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IMPACT OF FOOD ESTATE PROJECTS: AN ETHICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS IN THE INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Food estate projects are large-scale agricultural development initiatives that have been implemented in several countries, including Indonesia. Based on the concept of "food sustainability", the project seeks to capture the idea of hunger as a threat and a violation of a wider range of social, economic, and physical conditions. However, there are some criticisms for its negative impact on the environment, social structures, and cultural heritage of local communities. These projects have been criticized of their negative impact on the environment, social structure, and cultural heritage of the local communities. The research uses conceptual and historical approaches and is qualitatively analyzed. This article provides an ethical and socio-cultural analysis of the impact of food estate projects in Indonesia. It argues that these projects have failed to achieve their stated goals and have instead led to several negative consequences.

KEY WORDS

Food estate, modern agriculture, traditional farming, ethics, socio-cultural, Indonesia.

In the future, the ruler is no longer political or lawful; the food can be the ruler, for whoever has the food will control it. The statement was delivered by President Joko Widodo (RI, 2019). Raj Patel studies the concept of food sovereignty, aimed at overcoming the power gaps that characterize the global food system and trigger hunger and malnutrition (Patel, 2012). After World War II, food security became a public priority. The main focus of agriculture has shifted to food production that is safe for the entire population, especially in Europe. To achieve these public goals, the government establishes food and nutrition policies as well as programs to integrate and enhance the capacity of individual farmers to ensure food sustainability. However, "systematic efforts to tackle ancient challenges such as hunger and production shortages" directly interfere with farmers' daily practices. The aim of increasing food production as quickly as possible will generate a new paradigm in agricultural production. That is, "agriculture has grown from a basic sector of the primary economy to a secondary technical sector with complex combined interactions with other sectors of the economy" (Meijboom & Stafleu, 2016).

The concept of "food sustainability" seeks to capture the idea of hunger as a deficit (Lasminigrat & Efriza, 2020), but a violation of a wider range of social, economic, and physical conditions. In 1996, the FAO (Food Agriculture Organization) at the World Food Summit established the most widely agreed definition that "food sustainability, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels [is achieved] when everyone, at all times, has physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet food needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

In Indonesia, food estate is part of the 2020–2024 National Strategic Programs and is also linked to the global food shelter programs where organizations such as FAO help



member countries adopt integrated agricultural concepts to increase food sustainability, global agricultural production, and reduce dependence on imports. However, concepts and methods of use of food estate may vary in each country depending on the local needs and conditions of each country.

Food Estate is a large-scale, integrated food development that covers farms, plantations, and farms in an area called Food Estates (Santosa, 2014). Food estate was built in a concentrated area as a policy response to the pandemic in the Jokowi government. Septian Agam (2020) mentions that Food Estate aims to maintain the long-term sustainability of Indonesia's food. The concept of its development is carried out in an integrated way, covering agriculture, plantations and even farms in an area expected to have abundant food followed at cheaper prices.

In the midst of the global pandemic of COVID-19, the president responded to reports of a shortage of raw materials and issued a FAO warning about the threat of food shortages. Food Estate will soon be realized by opening new land, both wet and muddy, in Central Kalimantan. The land originated from the Soeharto-led Plug-in Land Implementation (PLG) project. The project is similar to the food estate project, considering the cost of repairing the land is lower than opening new land. Even President Joko Widodo has resumed the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) program that was stopped by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. A number of academic experts have captured the irony of the MIFEE project in Papua, where the activities are placed in areas that do not consume rice as a basic food. The emphasis of the government's policy project lies on printing activities.

During the pandemic, the government realized a food estate area in central Kalimantan and North Sumatra, that was designed as a prototype of the national food shelter project. The location of the building of the food shelter or food estate for the first project in the two provinces is in Humbang Hasundutan district, North Sumatra with a total land area of 30,000 hectares and Kalimantan Central is located in Pulang Pisau district and Kapuas district with a total land area of 160.000 hectares. The land is planted with food commodities such as peas, corn, parsley, shrimp, coconut, garlic, orange, and many others. The area in central Kalimantan was abandoned in 1995.

