

# Indonesia's Food Security and Food Sovereignty Under Agricultural Trade Liberalization

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## ABSTRACT

*Agricultural trade liberalisation affects food security and food sovereignty in Indonesia. This article aims to analyse the extent to which agricultural trade liberalisation impacts food security and food sovereignty, as well as examine the dilemmas faced by the Indonesian government related to agricultural liberalisation, food security, and food sovereignty. This research applies qualitative process-tracing case studies using primary data from interviews and secondary data by analysing documents, news, or statistical data provided by institutions such as Indonesian National Statistics, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and other institutions. This research found that agriculture is a comparative advantage of Indonesia. It supports the achievement of a surplus balance of trade in the global agricultural markets. However, it is challenging and dilemmatic in the context of food commodities. In the short term, agricultural liberalisation might support the achievement of food security as it provides availability of food and food access both physically and economically. However, at the same time, agricultural liberalisation also threatens food sovereignty as it raises dependence on food imports. In the long run, dependency on food imports could endanger food security if there is a change in the political economy of the global market system.*

**Keywords:** Liberalisation of Agriculture, Food Security, Food Sovereignty

*Liberalisasi pertanian mempengaruhi ketahanan pangan dan kedaulatan pangan di Indonesia. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis sejauh mana dampak liberalisasi pertanian terhadap ketahanan pangan dan kedaulatan pangan serta dilema yang dihadapi pemerintah Indonesia terkait liberalisasi pertanian, ketahanan pangan, dan kedaulatan pangan. Penelitian ini menerapkan metode kualitatif process-tracing analisis dengan menggunakan data primer yang diperoleh melalui interview dan data sekunder dikumpulkan dengan metode "desk research" termasuk menganalisis dokumen, berita, atau data statistik yang disediakan oleh lembaga-lembaga seperti Statistik Nasional Indonesia, Organisasi Pangan dan Pertanian (FAO), dan lembaga lainnya. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa pertanian merupakan keunggulan komparatif bagi Indonesia yang mendukung pencapaian surplus neraca perdagangan komoditas pertanian di pasar global. Namun, dalam konteks komoditas pangan, permasalahan bersifat kompleks dan dilematis. Dalam jangka pendek, liberalisasi pertanian dapat mendukung pencapaian ketahanan pangan karena menyediakan ketersediaan pangan yang dapat diakses oleh masyarakat dengan harga yang terjangkau. Namun, pada saat yang sama, liberalisasi pertanian juga mengancam kedaulatan pangan karena meningkatkan ketergantungan pada impor pangan. Dalam jangka panjang, ketergantungan impor pangan dapat membahayakan ketahanan pangan jika terjadi perubahan struktur ekonomi politik pada sistem pasar global.*

**Kata-kata Kunci:** Liberalisasi Pertanian, Ketahanan Pangan, Kedaulatan Pangan

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The article discusses three concepts of food policies, including liberalisation, food security, and food sovereignty. The three concepts originate from three different political perspectives of food regimes. The liberal/neoliberal perspective stresses minimising barriers to food trade and adopting market mechanisms. Agricultural trade liberalization means removing or reducing trade barriers in global agricultural trade, including tariff and non-tariff barriers that may affect international trade transactions. Food security is a discourse of the reformist perspective, while food sovereignty belongs to the radical one (Gimenez & Shattuck 2011). Despite originating from different perspectives, this work intends to analyse the three concepts simultaneously because all determine the survival and sustainability of people.

Based on the World Food Summit held in 1996, food security reflects a condition “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” It thus has four dimensions comprising physical availability of food or availability of food supply, physical and economic access to food, food utilization including food nutrients, and stability of the three previous dimensions (World Bank n.d.). Meanwhile, food sovereignty covers not only the fulfilment of healthy and nutritious food but also proposes an identity of a community related to food. The term food sovereignty first appeared in the 1996 World Food Summit i.e., “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.” (La Via Campesina 2021; U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance n.d.). Hence, it reflects that food sovereignty is more comprehensive than food security as it involves the rights of people, farmers, and indigenous people in food governance (FAO 2014).

Liberalisation of agriculture is a sensitive issue and dilemmatic as it is related to food security and food sovereignty. The main concern of food security is the fulfilment of people's basic needs related to the availability and accessibility of healthy and

nutritious food without problematising the country of origin of the food. Agricultural trade liberalisation that promotes open food markets facilitates food security since it might support availability and accessibility to food at the domestic level through food import. On the other hand, food imports facilitated by agricultural trade liberalisation cause intense competition that has the potential to harm local farmers and local identity. Moreover, dependence on food imports might threaten the food sovereignty of a country. Hence, agricultural trade liberalisation might support a country's food security, but at the same time, it might also threaten a country's food sovereignty.

