
The Politics of Food and Food Security during Indonesia's Old Order (1945-1965)

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Abstract

The early decades of Indonesian independence have often been described as a time of economic hardship. Food crises appeared to illustrate the absence of a strong state creating prosperity for the Indonesian people. By examining food-related policies on both the production and the consumption side, this article seeks to offer a more balanced view of the actual role of the state in achieving food self-sufficiency and food security. I argue that there was a strong belief during the Old Order period that the state should play an important role in the food sector rather than letting the market mechanism determine. Various policies were executed by the government in order to increase food production and improve distribution. They were brought in practice in the field and clearly indicate the active role that the state assumed in managing foodstuffs and food sufficiency issues. The fact that food crises persisted, even later contributing to the regime change in the mid-1960s, was apparently not due to the absence of the state in the food sector, but rather to the failure of the state to overcome the hurdles of rapid population growth increasing the need for food as well as the failure to establish the political stability required for an effective and sustainable implementation of food policies.

Abstrak

Dua dekade awal kemerdekaan sering digambarkan dalam historiografi Indonesia sebagai masa sulit dalam kehidupan ekonomi. Krisis bahan pangan sering dijadikan ilustrasi untuk menunjukkan tiadanya peran negara dalam mewujudkan kesejahteraan masyarakat. Dengan melihat kebijakan pemerintah, sisi produksi dan konsumsi pangan, tulisan ini bermaksud melihat secara lebih berimbang dan faktual peran negara dalam mewujudkan ketercukupan bahan makanan dan ketahanan pangan di Indonesia. Dalam tulisan ini diargumentasikan bahwa selama dua dekade periode dekolonisasi terdapat keyakinan kuat akan keharusan peran negara dalam menangani sektor pangan, ketimbang semata-mata diserahkan pada mekanisme pasar. Beragam kebijakan dikeluarkan oleh pemerintah dalam rangka meningkatkan produksi pangan, mengelola distribusi, dan menangani aspek konsumsi bahan pangan. Semua ini mengindikasikan adanya peran negara yang cukup aktif dalam menangani permasalahan bahan makanan. Fakta bahwa krisis pangan masih berlangsung dan bahkan kemudian ikut menjadi faktor yang menyebabkan perubahan regim pada pertengahan 1960-an, tampaknya bukan karena tiadanya peran negara dalam menangani sektor pangan, melainkan karena kegagalan dalam mengatasi permasalahan pertumbuhan penduduk yang pesat, yang menyumbang peningkatan kebutuhan pangan, serta kegagalan dalam mewujudkan stabilitas politik yang menjamin implementasi program secara berkesinambungan.

Keywords: food security, food politics, decolonization period, Indonesia

Introduction

The link between state and economy has become a major issue in the economic historiography of Indonesia. The Soeharto era (1966-1998) provides a good example of close connection between state and economy, and more importantly, the dominant role of the state in the economy. By placing economic development in the country as a major goal, the Soeharto era became widely known as 'an economic development regime'. And yet before the 1997/98 crisis, remarkable achievements were recorded: rice imports declined steeply 'to almost zero' and self-sufficiency in rice production was achieved in the mid-1980s (Ricklefs, 1992: 434; Hill, 1994: 72). Together with population control and poverty alleviation, the increase in rice production brought a positive image to the regime. Its performance was depicted as 'a success story of economic development' (Hill, 1994: xxiv-v). The image was strikingly different from the period of 1945-1965, often depicted as economically poor and politically unstable. Despite its agrarian nature, Indonesia was at the time known as the world's largest importer of rice (Hill, 1994: 54, Nawiyanto, 2010: 202).

The paradox could mislead us and give an impression that nothing was done by the Old Order government in with respect to the food sector. Indonesian history of that period, which has mostly been approached from a political perspective, reinforces the misconception that 'Indonesia was preoccupied with politics' (Dick *et al.*, 2002: 170) with a government busy only with politics. Scholarly attention to economic rehabilitation and economic decolonization helps us to understand the links between the state and the economy during that period. The gap in our knowledge of the issues, however, has only been recently been filled in. In this article, I look at the links between state and economy in the context of food politics and food security. The discussion is confined to the role of the state and its agencies in securing domestic

food supply, including both production and consumption. I expect to find an explanation for the food security of that period. The temporal setting is the Old Order period, 1945-1965.

The politics of food

From the early years of independence, the Indonesian government paid serious attention to the issue of food. This issue was highly important not only because it related to the people's basic need for living, but for political reasons as well. The availability of food at home affected political stability. Food also played an important role in Indonesia's international diplomacy. In 1946, for example, India suffered seriously from harvest failures and encountered famine. In April 1946 the Indonesian government under Prime Minister Sutan Sjahrir took the initiative to provide 500,000 tons of rice in aid to India. This offer was made on the assumption that Indonesia enjoyed a rice surplus of 4 million tons. In exchange, Sjahrir asked for textiles and medicines from India. There was a shortage of supply of such goods because of the Dutch marine blockade in an attempt to weaken the position of the Republican Indonesian government (Sudarno, 1993: 247). The rice for textiles and medicines exchange offered political benefits for Indonesia as a newly-born state in terms of international recognition, whilst also demonstrating the country's export capability despite existing difficulties (Cribb, 1990: 111).