A critic of food estate rolls because everything related to the planning and implementation of the PSN project is financed by the state through APBN. State projects always require a large budget. It is not uncommon that construction projects that ingest large budgets turn out results are not following expectations or the origin. Such failure gives the loss not only measured in terms of the people's money used in such construction but also the impact of environmental restoration that could not be done in the short term or create the expulsion of civilization. This is where the focus of the food estate project needs to be evaluated in depth to determine whether it has an impact on national or regional food security. And how should this impact be analyzed from an ethical point of view?

Ethical analysis is the process of evaluating actions, policies, or situations from the perspective of ethical and moral values. It helps individuals and organizations understand the ethical implications of acting in accordance with the moral values held.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This article uses the literature review method to analyze the impact of food estate in Indonesia. The research uses conceptual and historical approaches and is qualitatively analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The food estate project that has been running since 2020 has been in line with the ethical principles in force and meets the moral standards accepted in societies, especially indigenous societies.

Public participation comes from local communities, and stakeholders are not necessarily adequately involved in the planning and decision-making processes related to



the project. The farmers who joined were encouraged by the government to adopt an agricultural system involving hybrid seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides (Patel, 2012; Fahira et al., 2022; Tempo, 2019) until the procurement of free tools was indicated to refer to the global market sector. Not only is the diversity of working patterns and planting trees eventually turning farmers into peasant workers, modern farming patterns ignore the knowledge of the farmers that came from their ancestors.

Traditionally, farmers have broad moral values and convictions; however, their willingness to join the industrialization of agriculture demonstrates that the roles of farmers as entrepreneurs and technicians should be given priority rather than as stakeholders dealing with important agricultural aspects in the public arena.

Based on the first harvest, farmers who have joined the Food Estate program are disappointed by the failure of the government to implement the concept of agriculture. Despite years that farming experience, the farmers did not dare to violate government regulations with the principle of sustainable natural resource development should be able to balance the relationship between human nature and culture.

It shows that, based on ethical principles, farmers are aware of the moral dimension of their profession and are willing to build competence to deal with it. Therefore, farmers still demonstrate traditional values such as management, care, pride, and responsibility for nature. They are not only motivated by the demands of profit or well-being, but they also apply traditional ethics to keeping forests and caring for animals. Dealing with moral questions is often an integral part of a profession. This distinction of interests is becoming increasingly apparent between rulers, entrepreneurs, and farmers.

Food Estate projects in Indonesia have major environmental impacts, including deforestation, land-use change, and excessive water use. It is clearly inconsistent with the ethical principles of environmental sustainability. The perspective affirms that nature is something separate from man; it exists for the survival and development of human society; it is the human 'environment' and a set of resources that can be exploited for their benefit (Sólon, 2018). The view of anthropocentrism is deeply embedded in modern society.

A monoculture pattern or single planting is a way of cultivating on a farmland by planting one type of crop on one area. The concept of concentrated farming meant a fairly large farmland. It can have a bad impact on heterogeneous natural ecosystems (Ika, 2018). The picture below explains that when vast land was prepared for the printing of the meadow, there was a change in the consumption behavior of worms. It's because of the kinds of plants that have lost food.



As a result of the printing of shrubs, abnormal conditions occurred in the deer population by eating out the leaves of the Dutch shrub trees. The trees are the only trees that are left under such protection.

Image Source: Kinipan documentary, WatchdoC (Documentary, 2021)

The autonomy of agricultural practice with modern systems shows a violation of the right to with well-being of living beings other than humans and justice in sharing living space. Pluralism of views on the role of technology in the future that could replace energy or animal existence with technology. The conflict of interests must ultimately deal with the conflict between animal welfare and economic considerations as technology has been available to agriculture with new hopes and views on responsibilities to farming.



Local communities often have cultural and spiritual values associated with their land and surroundings. Food estate projects have significant social impacts, such as local resettlement, lifestyle changes, and inequalities in the distribution of benefits. Based on the findings, violations of the rights and well-being of local communities are inevitable. The existence of the recognition of the occurrence of human interaction with nature is connected from the belief in the values of traditionalism on the sustainability of nature, the two have an interrelationship.

