

INDONESIA'S DIPLOMACY STRATEGY ON FOOD SECURITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstrak

Ketahanan pangan diperlukan oleh setiap negara dalam mewujudkan kemandirian pangan. Dalam dunia yang penuh dengan ketidakpastian dan isu perubahan iklim, membuat negara-negara mementingkan kepentingan nasionalnya terlebih dulu, termasuk dalam konteks pangan. Tujuan penelitian adalah menguraikan strategi diplomasi pangan yang dilakukan oleh Indonesia dengan Jepang dalam menghadapi isu ketahanan pangan pada tahun 2020. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan naratif dan deskriptif analitik. Penelitian ini memaparkan bagaimana strategi Indonesia dalam hubungan kerja sama dengan Jepang untuk meningkatkan ketahanan pangan Indonesia pada tahun 2020. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pada tahun 2020 yang bersamaan dengan adanya pandemi covid-19, menimbulkan masalah ketahanan pangan. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) sudah menyampaikan ancaman kelangkaan pangan pada masa tersebut. Dalam menghadapi masalah pandemi covid-19, Indonesia berupaya untuk stabilisasi ekonomi salah satunya dengan menjalin kerja sama internasional, yaitu kerja sama dengan negara Jepang.

Abstract

Food security is essential for every country to achieve food self-sufficiency. A world filled with news and issues of climate change has led countries to prioritize their national interests, including in the context of food. The purpose of this study is to describe the food diplomacy strategy implemented by Indonesia and Japan in addressing food security issues in 2020. The method used is a qualitative method with a narrative and descriptive analytical approach. This study describes Indonesia's strategy in its cooperative relationship with Japan to improve Indonesia's food security in 2020. The results of this study indicate that in 2020, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic, food security issues arose. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has conveyed the threat of food scarcity during that period. In facing the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia is striving to stabilize the economy, one of which is by establishing international cooperation, namely cooperation with Japan.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known for its extraordinary natural resource potential, evidenced by its high biodiversity. Furthermore, its strategic geographic location and the world's largest tropical forest make its natural potential superior to other countries (Anggraini, 2020). This potential must be optimally utilized to improve the Indonesian economy by utilizing natural resources in the agricultural sector. Agriculture in Indonesia can be said to be the driving force and the second most influential sector for national economic growth (Rasti, 2020). The Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) released the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the agricultural sector as the highest contributor to national economic growth at 16.24 percent. Year-on-year (yoy) the agricultural sector contributed positively by 2.19 percent, making it one of the sectors unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Santia, 2020).

Amidst this pandemic, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, must focus on and implement strategic measures to maintain the stability of the agricultural sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the agricultural sector is crucial for meeting basic community needs, such as food, including food crops, livestock, vegetables and fruits, and plantations. The agricultural sector is crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic because it is closely linked to food security and can also threaten a food crisis in Indonesia.

Several regions in Indonesia are experiencing a food crisis, such as Maluku and Kalimantan. According to data from the Food Security Agency (Badan Ketahanan Pangan/BKP), rice demand decreased by 10-25% in April 2020, given that national rice stocks at that time reached 6.35 million tons (Tantomi, 2020). Food security is crucial during this period because it can lead to various problems, including disruptions to production, which is the basis of the food supply chain, distribution, and consumption of necessities due to social restrictions that trigger a food crisis.

The food crisis also threatened Japan, but the situation differed from Indonesia, particularly in the agricultural sector. The declining agricultural workforce in Japan has made it extremely difficult for farmers and farm owners to find labor, including foreign labor, which has negatively impacted agricultural output. Dependence on foreign labor increased significantly when the Japanese government restricted the arrival of foreign workers to reduce and prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Nuryanti, 2020). Therefore, Japan had to find alternative solutions to obtain skilled workers in the food sector, particularly from Indonesia.

During this period, the Indonesian government prepared strategic steps by establishing international cooperation with Japan to maintain Indonesian food security, particularly for agricultural revitalization, maintaining supply chains, and maintaining demand stability during the period of rising global food prices. The Indonesian government emphasized the importance of continuously strengthening the spirit of cooperation, especially amidst increasingly fierce competition among major world economies, as reflected in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) (Setkab.go.id, 2020).