The initiation of agricultural liberalisation was proposed by the CAIRNS group which consists of several countries including Indonesia in the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT). The result of the Uruguay round of negotiations was the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which also contained provisions on agricultural liberalization under the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) (WTO n.d.a). WTO's AoA consists of three essential elements, i.e., opening market access, reducing domestic support, and reducing export subsidies. First, market access means the commitment to reduce trade barriers on agricultural commodities. The scheme is "tariffication" due to which all non-tariff barriers must be converted into tariffs. In turn, the tariff is reduced according to the agreed schedule. Second, domestic support removes or reduces domestic subsidies usually allocated to national producers. It aims to reduce trade distortion between states and guarantee fairness in competition among countries. The schemes for reducing domestic support are green box (authorised aids), amber box (forbidden aids, must be reduced or eliminated), and blue box measures (tolerated aids). Green box measures are subsidies that do not impact trade distortion, such as research and training; hence, they are still allowed. Meanwhile, amber box measures consider subsidies that distort international agricultural trade, such as support for production or market price intervention, which must be reduced or eliminated. The blue box is giving aid to production but is still tolerated as it does not distort international agricultural trade (Global Policy Forum 2005; WTO n.d.b).

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Indonesia is one of the countries that actively encourages the implementation of agricultural liberalisation on a global and regional scale, as well as bilaterally with Indonesian partners. The Government of Indonesia ratified the WTO establishment agreement through Law no 7/1994 on Ratification of the Agreement Establishing the WTO, including the annex on AoA. At regional levels, Indonesia is bound to the ASEAN Community that also concerned with food governance. Regarding bilateral agreements, Indonesia has made several bilateral trade agreements, including in the agricultural sector as follows: (1) the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement/IA-CEPA, (2) Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement/IJ-EPA, (3) Indonesia and Thailand, (4) Indonesia and Italy. The agreement shows that Indonesia has opened its agricultural market for foreign products (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan n.d.). As a result, the liberalization of agriculture leads to food imports in Indonesia. Food imports have pros and cons, especially at the domestic level. Protests against rice imports occur almost every year as reported by several mass media either from the People's Representative Council (Rizky 2023), politicians (Sandi 2021), and the farming community (Ginanjar et al. 2015; Sandi 2021) criticising the government policies for importing rice during the rice harvest.

This study aims to analyse the extent to which agricultural liberalisation impacts food security and food sovereignty in Indonesia and also seeks to examine the dilemmas faced by the Indonesian government regarding the implementation of agricultural liberalisation, food security, and food sovereignty. This research is designed to bring practical and academic contributions by providing understanding to decision-makers and the public about the impact of agricultural liberalization on food security. Moreover, it also aims to enrich the knowledge of academia about the impacts of the liberalisation of agriculture.

This research is a qualitative study with process tracing as the main focus. In order to comprehend the viewpoints, experiences, and views of informants, a qualitative method is employed in this work (Hammarberg et al. 2016; King et al. 2019)an impressive set of guidelines for best practice on how to incorporate psychosocial care

in routine infertility care was published by the ESHRE Psychology and Counselling Guideline Development Group (ESHRE Psychology and Counselling Guideline Development Group, 2015). Meanwhile, process tracing is utilised to conduct a causal process analysis; hence it provides an opportunity for researchers to understand the meaning or essence of a phenomenon (Ryan 2018). Process tracing is also helpful for determining the specifics of phenomena and examining the causal relationship between independent and dependent variables, as noted by Collier (2011), and Beach & Pederson (2017). Therefore, these two combinations, qualitative and tracing processes, are expected to provide more complete information for understanding the substance of the issue.

The study focuses on Indonesia's agricultural policies. More specifically, this research is a case study in East Java, Indonesia, especially in the districts of Bondowoso, Jember, Situbondo, and Banyuwangi. Indonesia is one of the countries that has an interest in food sovereignty and food security. In addition, East Java is one of the regions that has a significant role in maintaining food security and sovereignty in Indonesia.