Continuing military clashes between the Republic and Dutch forces caused the production of food to decline. In addition, the irrigation works and physical infrastructure deteriorated due to a lack of investment and maintenance. Indonesia also encountered food scarcity because of flows of war-driven refugees, partly also because of the infertile lands under jurisdiction by the Republic (Soedarmanto, 2011: 152). To improve the situation, the Indonesian government designed a three-year food production plan, launched in Yogyakarta

in 1948 and named after the minister of Food Affairs, I.J. Kasimo. It was an attempt to achieve food self-sufficiency with real and practical instructions for implementation (Sie, 1968: 66). Kasimo recommended the conversion of waste lands in excess of 281,000 hectares into food crops production. For Java, Kasimo recommended adoption of agricultural intensification with better rice varieties. In order to guarantee a high quality of rice seedlings, Kasimo recommended the creation of seedlings gardens. Part of his instructions was the good raising of cattle required for soil preparation, preventing the good ones from being slaughtered (Soedarmanto, 2011: 152-3; Poesponegoro and Notosusanto, 1975: 280-1).

Next to promoting food crops production, the Indonesian government imposed restrictions on foodstuff and livestock exports to the Dutch-occupied areas. The restrictions were stipulated in Government Regulation (Peraturan Pemerintah, PP) 63/1948. Among restricted goods were rice (*beras*), unhusked rice (*gabah*), finely ground grains of rice (*menir*), rice flour, maize, ground grains of maize, maize flour, dried cassava (*gaplek*), cassava, dried cassava, dried cassava flour, tapioca, tuber, beans, meat, and eggs. The transport of these goods into Dutch-occupied areas was only allowed for limited quantities ranging from 0.5 to 2 kg and for people's own and family needs. When exceeding the allowed quantities, their transport required a special permit issued by the minister of People Prosperity (Menteri Kemakmuran Rakyat). The restrictions on foodstuff and livestock transport into Dutch-occupied areas were regarded as vital in order to maintain food security and the economy of the area under Republican rule.

During the Indonesian Revolution, procurement of rice was controlled by two parties, the Dutch and Indonesian authorities. To handle provisions of foodstuff, the Republican government formed the People's Food Control Service (Djawatan Pengawasan Makanan

Rakyat, PMR) under the Kementerian Kemakmuran Rakyat, whereas the Dutch formed the Voedingsmiddelenfonds (VMF). The control of the people's nutrition conditions was given to the Instituut Volksvoeding (IVV). The transfer of sovereignty in 1949 presented an even bigger challenge for the Indonesian government in terms of achieving food self-sufficiency. The greater challenge stemmed from the wider area of administration, the larger population to be fed, and the restored control of foreign estates by their owners.

After Dutch recognition of Indonesian independence, the VMF was merged with the PMR and renamed as the Foodstuff Foundation (Jajasan Bahan Makanan, BAMA). Meanwhile, the IVV changed into the People's Food Institute (Lembaga Makanan Rakyat, LMR). Subsequently, the BAMA was renamed as the Foodstuff Affairs Foundation (Jajasan Urusan Bahan Makanan, JUBM). The foundation was the only agent handling procurement of rice at national level. To foster harmony between food policy and nutrition policy, a board called the People's Food Improvement Board (Badan Perbaikan Makanan Rakyat) was established, and later was upgraded into the People's Food Council (Dewan Makanan Rakyat).

Apart from the provision of foodstuffs, the government paid attention to promoting food production aiming at self-sufficiency. In the early 1950s, the government made an attempt of developing rice agriculture in up and low tide land areas (*wilayah pasang surut*) in Kalimantan led by H.J. Schophuys. Despite its success, the attempt was discontinued due to limited funding (Pasandaran, 2008: 299). In 1951 the government launched the Special Prosperity Program (Program Kemakmuran Istimewa). This program incorporated the Colonial Prosperity Plan and Kasimo Plan and was run with a Dutch-modeled pilot project extension approach (Haryanto & Wahono, 2004: 262). The program set as its target that food self-sufficiency be achieved in 1956. There were

several ways to achieve the target, including food crops area expansion, improved planting techniques, superior seedlings use, fertilizer and equipment import, and irrigation infrastructure improvement (Higgins & Higgins, 1963: 74). Outside Java, the government established dry land agricultural nucleus companies managed by the Foodstuff Production and Land Reclamation Company (Badan Perusahaan Produksi Bahan Makanan dan Pembukaan Tanah) (Haryono & Wahono, 2004: 262).

