Perceived food security status - A case study of households in North Luwu, Indonesia

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Abstract

Purpose – In Indonesia, 87 million people are presently vulnerable to food insecurity. Thus, the United Nations Development Programme’s primary millennium development goal for Indonesia is to halve the number of people who suffer from hunger by 2015. It is clear that food security at the household level is crucial to achieving this target. The purpose of this study was to investigate the socioeconomic impact on perceived household food security in the North Luwu District of South Sulawesi Province in the eastern part of Indonesia.

Design/methodology/approach – In total, 371 household heads were interviewed. The households’ perceptions of their food security status were captured by asking the household head the following question: “How do you perceive your household’s food security status during the last month?” Respondents could select from the following options: insecure, somewhat insecure, somewhat secure, secure, and highly secure. Here, the household head’s answer is regarded as the household’s subjective food security status (SFSS). We then applied descriptive analysis and an ordered logit model to determine the socioeconomic factors that influence SFSS.

Findings – As expected, in both analyses, household income and formal level of education have a strong relationship to SFSS. However, this study finds that food nutrition knowledge also shows a significant role in enhancing the probability that household SFSS will be in a better food security category. This could be a breakthrough in improving household food security status given the lack of formal education.

Practical implications – Neighborhood resource-based food preparation counseling programs are essential. Existing food programs for Indonesian households should be reoriented and incorporated into the non-formal educational curriculum, and should be carried out at the family level or in small groups to ensure that the message of the program is delivered effectively. In the short term, for non-farm households, the government should provide targeted households with crash programs such as revolving funds for household-level business activities. For farm households, ensuring that farming infrastructures, facilities, and technologies are adequate and affordable is crucial to sustaining their production process.

Originality/value – This is the first study to investigate the perceptions of household heads on their food security status in Indonesia. Most prior studies on household food security in Indonesia were conducted in response to Indonesia’s 1997 economic crisis and focused predominantly on Java, in the western part of Indonesia; there is little existing research on the eastern part of Indonesia. Moreover, this study is the first to emphasize the significant role of food nutrition knowledge in increasing the probability of household heads’ perceptions on their food security status being in a better category.

Keywords: Indonesia, Household, Food security, Perceived, Ordered logit model