

Indonesia's Role in Promoting Food Security in the Context of ASEAN Food Cooperation

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Abstract

The 2007–2008 food crisis has spurred Indonesia and other ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member countries to embrace food security as a permanent, high-priority policy. With their ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) initiatives, ASEAN has set several strategic initiatives to ensure long-term food security in the region. The literature on Indonesia's food security emphasizes the domestic political economy context of food security. In particular, most recent studies examine the impact of Indonesian's key policy, which prioritizes national food self-sufficiency over other domestic distributional considerations. Given Indonesia's strategic participation in the ASEAN's cooperation in Food, Agriculture, and Forestry (FAF), however, the analysis of how the dynamics around regional cooperation and integration shape the country's role in enhancing food security remains underexplored. Thus, there is a lack of studies attempting to examine—let alone theorize—the dynamics around regional food security cooperation initiated by ASEAN. This study aims to fill this gap by using Indonesia as a case study for exploring this issue. Using the methodology of participant observation of the Special Senior Officials Meeting of the 39th ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (SOM-39th AMAF), we have closely examined the regional-national interaction by focusing on various regional cooperative initiatives for enhancing local food security. In addition to



secondary data, our analysis of the eighteen agendas related to food security discussed in the SOM-39th AMAF offers invaluable insights into the interaction of various domestic factors with the ASEAN food cooperation contextual factors that can influence food security. These national-regional interactions are critical because they can, in turn, determine Indonesia FAF policy choices and hence, its role in enhancing food security in the country. Notwithstanding the state's preoccupation with national food self-sufficiency, the Indonesian government has shown it is committed to engaging in various ASEAN sectoral task forces, technical working groups, ad-hoc steering committees to help shape the guidelines related to the various dimensions of food security. The paper argues that strong political will alone is not enough to ensure gains from the broadening food security agenda through the shared policy goals and exchange of ideas and learning process in the national-regional interactions. Intentions must be backed up by the country's ability to leverage the enabling environment arising from the ASEAN food cooperation initiatives and programs. In particular, it is necessary to enhance capacity to implement and coordinate policies based on local needs and capacities at various levels. At the same time, it is important for Indonesia to overcome the constraining environment endemic to the ASEAN food cooperation so as not to threaten food security for the most vulnerable groups in the country.

Keywords: food security, ASEAN Economic Community, Indonesia, national capacity, smallholder farmers

1 Introduction

With a population of more than 260 million, Indonesia is facing the challenging task of ensuring food security in the country. The Indonesian state continues to give priority to increasing staple food production, especially rice, corn and soybean. The 2007–2008 food crisis awakened Indonesia and other ASEAN member countries (AMCs) to the urgent need for embracing food security as a permanent, high priority policy (ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry [AMAF], [2014](#)). To accomplish this, the AMCs have adopted the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework and the Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security 2015–2020. Through the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) initiatives, ASEAN has set several strategic initiatives which it believes can ensure long-term food security in the region.

Existing research on Indonesia's food security shows that the country has emphasized the domestic political economy context of food security. However, little research has attempted to examine—let alone theorize—the dynamics around the kinds of regional cooperation and integration which may have positive as well as negative implications for food security in the country. Given that Indonesia is already participating in the ASEAN's various initiatives on food security cooperation, the present paper will explore the ways that national-regional interactions are affecting Indonesia's role in enhancing domestic food security.

Several important questions related to the Indonesian context and perspectives need to be addressed. For example, How did Indonesia's government frame and strategically approach various dimensions of food security at the national and regional levels? What has been Indonesia's response, so far, to ASEAN's various initiatives to enhance food security in the region? What are the challenges confronting Indonesia's staple food production in the face of regional trade and investment liberalization? And, finally, have there been any policy conflicts between Indonesia's food policy and the various ASEAN initiatives on food security mentioned above, as well as constraints or problems resulting from the country's participation in regional food cooperation or implementation of necessary rules or programs?

In the context of the above dynamics of national-regional interactions, this paper seeks to examine how Indonesia can best promote its food security. Using the methodology of participant observation of the Special Senior Officials Meeting of the 39th ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (SOM-39th AMAF), we have closely examined the regional-national interaction by focusing on various regional cooperative initiatives for enhancing local food security. In addition to secondary data, the accompanying documents which contained



eighteen agendas related to food security discussed in the SOM-39th AMAF were analyzed. Our analysis offers invaluable insights into the interaction of various domestic factors with the ASEAN food cooperation contextual factors that can influence food security.

The next section provides a snapshot of the context and progress of Indonesia's food security as it relates to several key indicators. The following two sections first look at Indonesia's participation in and response to ASEAN food cooperation initiatives before delving into how national-regional interactions are shaping Indonesia's role in enhancing food security. Using the mainstream definition adopted by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO] (2003), food security is the situation that "exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (p. 28). The paper concludes with several policy recommendations.