Political instability made it difficult to realize the program. To provide an impetus, in 1958 the government established a body called the Foodstuff Council (Dewan Bahan Makanan), led by Vice Prime Minister III, as stipulated in the Government Regulation 7 of 1958. The council had as its major task to formulate government policy on foodstuffs affairs, prepare plans regarding foodstuff production, procurement, transport and distribution, people's nutrition, and foodstuff prices, and coordinating and supervising their implementation. Another major task of the Foodstuff Council was to report all efforts it performed relating to the tasks to the Council of Ministers. In 1960 the legal framework of the Foodstuff Council was renewed with the President Regulation No 8 of 1960, dated 29 April 1960. Basically, there were no substantial differences regarding the tasks of the council, except in terms of to whom its report should be submitted. The reports were not directed to the Council of Ministers, but to the president.

Part of the efforts to achieve rice self-sufficiency was the launching of central rice (*padi sentra*) program (1958) by the Djuanda cabinet. There were four major activities in the program: (1) dry lands use and rejuvenation of its fertility; (2) rice planting area extension; (3) area development, and (4) population density reduction in Java through transmigration. The program was followed by Rice Self-sufficiency-Prosperity Movement Operation (Swa Sembada Beras-Operasi Gerakan Makmur/SSB-OGM

(1959-1962), and Foodstuffs self-sufficiency Movement (Gerakan Swa Sembada Bahan Makanan, SSBM) (Haryanto & Wahono, 2004: 262). In the context of this movement, implementation organizations for foodstuff self-sufficiency were established in each village. From national down to village level, there was a hierarchal structure of the Prosperity Movement Operation Command (Komando Operasi Gerakan Makmur) (Sosromarsono, 1965: 52-3).

The Foodstuffs Self-sufficiency Movement was followed up in 1963/64 with the establishment of intensification centers, which also became an advisory center for agricultural production cooperative. The scheme was inseparable from the initiative of Bogor Agricultural Institute (Institut Pertanian Bogor) sending a number of students in Karawang to assist farmers in applying the Five Principles of Complete Farming (*Panca Usaha Tani Lengkap*). The success of this pioneering project led to the launch of the Mass demonstration program (Program Demonstrasi Massal, DEMAS) in which hundreds of students from different universities were involved and which covered 10,000 hectares of land (Wiradi, 1987). The program gave satisfying results. In August 1965, the program was taken over by the Highest Command of Economic Operation (Komando Tertinggi Operasi Ekonomi, KOTOE). directly under President Soekarno. It was henceforth program called National Bimas (Bimas Nasional). Under the Bimas Nasional the area was extended to 150,000 hectares, including areas both in Java and the Outer Islands. To support the program, the government developed farmers' groups, agricultural inputs, technological extension of Five Principle Farming, and provided superior seedlings, fertilizers, and pesticides (Witoto, 2008: 1).

The government also provided credit to help producers run their farming. A report from Jember reveals that in 1952 the Bank

Rakyat Indonesia (The People's Bank, BRI) allocated loans to 1,086 farmers at a total of Rp. 106,000. The intention was to free them from the traps of informal money lenders providing credit at a very high interest rate (*Trompet Masjarakat*, 22 March 1952). Loans were more systematically given to farmers under the central rice project (*proyek padi sentra*). Mubyarto called it as pre-bimas credit system (Sistem Perkreditan Pra-Bimas, 1958-1964). The loans were allocated from the government budget via the Department of Agriculture and channeled to farmers through the central rice organization. This scheme, however, seems to have failed. Many loans were not paid back. In response to the problem, from 1963/64 credit was channeled through a trusted professional financial institution, the BRI (Mubyarto, 1987: 127-8).

During the 1963/64 planting season, the BRI channeled credit to farmers participating in DEMAS program. Loans were given to support them in applying the Five Principles of Complete Farming (*Panca Usaha Tani lengkap*), which became the embryo of the so-called Mass Guidance (Bimbingan Massal, BIMAS) during the Indonesia's New Order (Mubyarto, 1987: 128). Despite this effort, the government's funding of the program was actually quite limited, corresponding to less than 20 per cent of the farmers' credit requirements. Moreover, access to credit was not always easy. Special conditions applied and complicated procedures had to be followed. This all created obstacles for farmers to get the capital they desperately needed to run their farms and increase production (Sie, 1968: 131).

Apart from the production aspect, the government also dealt with distribution. The major objective was to guarantee that foodstuffs would reach all consumers. During the harvest time, the government organized the provision of rice through direct buying from farmers. Rice collected by government agents was subsequently held in the storage for certain

period of time. Approaching the harvest time when rice in farmers' households was in short supply (*paceklik*), the rice was channeled to the market. By doing so, the government tried to reduce potential threats of food crisis, especially in rice deficit areas, through what was in the 1950s called 'rice injections' (*Trompet Masjarakat*, 8 February 1958).

The provision of rice was especially carried out in areas with a rice surplus. The major one among them was East Java, a well-known rice granary of Indonesia. In 1952 it was reported that the quota of rice provision for the province was 300,000 tons (Kementerian Penerangan, 1953:145). The provision activities often appeared in newspaper reports, for instance in the daily newspaper *Trompet Masjarakat*. There were various obstacles to reach the set targets such as low buying prices, financial stagnation in the hands of the designated agents, and illegal fees imposed on farmers making them getting far lower prices than the buying prices set by the government (*Trompet Masjarakat*, 16 January and 3 June 1953).