The data used in this research are so-called primary and secondary data. To obtain primary data, in-depth interviews were conducted with informants, who included representatives from both the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. Interviews were also conducted with several local officials related to the theme, including sub-district heads (*Camat*) who directly related to government policies, as well as farmers and the general public. These government officials are also perceived to have insights into the implementation of the two policies. In addition, the community informants were those with knowledge and involvement in food security and food sovereignty. They were farmers who had a direct interest in government policies, as well as people who were consumers of agricultural products resulting from the two policies. In short, alongside government officials, farmers and the community's perceptions of food security and food sovereignty policies are also essential to observe. From both government officials and the farmers and community, the information includes information about the challenges and opportunities faced by the farmers and community. The secondary

data were collected by desk research. Official reports, academic journals, and the opinions of experts published in mass media are the major elements of the secondary data. All information is classified, coded, and triangulated. All these steps are aimed at ensuring the validity of the data.

**Agriculture Trade Liberalisation, Food Security,  
and Food Sovereignty in Developing Countries:  
A Literature Review**

Many articles agree that there are unequal relations between developing countries and developed countries regarding the implementation of agriculture trade. A study conducted by Siddiqui (2018) which emphasises that if protection is removed, resources would be expected to move away from high cost to low-cost products and as a result productivity would rise. His comparative advantage trade theory advocates in favour of a free trade, the argument implied generally to defend *laissez faire*. This study discusses the mainstream arguments relating to static and dynamic gains from trade liberalisation which seem to be based on weak theoretical and empirical grounds. It will also briefly discuss free trade and its impact on the industrial and agricultural sectors and how the performance of both sectors could have a long-term impact on local industrialisation, food security, employment and well-being of the people in developing countries. This article builds on this political economy and looks in particular at free trade policies and their impact on the economies of developing countries. Free trade theory, which has wide support among international financial institutions, namely, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) examining David Ricardo's theoretical framework on comparative advantage reveals that free trade policy worsens the condition of unequal relations. In this context, developing countries even facilitate developed countries to get more benefits from trade transactions by implementing a free trade policy. Indeed, although the liberalisation of agriculture has been agreed under AoA, many countries tend to impose protectionism on agriculture as it is related to food security. As argued by Panagariya (2005), developed countries implement protectionism and state intervention by giving subsidies to domestic production. As a

result, it hurts developing countries, including the poorest ones. It builds barriers to development in developing countries.

In addition, Orden et al. (2022) in their publication entitled “Liberalizing Agricultural Trade and Developing Countries” focus on the mechanism of liberalisation. Accordingly, there is a diverse perspective among developing countries, i.e., between development advocates and trade liberalisation advocates. They are debating regarding the scope and speed of agricultural liberalisation as well as the different policies regarding facilitating trade liberalisation or trade intervention. The view of developing countries cannot be separated from the global agricultural system, especially implemented by developed countries. Although liberalisation of agriculture has been agreed by the members of WTO, protectionism is implemented by many developed countries. Therefore, it can be said that the WTO’s AoA has not been successful in promoting a fair agricultural trading system (Birovljev & Četković 2002) accepted by both wealthy industrialized countries and many governments of developing countries as the generator of economic growth, development and employment. However, free trade has also been condemned by non-governmental organizations (NGOs.

Furthermore, there are also several studies on agricultural trade liberalisation in African countries such as (Hailu 2010), Abdullateef & Ijaiya (2010), Chikhuri (2013), and Sunge & Ngepah (2020; 2022). According to Abdullateef & Ijaiya (2010), WTO’s AoA has not brought any real impacts on food security in Nigeria. As the population grows, the demand of food also outstripped; meanwhile, food production and food import do not meet the demand. Thus, Nigerians keep staying vulnerable. Similar to the argument, Hailu (2010) considers that Sub-Saharan African countries are very dependent on the agricultural sector. However, although they have a comparative advantage in agricultural products, the growth of the population is very fast, yet the demand of food is high. The implementation of WTO’s AoA does not help the realisation of food security in African countries. Indeed, the benefits of agricultural liberalisation goes to developed countries as opposed to African countries. On the other hand, optimistic arguments for agricultural trade liberalization in African countries exist. A study by Sani & Yunusa (2019) reveals that trade liberalization including the agricultural sector is good for increasing economic growth,

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thus Nigeria must diversify its agricultural products and boost the agricultural sector. Parallel to the latest argument, Sunge & Ngepah (2022) argue that complying with trade liberalization supports food security.

In the context of Indonesia, a study conducted by Thow et al. (2019) entitled "An Analysis of Indonesia's shrinking food security policy under the WTO" argue that achieving food security is challenging for least-developed countries and developing countries, including Indonesia. Developing countries have to balance between the need to improve food security on one side, and the obligation to comply with WTO's AoA regulations. To promote food security, developing countries might issue administered prices for agricultural commodities such as food grain or rice. However, the policy can be considered as "trade-distorting support" since it violates amber box regulation. Therefore, it is important to propose an additional clause to WTO's AoA that supports the food security of developing countries. There should be direction changes in national policies regarding the food security agenda (de Paula & Pessali 2014).