2 Context and Progress

Indonesia's food security policies have gained a great deal of academic attention, mostly focused on two main issues: the evolution of the dominant framing of food security in the country and the consequences of the national self-sufficiency policy since independence. The voluminous literature on Indonesia's food security shows that the framing of food security in the country has been shaped by its political and economic history, as is the case for many developing countries (Hamilton-Hart, 2019; McCarthy & Obidzinski, 2017; Neilson & Arifin, 2012; Neilson & Wright, 2017; Safa'at, 2013; Sarjana, 2010; Timmer, 2004). Neilson and Wright argue that "while Indonesian food policy presents a broad and inclusive vision of food security, the resounding political rhetoric relies on a rather limited, scale-specific, and state-centric approach" (p. 132). The first President of Indonesia, Sukarno (also spelled "Soekarno") regarded food supply as a key to the survival of the nation. This is portrayed in a 1966 speech of his: "food is the death of a nation—when the people's food needs are not met, then, *catastrophe* [emphasis added]. Therefore, a large-scale and revolutionary effort is needed"¹ (Safa'at, 2013). Still, Sukarno focused on food availability without addressing other dimensions of food security such as individual-level food accessibility, an attitude reflective of the then prevalent international production-centered perspective.

1 "pangan merupakan mati hidupnya suatu bangsa; apabila kebutuhan pangan rakyat tidak dipenuhi, maka 'malapetaka'; oleh karena itu perlu usaha secara besar-besaran dan revolusioner"

Since that time, the Indonesian state has consistently framed the issue of food security in terms of achieving food self-sufficiency on a national scale (Neilson and Wright, [2017](#)):

Importantly for Sukarno, and with ramifications for how food security has been addressed ever since, the availability and production of food was presented as a matter of life or death for the nation (soal hidup mati bangsa kita), whereby the nation (the bangsa) is strongly anthropomorphised as if this abstract notion was itself capable of feeling hunger, or indeed dying. (p. 135)

Thus, the national food self-sufficiency came to be perceived as the central mechanism to ensure food security. Table 1 summarizes the perspectives on food security of former presidents of Indonesia.

Table 1. The Evolution of Food Security Framing from the Period of Soekarno

Selected Former Presidents	Perspective on Food Security and Policy Orientation
(1945–1966) Soekarno a, b	Primary concerned with food availability and production as a matter of life or death for the nation. Food in the form of rice allowance was given as part of monthly income to civil servants and military personnel in order to gain political support.
(1966–1998) Soeharto a, b	Rice was treated as a political instrument to preserve the regime's rule and also served as a social commodity and a parameter by which to measure development. Badan Urusan Logistik (BULOG), the national food logistic agency was set up in 1967, which acted as the sole buyer of farmer's rice and national food stock regulator. Its stock of rice was also distributed to civil servants and military personnel as part of their monthly income to maintain political support of both farmers and civil servants.
Yudhoyono (2004–2014) a, c	Made food self-sufficiency a national priority, creating an ambitious target of reaching national self-sufficiency in corn, soybeans, sugar, and beef and to generate a rice surplus by 2014. The <i>2012 Food Law</i> was introduced, marking a paradigm shift from promoting food security (ketahanan pangan) to promoting food sovereignty (kedaulatan pangan).

Note. Data adapted from (a) Safa'at ([2013](#)), and (b) Sarjana ([2010](#), Ch. 3), and (c) Neilson and Wright ([2017](#)).



Following its political and economic crisis in 1997, Indonesia has embarked on rapid decentralization process which has led to “increased policy performance by giving local governments the authority and power to tailor national goals to local circumstances, using local knowledge, expertise, and democratic input from the citizens to increase responsiveness” (Holzhacker et al., [2015](#), p. 3). Regarding food security, the third point of Article 11 of the Law on *Local Government* (UU. 32/[2004](#)) stipulates that food security is the mandatory obligation of provincial governments and regencies or municipalities to ensure food security at the local level (Sarjana, [2010](#), pp. 21–22).

Following the global food crisis of 2007–2008 which resulted in a sharp rise in the price of staple foods, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2009–2014) had elevated food self-sufficiency as a national priority (Hamilton-Hart, [2019](#), p. 5). Notwithstanding the ostensible paradigm shift from promoting food security (*ketahanan pangan*) to promoting food sovereignty (*kedaulatan pangan*) which is modified from La Via Campesina's discourse, the *Food Law* (UU. 8/[2012](#)) continues the emphasis on both the centrality of the state and the importance of the national scale (Neilson and Wright, [2017](#), p. 137). Thus, national food sovereignty is “defined as the right of the state and nation to establish an independent food policy” (Vel et al., [2016](#), p. 239) rather than to be something associated with rural citizens. The current Indonesian President, Joko Widodo, has continued to cling to the national self-sufficiency policy since his presidential election in 2014.