In late 1959 there was a steep increase in the rice price. Consequently, real incomes of public servants and persons with fixed incomes declined. The government regarded them as the biggest victims of the skyrocketing price. To mitigate the difficulties the government launched a policy of distributing rice to these groups as part of their salary (Djafar, 2008:2). It was called as a salary policy in kind (*politik upah natura*), in which rice served as both measurement and 'money' for a basis of exchange (Mubyarto, 1987: 143-4). Incorporating rice as part of the salary was actually a formalization of rice distribution to public servants and the army which had initially been carried out on an incidental basis (Soebagijo, 1979: 106).

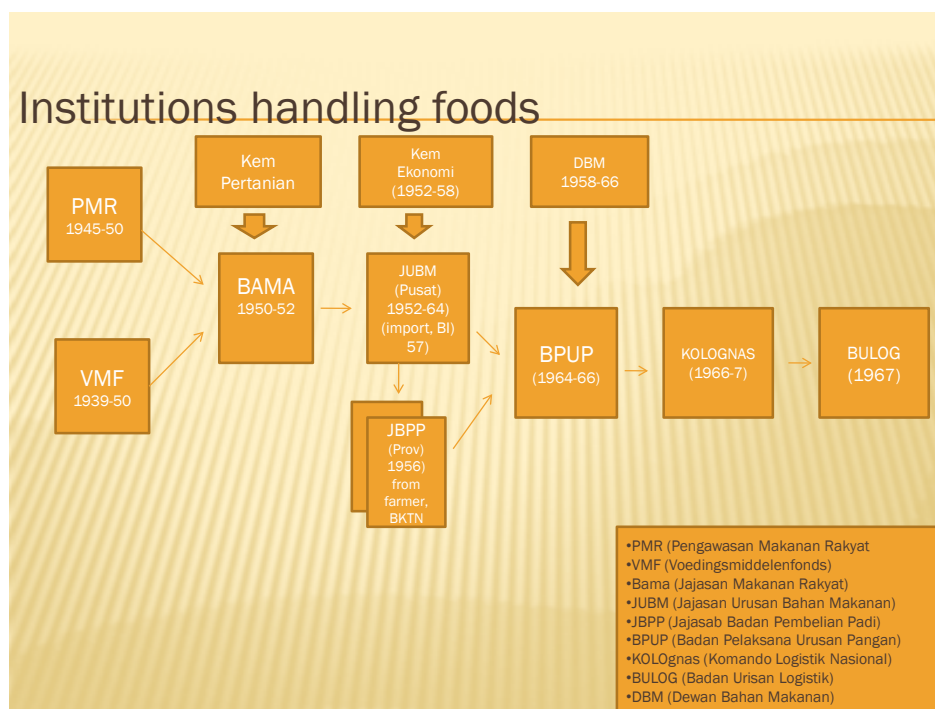
The crisis worsened. The government was increasingly unable to deliver the quantities of rice required by the inhabitants. Facing the situation, the government established the Rice Buying Board Foundation (Jajasan

Badan Pembelian Padi, JBPP), headed by the governor of each province. The foundation had the responsibility and tasks of collecting, processing, and distributing rice to consumers. Subsequently, with the issuance of the President Regulation 3/1964, a body named the Foodstuff Council (Dewan Bahan Makanan, DBM) was established. It was followed by the establishment of Acting Board of Foodstuff Affairs (*Badan Pelaksana Urusan Pangan*, BPUP), as a merger of JUBM and dengan JBPP-JBPP. The BPUP was formed with the primary objectives of managing foodstuffs, handling food stuffs transport and processing, storing and channeling foodstuffs according to the conditions issued by the DBM. The establishment of BPUP marked the return of food stuffs management under one control.

and selling them at high prices. In 1964, for instance, a rice speculator from Bondowoso, Oei Gwan Tjai, was sentenced to jail for four months and a fine of Rp. 20,000 because of accumulating and selling rice illegally (Darmawan, 1967: 503-5). Even some irresponsible public servants and army officers got involved in such practices (Feith, 1995: 106-7). A case of rice accumulation by a high ranking-official in Bondowoso was reported in 1961. In another edition of the same daily, a legal process at the court of Jember was reported involving illicit rice accumulation by public servants (*Trompet Masyarakat*, 16 May and 21 June 1957). Despite various efforts, the shortage of rice remained unsolved. This situation motivated President Soekarno to appeal for replacing rice with maize. The component of salary in kind paid

to the public servants and army members was changed into 25 per cent maize and 75 per cent rice. The government, however, found it difficult to implement and decided to stop it (Margono, 2010: 201).

