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## Social construction of farmer as profession and its potential threat for the food security

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# Social construction of farmer as profession and its potential threat for the food security

Sukri<sup>1</sup>, D Ekawaty<sup>2</sup>, A Amiruddin<sup>3</sup> and F Syam<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University

<sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of West Sulawesi

<sup>3</sup>Department of Agricultural Socio-Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Department of Islamic Politics, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Philosophy, Alauddin State University

Email: sukripolitik@gmail.com

**Abstract.** This paper aims to show the potential threats to food security policies in Indonesia. One of the important aspects in this paper is the influence of aspects of the availability of human resources in supporting food security efforts in meeting the food needs of the community. This paper shows that there is a reality of a downward trend in the number of human resources in agriculture. This becomes a big challenge to get attention. Decreasing the number of human resources seems to be one of the serious threats in guaranteeing food security. This seems to be related to social construction in viewing the agricultural sector as a profession, where it tends to not be fully controlled by the government.

## 1. Introduction

Food security is an integral part of human security which is a non-traditional security concept that developed after the Cold War. Human security is a security concept that targets individuals directly. UNDP formulates human security in seven components, namely economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security.

The international community has made a commitment to the fulfillment of human security through agreements that are framed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which contain 17 goals. One part of the objectives of the SDGs related to food security is to end hunger, achieve better food and nutrition security and support sustainable agriculture. In order to achieve this goal the targets to be elaborated are explained in the elaboration on the use of technology and land that is a supporting factor for realizing this goal.

Food security basically does not only talk about food availability, but further targets the sustainability of food availability itself. So the discussion on food security basically becomes a discussion that is not only related to technology and land but also about human resources, in this case, farmers. Farmers as the party that supplies food are of course important to pay attention to.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that as many as 19.4 million people in Indonesia are still experiencing hunger [1] The Global Food Security Index (GFSI) was developed by



The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) which assesses the country's food security in terms of availability, affordability, and food quality and safety, placing Indonesia in the 69th rank of 113 countries in 2017 [2]. Even though it has been upgraded from 2016 which ranked Indonesia as 71, this ranking certainly does not boast and is an indication that food security in Indonesia cannot be guaranteed by the government.

Indications of a problem in food security in Indonesia are inseparable from the reality of the lack of human resources in agriculture. Farmers are not the choice of work that is in demand by most of Indonesia's young generation. This is important to get the attention of the government because in addition to technology and land, human resources are a key factor in the availability and sustainability of food which will ultimately guarantee food security for the general public.

## **2. Food security and its condition in Indonesia**

The expansion of the security concept that developed after the cold war in the early 1990s is known as human security. As a new security concept, human security targets individuals individually. Security in this case concerns the welfare and human dignity that the UN security council assumes as an approach to assisting members of states in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to survival, livelihood and dignity of their people [3]. An example is the problem of poverty, poverty becomes an important part that threatens human security not because poverty can trigger violence that threatens the stability of a country but because poverty threatens the dignity of individuals [4].

One of the seven elements in human security is food security, things that can threaten food security include starvation. In order to avoid hunger which is a threat to food security, people must at all times have both physical and economic access to the most basic food needs [4]. Food security 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 [5–7]

In an effort to guarantee the food security of the people, the State governments in the world have agreed 17 goals of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of which is targeting Indonesia's food security (United Nations Document) as one of the participating countries committed to SDGs as stated in Presidential Regulation Number 7 Year 2017 on the Implementation of Achieving Sustainable Development Goals. This was then followed up with various government policies related to the agricultural sector. Various efforts made by the government to secure the food security sector apparently have not been able to realize the overall food security of the community.

Agricultural assistance provided by the government whether in the form of subsidies, irrigation development or assistance of agricultural tools and seeds has not been able to cover the food needs of the Indonesian people. Problems of malnutrition, hunger, high food prices are still found in several regions in Indonesia. This certainly weakens the ability of the community to meet their needs. Whereas food security does not only talk about availability but also about the sustainability of food availability

Basically Food security can be identified in four dimensions, namely availability, access, utilization, and stability. Availability is the first dimension of food security that states about food availability addresses the "supply side" of food security and is determined by the level of food production. Stock levels and net trade (FAO An Introduction to the Basic Concepts of Food Security).