As food self-sufficiency still remains a central policy objective, recent studies have examined the impact of Indonesia's predominant policy of ‘food sovereignty’, ‘food self-sufficiency’ and ‘food security’ in productivist terms, i.e. prioritizing strategies that privilege national production targets over other domestic distributional considerations. McCarthy & Obidzinski ([2017](#)), through several case studies carried out in Kalimantan, argued that these nationalist strategies empower particular actors and legitimize an industrial model that is based on corporate or state enterprise control of land and prioritize particular staple commodity chains, thus overlooking the specific livelihood challenges and problems facing rural populations in marginalized regions (p. 20). A similar conclusion was made in the earlier study by Vel et al. ([2016](#)), who posits that “[r]ice and sugar self-sufficiency remain issues that give political actors leverage, providing discursive power and setting the terms for the development of policies, norms and procedures shaping agricultural and food policy” (p. 244) at the expense of other pressing issues facing vulnerable rural populations.

Nevertheless, Hamilton-Hart (2019) speculates that the substantial rents generated from the renewed self-sufficiency policy have been distributed more widely than the above critics claim because “elite-owned agribusiness investors have benefitted, but so have many smallholders, including a set of “middle farmers” who have consolidated their position” (p. 2).

In addition, there has been much concern about various problems arising from the government’s continuous emphasis on a self-sufficiency policy in food production to resolve food insecurity, especially its restrictive import policies as summarized by USAID (Nathan Associates, 2013):

[a] country’s restrictive import policies, for example, have made rice prices significantly higher than world price equivalents. Weaknesses in the legal framework for infrastructure ultimately impede attempts to improve food distribution; and protectionist trade laws, particularly with respect to staple crops, drive up prices for consumers. The legal framework also does not adequately incorporate opportunities to improve food security by raising agricultural productivity. (p. 8)

According to one estimate, Indonesia’s meeting the 10% growth in rice demand with domestic production in 2017 “came at a cost of USD 6.4 billion, or USD 1,760 per tonne of rice – around 7 times the regional import price in 2017” (Greenville, 2018, p. 45). Apart from reducing access to staple foods, especially rice, due to higher prices, the reliance on domestic production exposes consumers to more frequent domestic production shocks associated with natural disasters and climate change (p. 39).

Consequently, unequal access to healthy food remains a major challenge despite the progress in food security achieved since 1990 (see Table 2). In addition, although Indonesia’s Global Hunger Index (GHI) has declined from 25.5 in 2000 to 21.9 in 2018, the level of hunger is still serious (see Figure 1 and 2).

Table 2. Undernourishment around the world, 1990–92 to 2015–17

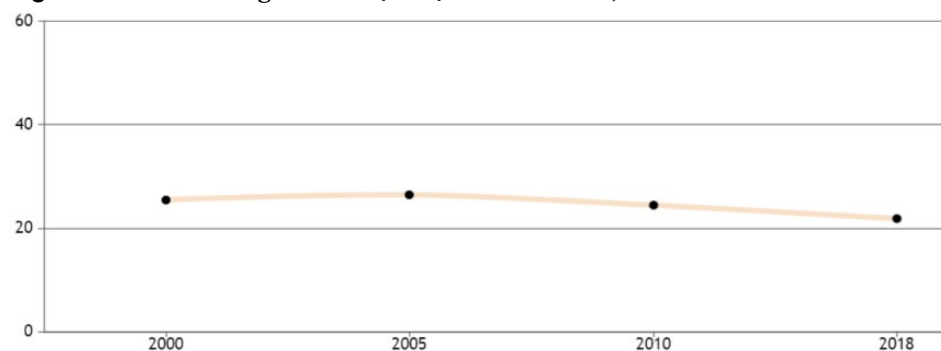
	Number of people undernourished (millions)					Undernourishment prevalence in total population (%)				
	1990–92	2000–02	2005–07	2010–12	2015–17	1990–92	2000–02	2005–07	2010–12	2015–17
Brunei D	ns	ns	ns	ns	<0.1	<5.0	<5.0	<5.0	<5.0	2.6
Cambodia	3.0	3.6	2.7	2.5	2.9	32.1	28.5	19.6	16.8	18.5
Indonesia	35.9	38.3	42.7	26.9	20.2	19.7	18.1	18.8	11.1	7.7
Lao PDR	1.9	2.1	1.6	1.4	1.1	42.8	37.9	26.9	21.4	16.6
Malaysia	1.0	ns	ns	ns	0.9	5.1	<5.0	<5.0	<5.0	2.9
Myanmar	26.8	24.3	17.0	9.4	5.6	62.6	49.6	33.7	18.0	10.5
Philippines	16.7	16.1	14.3	12.7	14.2	26.3	20.3	16.4	13.4	13.7
Thailand	19.8	11.6	7.7	6.0	6.2	34.6	18.4	11.7	8.9	9.0
Viet Nam	32.1	20.7	15.9	12.2	10.2	45.6	25.4	18.5	13.6	10.8
Southeast Asia	137.5	117.6	103.2	72.5	62.2	30.6	22.3	18.3	12.1	9.7

Note. “ns” = not statistically significant.