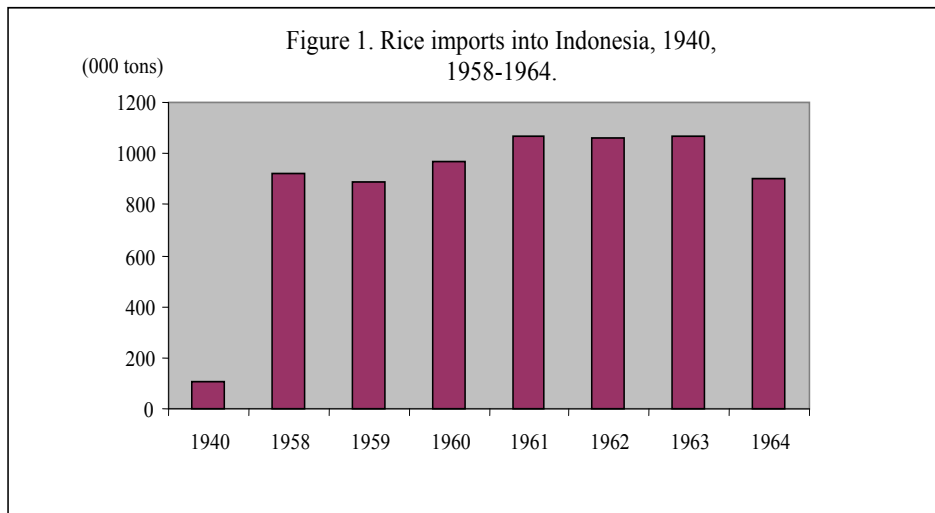
Rice imports formed a strategic instrument in the government's food policy. The import of rice was actually not a new phenomenon of the Old Order. During the Dutch colonial period, rice had been imported



In order to overcome the crisis of foods, Soekarno threatened to impose the death penalty to persons who accumulated rice for their own profits. What the rice speculators did was regarded to cause rice prices to skyrocket, beyond people's purchasing power. There were facts and rumors circulating in the society about activities of irresponsible speculators accumulating rice and other basic needs

from overseas when domestic production was disrupted by abnormal climate, disease or pests attacks causing harvest failure and food shortage. Rice import was carried out, for example, from Saigon in 1847 (De Vries, 1986: 201). The imports continued and increased from the 1870s and continued to do so until the 1930s depression (Creutzberg & Van Laanen, 1987: 98). Figure 1 shows quantities of rice imported

from overseas during the Old Order period. In general, rice imports during the Old Order were larger than those of the Dutch colonial period. The Australian economist Hal Hill (1994: 54) describes Indonesia during the Old Order period as the world's largest rice-importing country. In spite of its importance, rice imports were politically unpopular with the government. The Stipulation of the Temporary People's Assembly No. 2 of 1960 stated the Indonesia's dependence on rice import is 'a national disgrace' and 'a historical tragedy' (*Ketetapan MPRS No.:II/MPRS/1960*, Appendix of Book II/4:843-51). Rice import was seen to be in contradiction to the status of an agrarian country.



Source: Adapted from Sie, 1968: 38.

Even though unpopular, rice imports had to be carried out. Considering the importance of such imports, in 1951 the government shifted the task of handling rice affair from Ministry of Agriculture, occupied by Suwanto, to the minister of Economy, Wilopo (Soebagijo, 1979: 107). Domestic rice production was insufficient to meet the inhabitants' requirements of food. In 1953 Indonesia imported 700,000 tons of rice. As the population kept on growing, the mouths to be fed also grew. More quantities of rice had to be imported, notably from Siam, Burma, and Vietnam (Soekarno, 1953: 12). In October 1957, Indonesia was reported to have imported rice

from Burma and Italy. Vice Prime Minister III Leimena instructed direct rice injections to areas in desperate need (*Trompet Masyarakat*, 8 October 1957).

Another major instrument in food politics was price policy. The government tried to set the rice price in order to maintain its stability. The price standard was normally low as a strategy to make rice accessible to consumers. The policy of setting a floor price of rice pursued by the Old Order government constituted an important strategy to secure political stability in the 1950s. The policy was inherited from the Dutch and Japanese periods. Such a consumer-oriented policy regarding foodstuff prices

was by Mubyarto branded as a 'cheap food stuffs policy' (Mubyarto, 1987: 143). Complaints about the cheap price of rice set by the government were raised in the 1950s, yet regarded 'counterproductive' (*Trompet Masyarakat*, 16 January 1953).

The policy of setting the price of rice was considered depriving farmers of an incentive to increase output. With the intention of promoting production, on August 1964 the government began buying rice from farmers at market prices, abandoning the set cheap buying price of rice. The created a dilemma for the government, given its limited budget. On the one hand, the government needed more money to finance rice procurement at market prices. On the other hand, the government had to allocate money to provide a subsidy in order to make the rice accessible to by consumers, in particular public servants and members of the armed forces (Sie, 1968: 128).