From the perspective of the Papua people, the Dayak people, or the farmers in Hasundutan. Transformation takes place through the integrated aspects of life, including physical, emotional, work, intellectual, and rational. Transformation touches the spirituality of a society that is deeply related to creativity, love, forgiveness, compassion, trust, respect, wisdom, faith, and a sense of unity. (Moniningka & Clara, 2018).

For the people, if the forests disappear, then the harmonization between people, culture, and living environment will also cause the destruction of the cultural values and identity of the Papua people. The food estate project then transforms the sociocultural sacrality of the Papua people. Rumansara (2015) stated that many of the construction failures occurred since the New Order's time, and the development program carried out in the form of Top Down ignored the local wisdom in Indonesia, especially in Papua. Planners have not fully understood the cultural values that each ethnicity possesses and have always equalized development by using one ethnic measure, while Papua has ignored 254 other ethnicities.

Forests are for people to care for. It is believed that there is continuity between nature and man, so nature needs to be preserved. The forest has priority in the spiritual and cultural life of the community, becoming a sacred space to be respected for its majesty and beauty. Indigenous or local communities have traditional beliefs and practices that are closely related to forests.

The forests and the culture of the spear haminjon embodiment of the cultural community and beliefs in the land of Hasundutan. Cheminyan can be stored for long periods of time, although haminjon is not the only source of rejection. Farmers always investigate their crops with other crops, which means people's farming is not monoculture. The traditional concept of agriculture run by locals and indigenous communities does not change nature. The Papua Mahuze women believe that nature is the mother and the earth is the womb, and fellow creatures with wombs cannot betray each other (Arfiani, 2021:357).

The concept of traditional agriculture conducted by the indigenous people and Indonesian communities is still high in nature. In the context of ecology, Mother Earth's view is used to emphasize the importance of the sustainability of the planet Earth. The focus of the environment and women's discourse is not on how close women are to the environment but on how women and nature culture are seen as better models than men's culture and nature (Astuti, 2012). In other words, the traditions and principles held by women are considered to have higher values, so a living environment model that adopts feminist principles will be more beneficial to the entire living environment system.

Mother Earth is seen as a life resource to be protected and preserved. Man cares for the earth, but the earth supplies man with food, and treasures (Assyatthie, 2022). In the cosmology of the Malind Anim society, forests are regarded as the "mother" associated with the life-giver and the entrance to religion, as well as the source of livelihoods that provide sackcloth, livestock, fruit, and other necessities of subsistence. It's a tribal identity (Suciningsih, 219; Sefriani et al., 2023).

The scope of life is seen not only in economic functions but also in social and cultural environments. In the economic function. It is very clearly sawah as a producer of food products and today sawah becomes a supporter of agritourism activities. Sawah for the environment can help reduce the impact of flooding, erosion, carbon storage, preserving the quality, and recycling of groundwater to be a site of flora and fauna (Sudrajat, 2015).

Indonesia faces a long list of environmental problems that threaten the lives of hundreds of millions of its inhabitants. (Rochyadi-Reetz & Wolling, 2023). The findings have



detailed the negative consequences of food production. The failure of a large-scale food reservoir project proves examples in the village of Ria-ria, Humbang Hasundutan, North Sumatra. Despite the disappointment of the farmers who joined the food estate project, a number of agricultural facilities, including land, were given free of charge. It is precisely the emergence of the food-capitalist industry in the circle of the Joko Widodo regime's government project.

CONCLUSION

Based on the ethical conflict findings emerging in the Food Estate project in Indonesia, it should be the basis for decision-making on long-term sustainability, both in environmental and economic terms. Violations of human rights and other living creatures related to harmonization in the survival of ecosystems; violations of the right to social-cultural; determination of the destiny of regeneration of beliefs up to the right of cultural freedom to food and animal.

It affirms that the concept of agriculture in local communities or indigenous communities has become a successful concept because it has been implemented successfully. From their ancestors they were taught how to understand the treatment of nature so that the concept was more environmentally friendly and friendly with other creatures. The inequality of power and the strength of the approach to food sovereignty lie in the power relationship specifically created. This article identifies the power gaps in the global food system that were forced to be adopted in Indonesia. There are hegemonic efforts by governments in the participation of farmers to rely entirely on global industries including using technology support, seedling and fertilizer procurement.

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