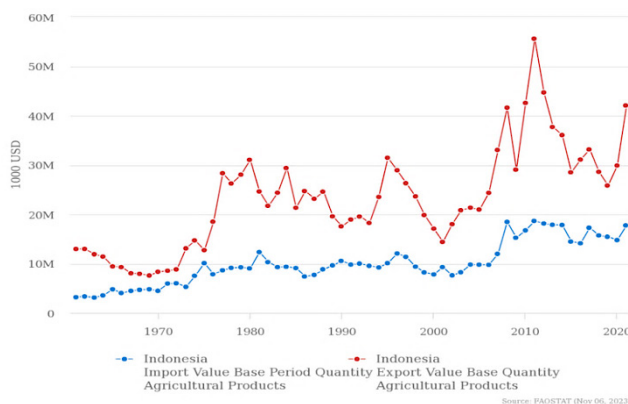
Meanwhile, studies on the relations between agricultural trade liberalisation and food sovereignty are quite limited. Laroche Dupraz & Postolle (2013) argues that the food crisis indicates the ineffectiveness of agricultural trade liberalisation. Accordingly, the fulfilment of food security must be relied on domestic production and not on food imports. The food policies must be a protective policy to mitigate fluctuations in world food prices and unfair trading systems. Moreover, Sarna et al. (2020) specifically focus on trade disputes between Indonesia and New Zealand along with the United States in the Dispute Panel Assembly WTO, cases number 477 and 478 from the perspectives of law or legal normative. Accordingly, while Indonesia was defeated in the dispute, Indonesia still had opportunities to promote food sovereignty. Building on the discussion, research that focuses on the dilemma of agricultural liberalisation, food security, and food sovereignty in the context of Indonesia is limited. Examining loophole topics might potentially bring both academic and practical contributions.



## Indonesia's trade balance of agricultural commodities

In the period of 1970s until the 2020s, Indonesia's balance of trade in the agriculture sector is always surplus. Figure 1 below shows the trend of Indonesia's balance trade of agricultural commodities.

**Figure 1.**  
**Comparison of Indonesian Export and Import on Agricultural Commodities**



Source: FAOSTAT (Nov 06, 2023)

The agricultural sector has five components, i.e., farming (including food and horticulture), animal husbandry, fisheries, plantations, and forestry. As shown in Table 1, *Badan Pusat Statistik* (BPS– Indonesian Statistics Agency) reports that the surplus of trade balance comes from several sectors. First, fisheries such as fish and shrimp. Second, plantations such as rubber, palm oil, coffee, tea, spices, and tobacco. Third, forestry such as logging, timber, rattan, and others. However, Indonesia is weak in the food and horticulture sector. As a result, this latter sector does not contribute to the surplus of trade balance and even causes a deficit in Indonesia's trade balance in the global trade of food and horticulture (Badan Pusat Statistik n.d.). This is in line with data provided by the Indonesian Ministry of Trade that the main potential agricultural products for Indonesian exports are shrimp, coffee, cacao, palm oil, and rubber (Indonesian Ministry of Trade 2022).

**Table 1.**  
**Comparison of Export and Import of commodities of  
fisheries, plantation, and forestry (2022)**

Name of Commodities	Export (US \$)	Import (US \$)
Fish, crustaceans and mollusca	364,428,416.17	40,884,978.00
Coffee, tea, and spices	142,905,481.55	38,166,582.00
Lac, gums, and resins	23,015,100.51	6,419,373.00
Cocoa and cocoa preparations	116,757,019.30	23,160,093.00
Tobacco and cigarette	133,264,543.37	58,184,589.00
Rubber and articles thereof	411,581,037.95	141,245,084.00
Wood and articles of wood	327,221,162.78	47,676,514.00

*Source: Badan Pusat Statistik (n.d.)*

Table 1 shows the comparison of Indonesian export and import of several commodities of fisheries, plantation, and forestry. Accordingly, the value of exports is higher than that of imports.