This availability dimension will be related to how food is produced. Food production will depend on the aspects of technology, land and human resources (farmers). Technology will be related to the ability to adapt technology used for agricultural production, land will be related to the availability of agricultural land which is usually found in rural or suburban areas (periphery). Technological aspects and land availability will support each other to guarantee food availability, but these two things will certainly be related to who uses technology and cultivates land, farmers will of course be very important aspects in the context of efforts to fulfill agricultural production.

## **3. Social construction and the future of agricultural sector in Indonesia**

Adherents of social construction understand that knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by thought [8]. Berger and Luckmann (1991) are concerned with the nature and construction of knowledge: how it emerges and how it comes to have the significance for society. They view knowledge as created by the interactions of individuals within society which is central to constructionism [8]. Related to this, one part of social life that can be constructed is the choice of work to be cultivated by the community.

In social life, the community attaches a certain image to some occupied work and this certainly has implications for the views and indirectly on the social strata in society. People who work in the field of education and health will usually be attached to the image of people who are educated and get good positions in social life. Today's modernity also contributes to the view of work. Through modernization, the people's mindset is changed to work in the room rather than outdoors like a farmer.

Farmers in the view of the community today are not considered a promising profession. Negative images are often attached to farmers. The main community, young people, construct their thinking about farmers. Farmers are attached to the image of poverty, and this is supported by data showing that the average income of the agricultural sector is Rp 12,413,920 / year or approximately Rp 1,034,500 / month (BPS-ST2013). This income certainly cannot be relied upon to finance current life. In addition to the problem of poverty, another image which is closely related to farmers is that farmers are jobs that are cultivated by people with low education levels. This certainly puts farmers in a low social strata in the middle of society [9]. And finally, farmers are identified with the work done by parents, who are in the range of 30-87 years [10]. This image then contributed to the decline in the number of farmers in Indonesia. The number of farmers in Indonesia in 2017 was 31.87% and in 2018 it was 30.46% .

The social constructs built so far do not show the important position of farmers in the context of efforts to maintain food availability and ensure food security in Indonesia and even in the world, by observing that Indonesia is an agrarian country, of course. Conditions of availability and sustainability of food availability in a country will be influenced by three important factors. Technology, land, and human resources, technology and land are two things that can still be touched by government policy, but human resources, in this case farmers, are independent aspects that are free from government intervention. The government does not have the authority regarding community work preferences because the choice of work is in the private domain. When the government cannot be a patron, the social construction built in the community takes on that role.

The current important position of farmers can be attributed to what Malthus said that humans increase based on the geometric sequence and the rate of food growth such as arithmetic [11]. This condition if taken place simultaneously will have an impact on the problem of food availability. So based on these conditions there must be an effort from the community and the government to guarantee the availability and sustainability of food availability.

In order to maintain the availability and sustainability of food in Indonesia, the central government and regional governments have issued various policies. In general, both central and regional government policies related to hatchery assistance, appropriate technology, encouraging trade between regions and several other policies [12]. The policy issued by the government is the government's effort to help farmers increase production and marketing results so that farmers' welfare can be further improved. In reality, this policy is implemented, but not yet effective enough to overcome the problem of food availability and sustainability in Indonesia.

Problems related to the availability and sustainability of food availability in Indonesia revolves around the high import of food needs which is an indication of the inability of domestic agricultural production to meet the needs of the community, high food prices, and uneven agricultural products [13].

This condition occurs because there are problems related to agricultural human resources, agricultural human resources in this case related to the quantity and quality [13], the quantity will certainly question the number of farmers in Indonesia based on data that has decreased. In addition to quantity, quality of human resources is also an important determining factor. The quality of human

resources talks about the ability of farmers to adapt or utilize the latest agricultural technology that can be a driving factor in efforts to increase the amount of agricultural products. The tendency that emerges is that farmers in Indonesia come from low levels of education and ages around 30-87 years [10]. These two things, in turn, will have an impact on food availability and food security guarantees in Indonesia. If the tendency of these conditions take place simultaneously it will certainly have a negative impact on food security of the community.

#### 4. Summary

Food security is one element in human security that has become part of an international commitment known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a country that took part in the commitment, the Indonesian government certainly has a legal standard in the effort to fulfill food security. Fulfillment of food security is related to three main things namely technology, land and human resources.

The central and regional governments have policies related to technology and land and efforts to improve the living standards of farmers. But being a farmer tends not to be a preferred job choice for young Indonesians, this view is influenced by the social constructs built in the community with regard to the profession of farmers. The decline in the number of farmers in Indonesia will have a negative impact on meeting food security.

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