Data for 1990–2012 from FAO (2015), p. 46; Data for 2015–2017 from FAO (2018), (millions) on p. 132 and (%) p. 120.

Figure 1. Global Hunger Index (GHI) Severity Scale

Note. Severity Scale from von Grebmer et al. (2018), p. 9.

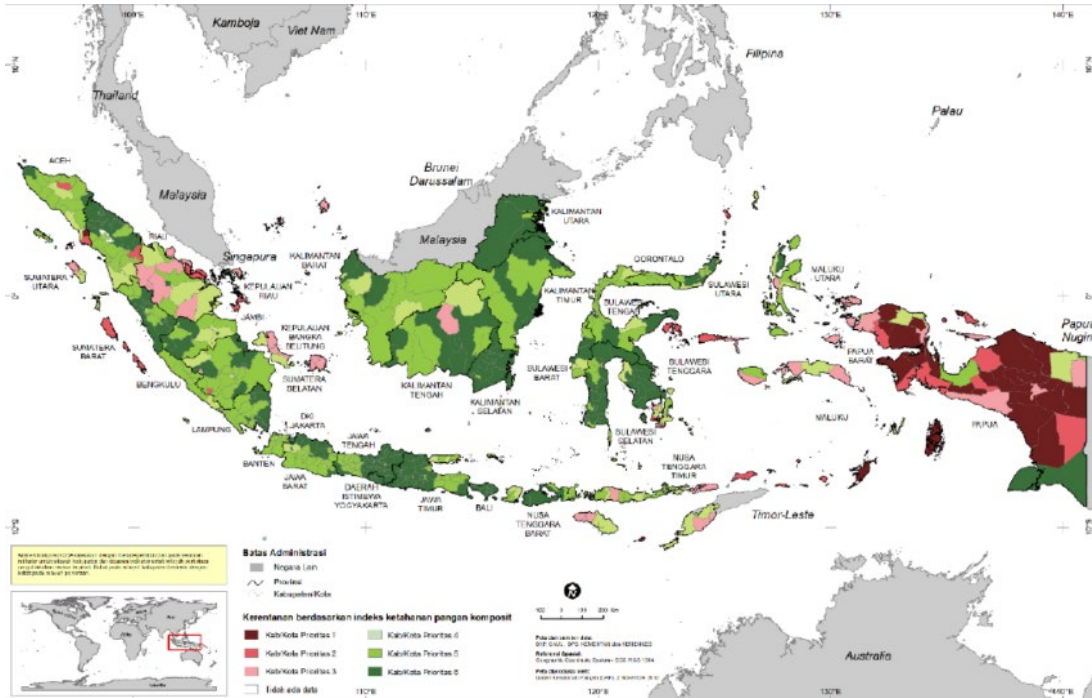
Figure 2. Global Hunger Index (GHI) for Indonesia, 2000–2018

Note. Data for Indonesia adapted from von Grebmer et al. (2018), p. 13.

Notwithstanding the steady economic growth in recent years and improvement in food security, Indonesia's level of vulnerability to food insecurity still varies substantially by geographic region, as can be seen in Figure 3, the *2018 Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas* (FSVA) map published by the Badan Ketahanan Pangan (Food Security Agency) ([2018](#)). They found 335 districts, or 80%, are considered to have food security status, marking an increase in food security status in 177 districts when compared to the 2015 FSVA (Food Security Council, Ministry of Agriculture, & World Food Programme, [2015](#)). Nevertheless, large portions of eastern Indonesia still have food and nutrition insecurity, particularly the provinces of Papua, Papua Barat, Maluku, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Sulawesi, and Maluku.

President Joko Widodo has acknowledged that “we have not succeeded in reducing fundamental problems facing the consumers and farmers, namely fluctuation in food prices and less opportunity of land tenure by farmers” (FAO, [2015](#), p. ii). Thus, the reliance on national food self-sufficiency policy alone has proven to be ineffective as income inequality, poor infrastructure, natural disasters, and climate change continue to pose challenges to Indonesia's food security (Timmer, [2019](#), p. 29; FAO, [2015](#), p. v).

Figure 3. Indonesia's Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas, 2018



Note. Reprinted from Badan Ketahanan Pangan (2018), p. xix.