### **Meeting Food Security, Yet Raising Food Dependency**

Indonesia is one of populous countries in the world. Worldometer (2023) notes that Indonesia is in the third rank after China and India as a densely populated country. Indeed, among ASEAN member states, the number of Indonesian people is the highest, which is about 272.682 million in 2021, 275.773 million in 2022, and 278.696 million in 2023 (Badan Pusat Statistik 2023). The number of populations is in line with the need for food. However, the volatility or fluctuation of domestic food production is high due to environmental problems, land conversion, and others. As a result, Indonesia has to import food products from global markets, otherwise, people might encounter food insecurity. Indonesia can be categorized as an agricultural country however it is challenging to meet food security. According to the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) 2022 published by the Economic Impact Group, the food security of Indonesia is in the position of low middle rank. At the global level, Indonesian food security rank is 63<sup>rd</sup> out of 113 countries, with a score of 60.2. Meanwhile at regional levels, among ASEAN member states (excluding Timor Leste), Indonesian food

security rank is 4<sup>th</sup> out of 9 countries as shown in Table 2.

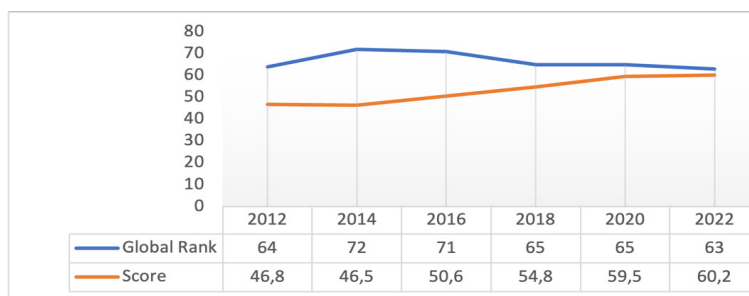
**Table 2.**  
**Comparison of Food Security Index in**  
**ASEAN Countries (2022)**

Name of Country	ASEAN Rank	Global Rank	Score
Singapore	1	28	73.1
Malaysia	2	41	69.9
Vietnam	3	46	67.9
Indonesia	4	63	60.2
Thailand	5	64	60.1
Philippines	6	67	59.3
Myanmar	7	72	57.6
Cambodia	8	78	55.7
Laos	9	81	53.1

Source: The Economist Group (2022)

In addition, while the score is increasing, the trend of the Indonesian Food Security Index from 2012 to 2022 is relatively stagnant as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.**  
**Trend of Indonesian Global Food Security Index**



Source: The Economist Group (2012;  
 2014; 2016; 2018; 2020; 2022)

In a more detailed fashion, GFSI consists of several components, namely (1) affordability, (2) availability, (3) quality and safety, (4)

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sustainability and adaptation. Table 3 below shows the components of the food security index of Indonesia.

**Table 3.**  
**Food Security Index of Indonesia 2022 (per component)**

Categories	Score (from 0 to 100)	Rank (from 1 to 113)
Affordability	81.4	44
Availability	50.9	84
Quality and Safety	56.2	78
Sustainability and Adaptation	46.3	83
Overall	60.2	63

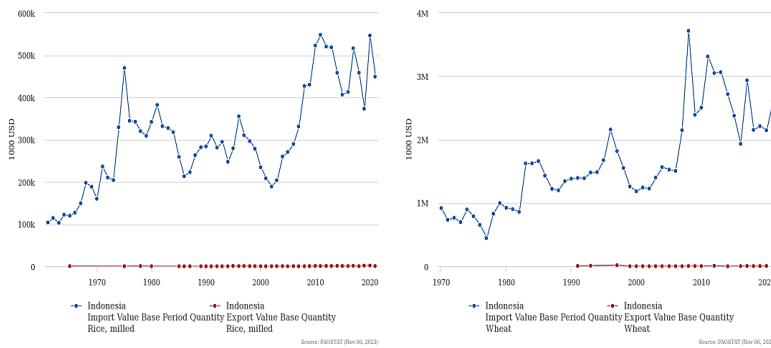
*Source: FAO (n.d.)*

Table 3 shows that the score of affordability is relatively high. It is related to the price of food and the purchasing power of the people. However, the availability of food is quite low. At domestic levels, the low score of food availability is due to the low of agricultural inputs such as support for farmers, access, infrastructure, commitment to innovative technology, and others, including political barriers. The table also shows that the quality and safety of food are quite low (FAO n.d.). At the same time, unfortunately, sustainability is also low due to Indonesia's dependency on global food markets and the ineffectiveness of domestic production. Indeed, in the immediate future, the sustainability of food availability is also hard to maintain due to "geo-political scenario[s], El Nino sentiments and extreme climatic conditions in other rice-producing countries", such as India, Thailand, and Vietnam. (Al Jazeera 2023)

