: Processes that involve local farmers and utilize local potential tend to still be limited as well as the risk of the program being implemented in a top-down manner without sufficient field input.

CONCLUSION

The South Labuhanbatu Regency Government is working to achieve rice self-sufficiency through various policies and programs. Support from various parties, including the Indonesian National Armed Forces, the Indonesian National Police, and private companies, has also been instrumental in achieving this target. These efforts include increasing the cropping index, optimizing land use, and utilizing agricultural technology. The South Labuhan Batu Regency government has also implemented several policies aimed at food security to increase rice self-sufficiency in the regency. Food policies in South Labuhan Batu Regency are in accordance with the legal principles of food security. However, currently, there is no explicit food policy that leads to rice self-sufficiency in South Labuhan Batu Regency.

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