Districts were classified into six priority groups based on the results of data analysis of indicators of vulnerability to food insecurity using nine indicators that represent three aspects of food security, namely availability, affordability, and food utilization. While districts in priority groups 1, 2, and 3 are relatively vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity (districts in priority group 1 being the most vulnerable), those in priority groups 4, 5, and 6 are less vulnerable (districts in priority group 6 being the least vulnerable).

3 Indonesia's Participation in Regional Food Cooperation

The literature on Indonesia's food security reviewed in the previous section emphasizes the domestic political economy context of food security. Given Indonesia's participation in the ASEAN's various initiatives on food security cooperation, however, analysis of how the dynamics around regional cooperation and integration shape Indonesia's role in enhancing food security in the country remain underexplored. Prior to this analysis, the section looks at Indonesia's participation in ASEAN cooperation in food, agriculture, and forestry (FAF).

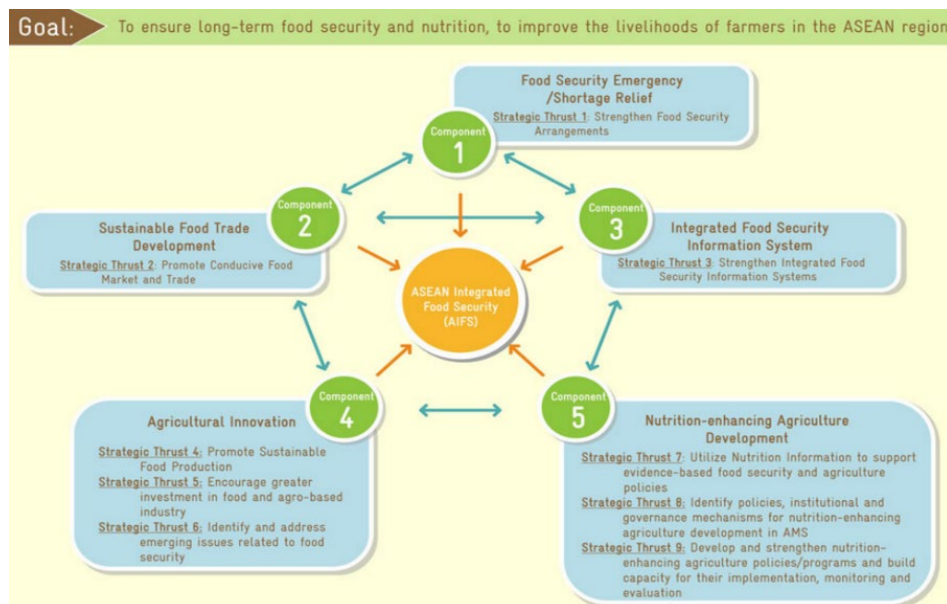
As the member country with the largest regional economy, population, and the most natural resources, Indonesia has traditionally been perceived as the default leader of ASEAN (Emmers, [2014](#), p. 544). Since the 2007–2008 food crises, Indonesia together with other AMCs has adopted various initiatives to enhance food security in the region. The ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security (SPA-FS) 2009–2013 were adopted by the ASEAN Summit of 2009 and continued beyond 2013. The SPA-FS has received new commitments from ASEAN leaders and has shifted its focus to the following contents (AMAF, [2014](#), p. 2):

- a strong, equal, and sustainable infrastructure for improving food security and nutrition
- timely and accurate emergency responses
- the development of a newly integrated system of cooperation in food security and nutrition and increased investment in agriculture
- regular coordination and monitoring of AIFS and SPA-FS

The AEC aims to further reduce and remove tariffs to boost intra- and extra-ASEAN agricultural trade and adopt better coordinated quality management systems for food safety. Improvements in agriculture and fisheries are among the twelve priority sectors identified under the AEC to transform the region into an economically integrated market in 2015 and beyond. As part of the measures for deepening regional integration, an AEC scorecard has been developed to be used as a monitoring tool to ensure the timely implementation of AEC initiatives, including the coordination of food control and safety requirements across the ASEAN member countries (see Chin, [2016](#): Table 2). Indonesia was asked to take charge of four main activities related to the reintegration of ASEAN food standards, and to specify the areas for development and implementation of the Mutual Recognition Agreement (Neo, [2019](#)).

The AIFS Framework and SPA-FS, 2015–2020 set out nine strategic directives, each supported by action programmes, activity, responsible agencies, and a work schedule. These have been adopted to ensure long-term food security and nutrition for the populace, and to improve the livelihood of farmers in the ASEAN region (see Figure 4). The annual Special Senior Officials Meeting of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry (SOM-AMAF) provides a platform for Indonesian senior officials in the field of food, agriculture and fisheries to meet with their ASEAN's counterparts to sort out various issues related to regional food cooperation. This meeting is followed by the annual AMAF, which is attended by representatives of the member countries' agriculture and forestry ministries.