This is an irony and dilemma as well. As mentioned in the previous section, the comparative advantage of Indonesia is agriculture. It is shown in Figure 1 that Indonesia always surplus in the global trade of agricultural commodities. Thus, Indonesia proposes the liberalisation of agriculture with other members of the Cairns group. However, as shown in Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5 below; in terms of main food trade such as rice, wheat, meat, sugar and honey, eggs, dairy products, fruits, and vegetables, Indonesia always suffers from deficit. The following figures show that in order to meet the need for carbohydrates (rice and wheat), protein

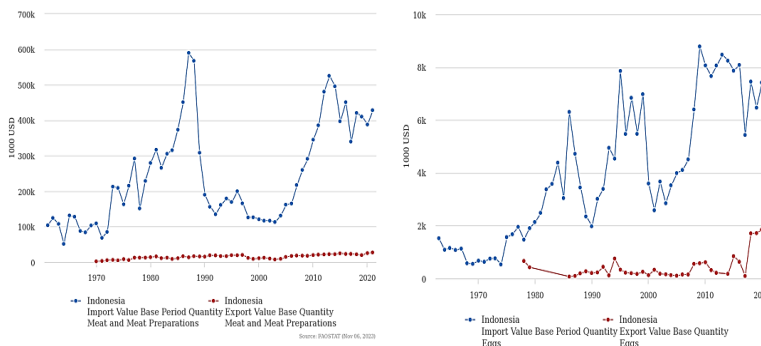
(meat and eggs), vitamins and minerals (fruits and vegetables), Indonesia must import the commodities.

**Figure 3.**  
**Comparison of Indonesian export and import of Rice and Wheat**



Source: FAO (2023)

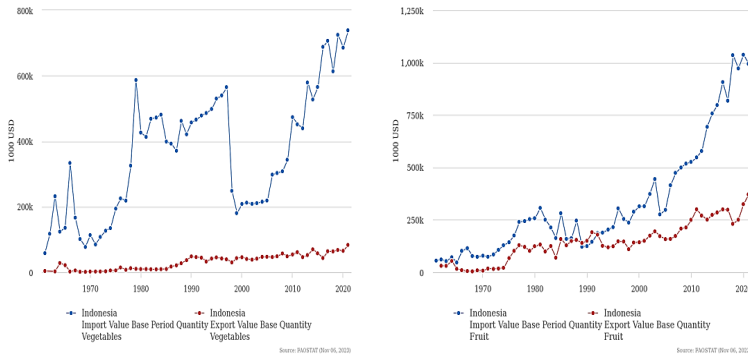
**Figure 4.**  
**Comparison of Indonesian export and import of Meat and Egg**



Source: FAO (2023)

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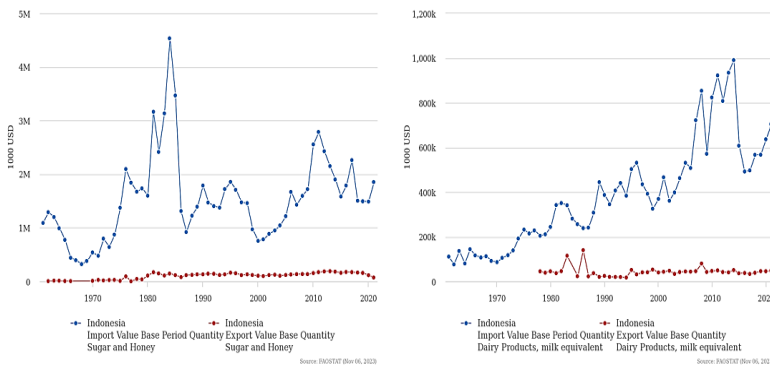
**Figure 5.**  
**Comparison of Indonesian export and import of Fruits and Vegetables**



*Source: FAO (2023)*

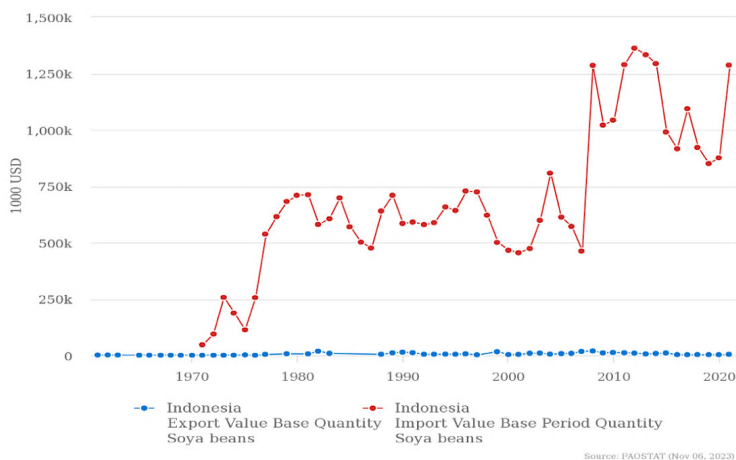
In addition, Indonesia is also dependent on food imports such as sugar, dairy products and others including soybean as shown in Figure 6, and Figure 7.