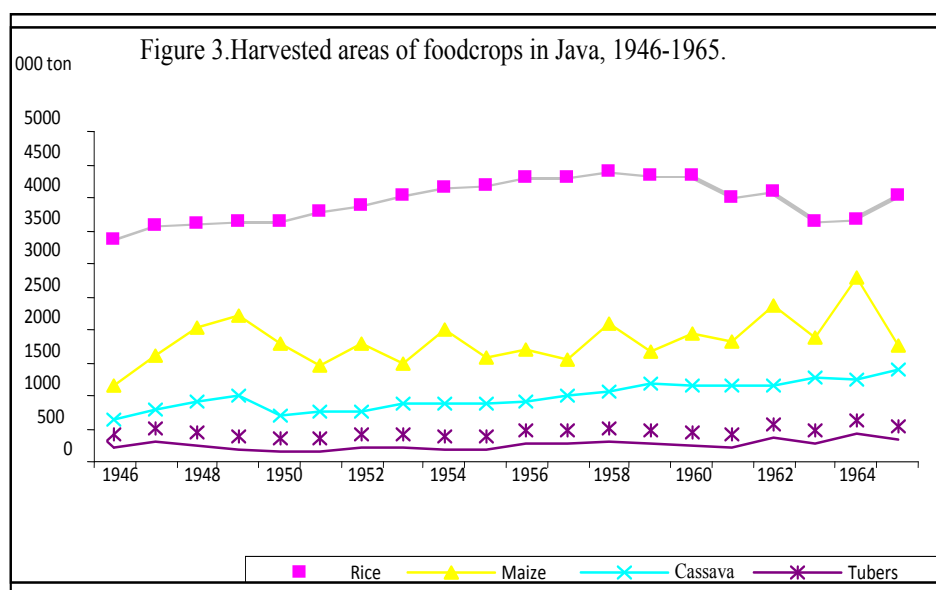
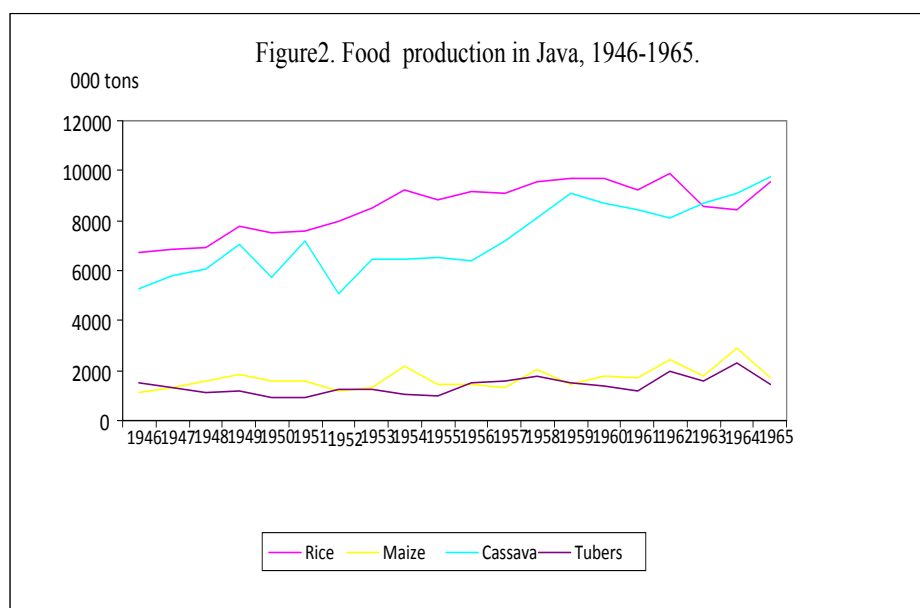
Production

The previous section has shown that in the 1950s and early 1960s, the Indonesian government drafted various policies to promote food production. Self-sufficiency in food was set as a major target to achieve. The abundance of farmers was considered a great asset for food crops production. This view was based on the fact that farmers made up more than two-thirds of the Indonesian population (Higgins & Higgins, 1968: 18). The main food crops produced were rice, maize, and cassava, although tubers were also grown.

Figure 2 shows an increasing production of foodcrops during the first two decades after independence, although at different rates of increase. A calculation by Anne Booth suggests an average annual growth of 2.8 per cent for foodcrops in Java and 3.2 per cent for foodcrops in all of Indonesia during the period of 1948-1961 (Booth, 1988: 35). The rising trend was more pronounced in rice and cassava than in maize and tubers. The rising trends in production of rice and cassava run parallel to the increase acreages for these two crops, as demonstrated in Figure 3.

A part from influences of the nature, these trends reflected intervention by the state. The increase in the production of rice was inseparable from

the active role of the government in promoting food production. Farmers were encouraged to adopt better rice seedlings, which in the 1950s and early 1960s included varieties called as 'National Superior Paddy' (*Padi Unggul Nasional*, PUN). Between 1955 and 1960, the superior rice seedlings included *Bengawan*, *Sigadis*, *Remadja*, and *Djelita*. Subsequently, in the early 1960s several superior rice varieties were introduced, for instance *Dara*, *Syntha*, *Dewi Tara* (Sumintawikarta, 1965:70-1). Of all these, *Bengawan* was the most famous



Source to Fig. 2-3: Van der Eng, 1996: 299.

one (*Trompet Masjarakat*, 6 February and 11 January 1952). President Soekarno called this variety 'allround' because of its resistance against mentek disease, its good taste, and higher yields than other varieties (Soekarno, 1953: 15). Its superiority gave it its popular name *padi atoom* ('atomic rice') (Martodarsono, 1958: 433; *Trompet Masjarakat*, 27 April 1954). Better varieties were introduced for drylands, for example, *Si Bandel*, *Bintang ladang*, and *Bimokurdo* (Sumintawikarta, 1965: 71). In addition, the government provided farmers with financial loans (*Trompet Masjarakat*, 22 Maret 1952).