Figure 4. AIFS Framework and SPA-FS 2015–2020



Note. Reprinted from Sustainable Agrifood Systems in ASEAN ([n.d.](#)).

Indonesia has chaired the following ASEAN sectoral task forces, technical working groups, and ad-hoc steering committees set up to enhance food security cooperation in the region:

- 1) The 13th Meeting of the ASEAN Technical Working Group on Agricultural Research and Development (ATWGARD)
- 2) The 25th Meeting of the Joint Committee on ASEAN Cooperation in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme (Joint Committee)
- 3) Policy Framework of ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Related to Food, Agriculture and Forestry
- 4) The Progress of the Activities under AMAF Plus Three Cooperation:
 - a) Strengthening global and regional food security arrangements
 - b) Improving sustainable forest management in Asia
 - c) Climate change mitigation and adaptation of impacts of climate change to agriculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors
 - d) Strengthening cooperation in the control and eradication of transboundary pest and animal diseases
 - e) Cross-cutting issues (enhancement of capacity-building and human resource development, strengthening of information and knowledge networking and exchange, enhancement of productivity, quality and marketability of agriculture and agricultural products, and strengthening collaboration on research and development).

In addition, ASEAN has also come up with various guidelines related to various dimensions of food security for its member countries. Table 3 shows two food cooperation guidelines initiated by ASEAN. The first was introduced in 2017 to ensure a sustainable and sufficient supply of affordable, safe, and nutritious foods by promoting the integration of policies for agriculture, trade, infrastructure, health, and education. All member countries are encouraged to establish food-security and nutrition regulatory bodies and to adopt a more proactive stance to promote policy changes.

**Table 3.** Selected ASEAN Food Cooperation Guidelines

Guideline	ASEAN Regional Guidelines on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Policy	ASEAN Roadmap for Enhancing the Role of Cooperatives in Agricultural Global Value Chains 2018–2025
Date of Endorsement	Endorsed by the 39th AMAF Meeting on September 2017	Adopted at the 40th AMAF Meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam on 11 October 2018 following the endorsement of the Strategic Plan of Actions for ASEAN Cooperation on Agricultural Cooperatives (2016–2020) by the 38th AMAF in Singapore
Objectives	1. Serve as a general framework guide for the AMSs as they endeavor to introduce, implement, and develop FSN policies in accordance with the economic context and specific regulations on AMSs. 2. Aims to help in the process of building stronger FSN cooperation and integration in the region.	Provide guidance for enhancing participation of ASEAN agriculture cooperatives in the agricultural global value chains
Legally Binding?	Serve only as reference, are not binding on the AMSs. The Regional Guidelines considers the different development stages of FSN policies in AMSs	Provide guidance for Indonesia to empower agricultural cooperatives to deal with their challenges and enhance their roles in the agricultural global value chains. ASWGAC provides the overall coordination and monitoring in the implementation of the roadmap, while the AMSs will give updates on its implementation during its annual meeting.

Note. Data for ASEAN Regional Guidelines from ASEAN Food Security Reserve Board [AFSRB] ([2017](#)); Data for ASEAN Roadmap from ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Agricultural Cooperatives [ASWGAC] ([2018](#)).

These guidelines were finally adopted at the 40th AMAF Meeting in 2018. They empower agricultural cooperatives in the member countries to compete with agribusinesses for markets, financing, and technology through “capacity building to support small farmers in improving productivity and product quality, developing institutional mechanisms for agricultural cooperatives, and facilitating access to financing and markets” (ASEAN Integration Monitoring Directorate, [2019](#), p. 100). The ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Agricultural Cooperative (ASWGAC) coordinates and monitors its implementation. The

Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs of the Republic of Indonesia in coordination with the ASEAN Farmers' Organisations Support Program (AFOSP) organized the ASEAN Exchange Visit program involving multiple stakeholders across ASEAN to identify the challenges and opportunities in the coconut value chain and share the best practices for coconut processing and marketing as well as innovative coconut-based product development to raise production (ASEAN Secretariat, [2018](#)).