**Figure 6.**  
**Comparison of Indonesian export and import of sugar and honey, and dairy products**



*Source: FAO (2023)*

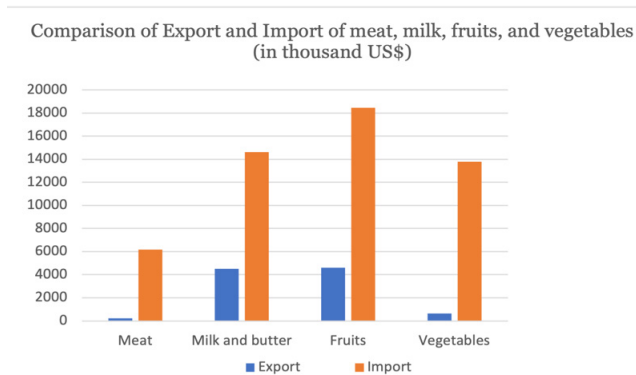
**Figure 7.**  
**Comparison of Indonesian export and import of soybeans**



Source: FAO (2023)

Soybean is the main ingredient of *tempeh* and tofu that is very popular in Indonesian society. However, the raw material is also dependent on the import of soybean as the main material of *tempeh* and tofu. The data on Indonesian dependence on food import issued by the FAO has a parallel with data provided by the Indonesian Statistics Agency as shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8.**  
**Comparison of Export and Import of meat, milk, fruits, and vegetables**



Source: adapted from Badan Pusat Statistik (n.d.)

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The figures show that the quantity of imports is much higher than the exports. It means food security especially related to the availability of food in Indonesia is sourced from foreign production through import. In the short term, food import supports food security as it provides availability and affordability of food. However, in the long term, dependence on the import of food might threaten food security itself, especially if there are changes in the structure of global food markets.

Yet, any analysis that relies only on the trends at the national level would be misleading, particularly in identifying the specific problems of food security and food sovereignty. It is simply because the above figures are too sweeping. To sharpen analysis, therefore, it is necessary to complement it with the trends at the local level. Our comparative research at the grassroots level found more detailed conditions that are not available in the figures at the national level. Dealing with food security and sovereignty, we discovered different situations between rural and urban people. For rural people, particularly those who live in agricultural enclaves, threats to food security are still relatively well-maintained. Even during the previous COVID-19 pandemic, they fulfilled their daily food needs. The Head of the Banyuwangi Agriculture and Food Office told us that agriculture is a leading sector in the district and has become the main supporting factor for community food security. Our various interviews at the lower levels confirmed the statement. The Secretary of Sempu Subdistrict, the Head of Jambe Wangi Baru village, and the Head of the Temuasri village at Banyuwangi district have identical views by saying that farmers generally initiate various food sources (The Secretary of Sempu Subdistrict; The Head of Jambe Wangi Baru village; the Head of the Temuasri village Banyuwangi 2022). They do not only rely on rice but also other commodities, such as corn, cassava, and sweet potato. They even sell the surplus of the products to other cities across the country.

In the neighbouring district of Situbondo, the conditions are not so much different. The majority of its rural population comprises farmers and fishermen. Yet, food security and sovereignty in the two communities are also well-managed despite different occupational backgrounds. So far, Situbondo is one of the districts with a surplus of rice production. The Head of Food Security for