From the early 1960s onwards, rice production declined. Per capita production fell to 78 kg in 1960, less than the 80 kg reported for 1950 (Booth, 1988: 34). A complex of factors was responsible for the deterioration, including rat plague. The bad harvest of 1961 caused by long draught led to the rice crisis (Hutabarat, 1974: 13-4). A micro study by Darmaningtyas on Gunung Kidul illustrates the dire consequences of long draught. The climatic abnormality brought severe draught. Many parts of the region such as Panggang, Tepus, Rongkop, Panjang and Semin, suffered severe harvest failure and consequently, the production of foods fell steeply. Widespread rat attacks were blamed as may be inferred from the large number of rats, 3.5 million, killed during a campaign against the pest (Darmaningtyas, 2002: 322-3). Harvest failures from rat attacks were also reported elsewhere in Java, for example in Besuki (Nawiyanto, 2007: 121-2).

By contrast, the production of cassava tended to increase during the 1960s (Figure 2). This increase was consistent with the expansion of the harvested area (Figure 3). The role of the government in the increase seems to have been limited. Rather than being pushed by the government, farmers expanded cassava cultivation on their own initiatives. Unlike rice, cassava was produced for both domestic and export markets. The export of dried cassava was

71,000 tons in 1950, rising to 174,000 tons in 1955. By 1960 it had fallen to 102,000 tons, but rose again reaching 156,000 tons in 1965 (Nelson, 1984:152-3). Yet, volumes of export, were smaller than in the colonial period, at which time Indonesia had been the world's largest exporter of cassava products.

Consumption

Rice constituted the major component in the Indonesians' diet throughout the period under consideration and also during subsequent periods. Non-rice consumption was importantly among certain groups of people, for instance maize among the Madurese and inhabitants of Sulawesi and Nusa Tenggara, and also cassava for some people in upland areas (Susanto & Suparlan, 1989: 390-4). Nonetheless, it can be said that for most Indonesians, non-rice foodstuffs played no more than a supplementary role. It was a rice crisis, not a crisis in maize or other non-rice foodstuffs, that could provoke social unrest in the society (Ikhtisar, 1958: 76). It comes as no surprise that food crises in Indonesian history have been exclusively linked to rice.

The fact that two-thirds of the Indonesian population were farmers did not necessarily imply self-sufficiency in food. The food production should be put in the context of the country's population size. In 1950 the population of Indonesia was around 77 million people. It grew to 85 million in 1955 and 95 million in 1960 (Nitisastro, 1970: 126; Van der Eng, 1996: 22). By 1965, the population of Indonesia had reached 105 million (Van der Eng, 1998: 279). As the population kept on growing, more people had to be fed. Food requirements increased accordingly. Compared with the growth of food production, the Indonesian population grew faster. Consequently, food consumption adequacy was left behind. In a speech delivered on 27 Februari 1952, President Soekarno clearly stated that there was a rice deficit of 700,000 tons. The problem was there and predicted to

remain for the years to come. Furthermore, as the President pointed out, the rice deficit kept on rising (Soekarno, 1953:12).

The inadequacy is also evident from the Indonesia's daily per capita food supply. According to Poerwo Soedarmo, a good standard of living is indicated by a daily per capita food supply of 2250 calories. In 1952, daily per capita food supply was estimated at 1700 calories, around 1957 some 1850 calories (Makanan, 1958: 249). These figures were below the minimum standard of daily intake set by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 1,860 calories (Bennet, 1961:99). Compared to the colonial period, per capita food supply of Indonesia in the 1950s appears to have worsened (*Rakjat Indonesia*, 1952: 9). Data by the economic historian Pierre van der Eng suggest that in 1913 daily per capita food supply was 1954 calories, increasing to 2132 calories by 1940 (Van der Eng, 1995: 89; 2002:427). In a comparative perspective, daily per capita food supply in Indonesia was also lower than in Burma (2120 calories), Indochina (2121 calories), Srilanka (2167 calories), and Cuba (2918 calories). The gap was even greater compared with countries like the Netherlands (2958 calories), Australia (3128 calories), and the United States (3248 calories) (Makanan, 1958: 249).