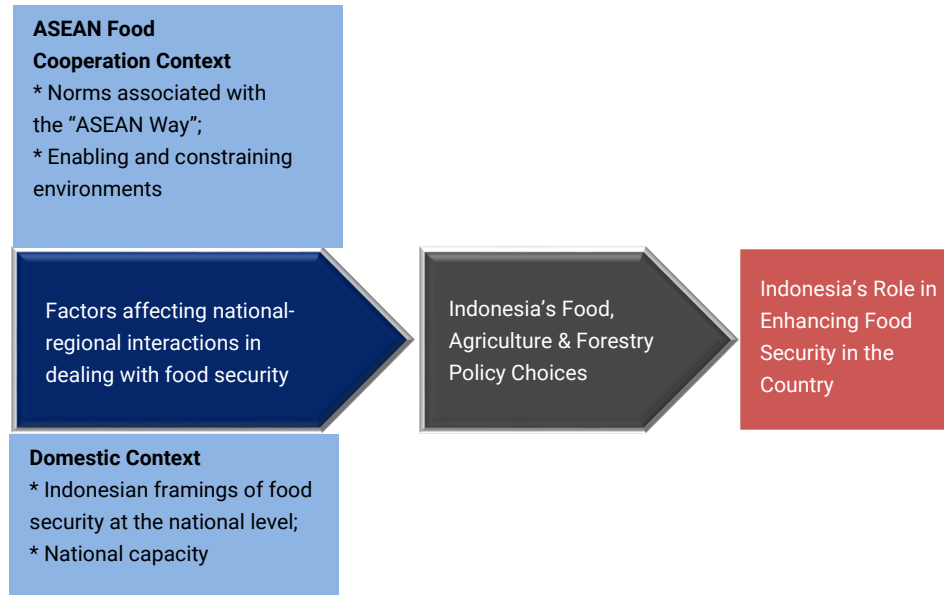
In short, Indonesia's strategic participation in ASEAN's cooperation in FAF covers a wide-range of activities from information and knowledge networking and exchange, training, research and development, agricultural global value chains as well as trade promotion in the areas of crops, livestock, fisheries, and forestry. All of these are important and can help enhance all dimensions of food security in the country. However, the success of these endeavors calls for more effective engagement, coordination, and collaboration at both the national and regional levels. An analysis of how the national-regional interactions shape Indonesia's role in enhancing food security is taken up in the following section.

4 National-Regional Interactions in Dealing with Food Security

We have identified various domestic factors interacting with the ASEAN food cooperation contextual factors that can influence food security, which in turn determine Indonesia food, agriculture, and forestry policy choices and hence, its role in enhancing national food security, as illustrated in Figure 5. Regional food cooperation has generated both the enabling and constraining environmental factors (Chin, [2016](#)) that shape Indonesia's role in enhancing food security. The enabling environmental factors include:

- Providing guidelines toward harmonization of food safety regulations.
- Building stronger food security & nutrition cooperation & integration in the region.
- Enhancing research and development, technology transfer, and capacity building in member countries through cooperation in food, agriculture, and forestry with international organizations, and other third parties, as well as using advanced countries as dialogue partners.
- Empowering various stakeholders in rural areas, especially smallholder farmers, agricultural cooperatives, and women to intensify their crop production and to diversify their livelihoods.
- Implementing regular coordination and monitoring of AIFS and SPA-FS.

Figure 5. The Dynamics of Regional Food Security Cooperation in Shaping Indonesia's Role in Enhancing Food Security



Note. From the author's compilations

The more regional food cooperation initiatives can complement national food security strategies, the more these initiatives can be easily incorporated into Indonesia's policies to facilitate enhancing national food security. A case in point, Indonesia can regard the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR)—a regional rice reserve set up in 2012 by ASEAN member countries in collaboration with Japan, South Korea, and China—as an additional source in the stockholding program administered by BULOG for dealing with emergency needs in natural calamities or emergencies. Moreover, regional integration of ASEAN agro-food markets needs to be complemented by improved regional safety nets for ready response. By strengthening APTERR, Indonesia can help build trust in the regional rice market (Greenville, [2018](#), p. 11).

In addition, given the inadequacy/weaknesses of national food security strategies which prioritize national production targets, Indonesia's active engagement in various ASEAN sectoral task forces, technical working groups, ad-hoc steering committees in shaping guidelines related to the multiple dimensions of food security is necessary to facilitate the country's strategies to strengthen its food security. Broadening the food security agenda through shared policy goals and the exchange of ideas and learning processes in national-regional interactions may improve the country's current five main strategies to affirm the importance of national food security. Apart from prioritizing the development of

agriculture and rural-based economies to increase the domestic food production capacity, providing employment, and raising community incomes, other strategies include (Andoko & Doretha [2019](#), p. 3):

- a. providing food for community groups, especially chronic and transient poor people (due to natural, social and economic disasters) through the distribution of food aid.
- b. community empowerment to take advantage of the local resource-based, nutrition balance and adequacy program (B2SA Program).
- c. promotion and education of the community to utilize B2SA Programs based local resources.
- d. assuring the following of fresh food handling safety guidelines.