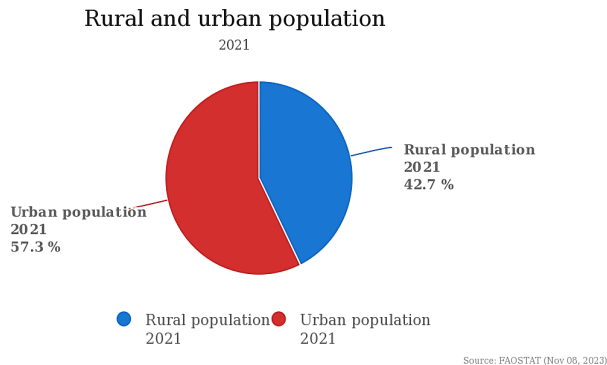
the Situbondo district insisted that “here, people have no problem with food security because this district always experiences a surplus production of rice. Apart from growing rice, they also cultivate alternative foods, such as sorghum”. (The Head of Food Security for the Situbondo district 2022). Interviews at the lower-level support the claim. In the coastal sub-district of Panarukan, for example, both farmers and fishermen consume rice. According to the Sub-district Secretary of Panarukan, “These two groups with different jobs meet their daily food needs through district self-sufficiency. As for anticipating the food crisis, they develop different businesses. Farmers grow alternative foods, such as wheat; while fishermen develop seafood home industries” (Sub-district Secretary of Panarukan 2022). Their main complaint is the increasingly expensive price of fertilizers. These findings show that rural people generally maintain their food security well through the availability of foodstuff they produce and are supported by their creativity to diversify crops to become food supplies.

Compared to rural areas, the condition of urban regions is generally different. At the latter people, particularly those who have low purchasing power, are relatively vulnerable regarding their food security. Dealing with this issue, the Head of a non-government organisation, namely *Lembaga Gerakan Peduli Perempuan* (LGPP) in Jember, explains:

Urban people do not have any area for farming to fulfil their food needs. Therefore, they have to buy food from markets. However, poor people do not earn enough income to buy food. They cannot afford the food (Director of LGPP 2022).

If this is a general phenomenon in urban areas nationwide, food insecurity is likely to happen in urban areas. In fact, the total number of urban people is higher than that of rural ones. Figure 9 shows that, in 2021, the total number of urban people reached 57.3%, while rural people levelled at 42.7%. As such, the potentiality of food insecurity in urban areas is higher than in rural areas.

**Figure 9.**  
**Comparison between Rural and Urban People**



*Source: FAO (n.d.)*

Furthermore, while food security is still quite well maintained, food sovereignty is threatened due to the decline of domestic production. It is caused by the decline of people's interest to be farmers. As said during the interview with the Secretary of Sempu Sub-district, the interest of the younger generation to pursue agriculture as their livelihood tends to decline over time (Secretary of Sempu Sub-district of Banyuwangi 2022). This is in line with the results of the 2019 agricultural census that 72.34% of the farmers in Banyuwangi are at the age over 45 years old (Badan Pusat Statistik 2019). It can be as a serious problem in achieving food security due to the sustainability of food availability from domestic production. Food sovereignty is also threatened by people's preferences in planting that are based on market needs. People tend to plant commodities that are marketable as opposed to food fulfilment. This is a crucial point in efforts to maintain food sovereignty.

The findings allow us to critically review the relationship between liberalisation, food security, and food sovereignty. As known, agriculture liberalisation refers to a process of removing any government-imposed restriction on agriculture products movement. The regime has an optimistic view that the free trade of agricultural products would improve human lives. As the free product movement would guarantee food supply, food security would presumably be well-maintained. However, the findings in

this micro-scale research show that the assumption only sometimes holds. In urban areas, the availability of agricultural products, thanks to liberalisation policies, rarely guarantees food security and includes food sovereignty, especially for people experiencing poverty. The reason is that low-income people in urban areas can only sometimes afford the high prices of agricultural products. At the same time, they also have limited, or even no, alternative food sources to meet their basic daily needs. In rural areas, the situation is different. Agricultural liberalisation has little impact on food security and food sovereignty. Besides the food being well-secured, rural people are even able to have food sovereignty. Although at the national level, food sovereignty is challenging to maintain because imports essentially meet food availability, rural communities can preserve their food sovereignty because they generally have the means to produce their food and diversify their daily diet. Nevertheless, the sustainability of food sovereignty is at stake as the rural young generation's enthusiasm for working in the agricultural sector decreases.

### **Conclusion**

Indonesia relatively benefits from agricultural liberalisation because it allows Indonesia to meet the need for food security. The data shows that daily food needs that include availability and affordability aspects (nutrition) can be met through imports. Indonesia's food security ranking is also not too bad at the world level and does not report food shortages. Indonesia's ranking tends to improve, although not too significantly. Though food security is not a problem in the short term, Indonesia's food security remains an unresolved issue. Indonesia's surplus in exports of agricultural products does not indicate that Indonesia is relatively independent in food sovereignty. The surplus is supported by the exports of fisheries, plantation, and forestry commodities as opposed to food crops and horticulture. Indonesia therefore needs to consider alternative policies to enable its food security to be met from domestic sources rather than from imports. In this context, it is necessary to consider every single positive and feasible discourse offered by the available different perspectives of food regimes.

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