More evidence of malnourishment can be found in local reports. The problem was even observed in Java's rice granary at Besuki. In January 1952, it was reported that many inhabitants of Kemuningan in the Tegalampel subdistrict (Bondowoso) were lacking food. Most of them could only afford dried cassava mixed with rice residual once a day (*Trompet Masjarakat*, 29 January 1952). A similar case was reported in parts of Banyuwangi. Here some inhabitants suffered from *hongerodeem*, a disease caused by lack of food. An observation in early 1953 revealed that inhabitants of the Pesanggaran subdistrict ate only twice a day. In a more detailed report, it was said

that 20 per cent of the inhabitants had dried cassava for breakfast and rice for lunch, 40 per cent ate dried cassava in the morning and maize in the afternoon, whereas 35 per cent had dried cassava for both breakfast and lunch (*Trompet Masjarakat*, 2 January 1953). Also, a case study by Bennet on the regency of Malang showed that in the 1950s two-thirds of the population suffered from food inadequacy (Bennet, 1961:99). Meanwhile, in Central Java 23 subdistricts were listed among areas extremely stricken by malnutrition in 1958 (Napitupulu, 1968: 63).

The situation seems to have become even worse in the 1960s. One estimate suggests that daily average per capita food consumption was only 1650 calories and 34 gr of protein, of which 4 gr protein (animal protein). In some villages, the calory intake was only enough to maintain body metabolism, hardly for producing energy. Among the 80 regencies in Java, 68 (85 per cent) in 1961 could not meet the minimum consumption need. Seven regencies could even not reach half of the need (Napitupulu, 1968:63-4). An extreme illustration is taken from the Gunung Kidul area of Yogyakarta. As mentioned by Darmaningtyas, the early 1960s were popularly called as *zaman gaber* by people in Gunung Kidul as people were forced to consume food made of paw-paw and banana trees replacing dried cassava which was in shortage (Darmaningtyas, 2002:322). According to the economist Egbert de Vries, *gaber* also refers to cassava byproducts traditionally used to feed pigs reports in Purwokerto, Banyumas, Purbalingga, Banjarnegara, Cilacap and Karanganyar (De Vries 1985: 45). As a consequence, there was a steep increase in *hongerodeem* sufferers in Gunung Kidul in late 1961. Numbers of sufferers reached 30,000 people, of whom 600 were hospitalized and 106 people died (Darmaningtyas, 2002:322).

Low food consumption and malnourishment were regarded as the explanation why Indonesians suffered 'indolence'. Symptoms

of the disease include bodily weakness, easy exhaustion, laziness, dislike of hard work, easy self-satisfaction, lack of initiative, short stature and less than optimal body growth (Soedarmo, 1953:188). According to Napitupulu, chronic malnutrition caused Indonesians having 'sleeping brains' (Napitupulu, 1968:61). Commenting on indolence, an early 1950s source stated: 'Indolence that is blamed to have characterized Indonesians, seen from the recent scientific research findings, has nothing to do with the nation's nature, but has more something to do with a matter of foodstuffs.' Moreover, 'lack of food not only caused them low in spirit, but easily angry too' (*Rakyat Indonesia*, 1952:10).

The state certainly did not turn a blind eye to the food consumption issues. A state agency, the People's Food Institute (*Lembaga Makanan Rakyat*, LMR) initiated a national nutrition program in the form of nutrition extension, nutrition worker training, and malnourishment eradication. To improve people's nutrition, in the early 1950s, Poerwo Soedarmo, head of the LMR, began to popularize a menu slogan that became common in the later decades, *Empat Sehat Lima Sempurna* (Four Healthy, Five Complete). Soedarmo criticized the widely-held misconception that 'killing hungry feeling' (*menghilangkan rasa lapar*) was the major reason for eating rather fulfilling the body's need of nutrients and energy to perform activities. Another slogan, 'Health People, Strong Country' (*Rakyat Sehat, Negara Kuat*) was also popularized. Food consumption was the first factor affecting people's health. The government began raising people's awareness about this (Makanan, 1958: 248). A Committee for the Improvement of the People's Food (Panitia Perbaikan Makanan Rakyat, PPMR) was established (Napitupulu, 1968: 63).



Conclusion

This article has shown that food security was a central issue during the period 1945-1965. The government was aware of its responsibility to provide food security in the country. In its perception, food security and food sufficiency could not exclusively be achieved by the market mechanism. There was a strong belief in the necessity of state intervention. The production and distribution sides both clearly demonstrate the active role of the state in handling food issues. Promoting food production, especially rice, was set as a major target. Several technical aspects of rice cultivation were improved and better rice technology was introduced. Moreover, farmers were encouraged to increase the production of rice by providing them with credit incentive. Stocks of rice were further secured by regular procurements and also imports. To guarantee the fulfillment of the people's need for food, especially in deficit areas, rice injections were carried out. In addition, the government tried hard to keep rice prices affordable to low-income consumers.

On the consumption side, the government encouraged Indonesians to get adequate nutrient intakes. The primary reason was a deep concern about malnourished Indonesians. Many Indonesians had low food quality and insufficient consumption. From a food security perspective, these measurement an extra challenge for the government as larger quantities of food were required, apart from an

improved quality and a greater diversification. On top of this, a far bigger challenge arose from the growing size of the population. The increase in food production could not keep up with the population growth. The fact that a food crisis contributed to the regime change in the mid-1960s, therefore, must not be ascribed to a lack of intervention by the state but rather to the failure of the state to adopt adequate and systematic ways of tackling food related-problems.

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