Because of the state's preoccupation with the national food self-sufficiency agenda, the Indonesian government has shown its commitment to meeting various regional food security initiatives. While strong political will and the right national framings of food security are important, they are not sufficient to ensure tangible results, particularly owing to the highly decentralized nature of Indonesia's central government, which is the root of various implementation and institutional constraints (see SMERU Research Institute, [2015](#), pp. 45–46). Thus, turning food security policies into government programs is a real challenge as it depends on the country's capacity to implement and coordinate policies at various levels. As noted by the SMERU Research Institute:

The most significant gaps in Indonesia's response to food insecurity and malnutrition include: i) misalignment of policy and programme design; ii) limited geographic coverage of interventions; iii) missed opportunities to leverage food security and social assistance programmes to address malnutrition; iv) low quantity and quality of personnel; v) lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; vi) weak institutional arrangements; and vii) insufficient focus on behaviour change and education.
(p. ix)

There are also constraining elements endemic to the ASEAN food cooperation that need to be overcome so as not to threaten food security for the most vulnerable groups in the country. These include:

- The increasing the dominance of neo-liberal investment rules and framework without the appropriate regional regulation of transnational investment in agriculture;
- Lack of non-state actors' participation in ASEAN food cooperation.



Southeast Asia has become a major hotspot of the global land and resource rush, and Indonesia is ranked second in the top ten target countries listed during the 2000–2014 period (Neef, [2014](#), p. 187). As a result, there is serious concern that regional investment liberalization as envisaged in ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA)—which allows greater investment liberalization and higher levels of protection for investors in the region—will further accelerate the current wave of land acquisition. Recently adopting the ASEAN Guidelines for Promoting Responsible Investment in Food, Agriculture and Forestry is not enough on its own. It must be accompanied by a range of actions at the national level to safeguard the interests and rights of its peoples and farming communities to ensure food security.

In addition, non-state actor participation constraints need to be overcome by all member countries to ensure that the desired trickle-down effect of greater regional food cooperation will reach the vulnerable groups and the regional trade and investment regime not fall under the control of powerful economic interests. Limited direct engagement with non-state actors, especially the smallholder farmers and civil society organizations at both the national and regional levels, has resulted in a failure to address their needs and real concerns (Chin, [2016](#)). Because of the importance of smallholder farmers in producing food as well as their need to make gains in investment through various developments (see International Fund for Agricultural Development, [2013](#)), it has been recognized that there is an urgent need to boost national capacity to overcome the regional constraints and safeguard their interests in order to boost Indonesia's food security.

Thus, it is important for Indonesia to create a conducive domestic environment to boost national capacity not only to leverage emerging regional enabling factors but also to overcome regional constraints, as discussed above. Although the government development plans envisage the private sector as playing a more significant role through public-private partnerships with the government, the lack of national legal provisions *ex ante* that allow for, and define the scope of, private sector involvement in the national economy constrains Indonesia's ability to gain from the collaboration (International Food Policy Research Institute, [2019](#)):

For instance, laws regarding taxation, labor, and land use can make investment attractive for private sector firms, encourage competition among firms to provide services, and protect citizens' rights where needed. And effective regulation of private firms can ensure that firms do not abuse workers or the environment and that citizens profit from their engagement.

While recognizing the importance of the legal and regulatory framework for creating an enabling environment for rural revitalization, two caveats are warranted. First, regulatory frameworks must be predictable; even more than the substance of regulation, frequent changes can undermine the ability of investors to plan and scale up operations—which tends to drive away investment. Second, frameworks should be revisited periodically to ensure compliance with best practices and compatibility with contemporary circumstances. (pp. 70–71)

Indonesia must realize potential gains to the extent that smallholder farmers can participate in public-private partnerships based on their capacities and concerns. Such multi stakeholder partnerships can contribute to higher productivity and quality of products through micro-financing and easing access to quality inputs such as seeds and technology as well as improving the efficiency of the food value chain by linking smallholder farmers to markets (Siregar, [2019](#)). Thus, various incentives should be given to encourage such multistakeholder partnerships as they can improve the effectiveness of various regional and national food security programs, ensuring its trickle-down benefits reach vulnerable groups.

5 Conclusion

Despite the progress on food security in Indonesia since 1990, the levels of vulnerability to food insecurity in the country still vary substantially by geographic region. Given Indonesian's chief policy of 'food sovereignty', 'food self-sufficiency', and 'food security' in productivist terms, the country's active engagement in various ASEAN sectoral task forces, technical working groups, ad-hoc steering committees and guidelines related to the multiple dimensions of food security must be improved to facilitate its efforts to enhance food security. To ensure gains from the broadening of the food security agenda, it is important for Indonesia to be able to leverage enabling factors as well as overcome constraints arising from the ASEAN food cooperation initiatives and programs.

Strong political will and the right national framings of food security alone are not sufficient. These need to be accompanied by the country's enhanced capacity to implement and coordinate policies based on local needs and capacities at various levels. Multi stakeholder partnerships are necessary not only to improve the effectiveness of various food security programs but also to ensure that their benefits trickling down to vulnerable groups. Thus, progress in the fight against food insecurity is extremely challenging as it requires coordinated and complementary responses from all stakeholders—state and non-state actors alike.



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