According to Jose Tavares, the AOIP (Affiliation for the Economy) is a program capable of enhancing trust through a culture of discussion and collaboration, fostering strategic trust. AOIP demonstrates ASEAN's commitment to building inclusive cooperation rather than competition. AOIP also demonstrates that ASEAN will not side with any major power and will maintain peace in the Indo-Pacific region (MOFA Republic of Indonesia, 2020). Based on the above description, the researcher formulated the following problem: How did Indonesia and Japan collaborate on food security in 2020, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic? This article argues that Indonesia has implemented various strategies to address food security issues, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. One such strategy is cooperation with Japan.

This research uses the concept of food security to address the above problem. Food security is defined as the right of communities, commodities, and countries to determine their policies and strategies for sustainable food production, distribution, and consumption to protect the right to food as citizens of the earth. Food security implies that every country and community has the right to independently produce its own basic food needs (Wahyu, 2017).

On the other hand, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that food security is a condition in which all family members have material and economic access to food, but the family is not at risk of losing either type of food (Wahyu, 2017). Meanwhile, Mercy Corps in 2017 explained that food security is following the productivity and healthy lifestyle of all people, where everyone can obtain sufficient, safe, and nutritious food at all times, physically, socially, and economically, to meet their nutritional needs (Suharyanto, 2011).

Meanwhile, according to Law Number 18 of 2012 concerning Food, it is a condition where food is fulfilled for the state down to the individual, as reflected in the availability of sufficient food, both in quantity and quality, that is safe, diverse, nutritious, equitable, and affordable, and does not conflict with the religion, beliefs, and culture of the community so that people can live healthy, active, and productive lives sustainably. Normatively, food security will include natural resource management, agricultural infrastructure development, employment opportunities, economic growth, equitable distribution of development results, poverty alleviation, human resource development, other interrelated aspects, food input-output trade, and international trade in the food sector.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive analytical approach. According to Neuman (2007), qualitative research is based on critical or interpretive social sciences and discusses cases and contexts. Qualitative research begins with collecting data on a general topic, then focuses on it after conducting an initial analysis. This general overview of the data is then used as a guide to formulate research questions. Therefore, qualitative research is inductive, drawing general conclusions from existing facts. This method begins with data collection and then directly enters a deductive process (Muhyiddin et al., 2017).

The descriptive approach involves finding facts with appropriate interpretation. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe and solve problems systematically, factually, and accurately (Muhyiddin et al., 2017). Researchers provide an overview of the object of study through collected data or samples and draw applicable conclusions.

In this study, the authors used secondary data, namely data obtained from literature related to the food security situation in 2020, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, including books, journals, and online media. In the data analysis technique, the researcher began by collecting data from various sources. The collected data relates to Indonesia and Japan's resilience cooperation in 2020, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The collected data was then simplified and classified to facilitate the author's determination of what was needed and what was not for this article. Thus, the organized information was elaborated to support the author's analysis, making it easier to understand systematically, leading to conclusions that answer the stated problem.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia is known for its extraordinary wealth of natural resources, evidenced by its rich biodiversity. This potential must be optimally utilized to improve the Indonesian economy by utilizing natural resources in the agricultural sector. In a large agricultural country like Indonesia, agriculture makes the largest contribution to the economy and meets the basic needs of the people. The results of this natural wealth can provide a source of income for the country's economic development. Furthermore, with a growing population, the need for food is also increasing. Agriculture is the sector that plays a crucial role in the well-being of the Indonesian population.

Therefore, the Indonesian government needs to implement proper management both internally and externally, one of which is through collaboration with other countries, such as Japan, specifically regarding food security during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, food security is crucial for every country in the world. In Indonesia, food security issues are fraught with dynamics, such as food availability and access. The COVID-19 pandemic is a different story in Japan. Japan also faces various food security issues, similar to those in the agricultural sector, but differs from Indonesia in the employment sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has infected more than 117 million people worldwide, including developed nations like Japan and Indonesia (Putra, 2021). In light of this, it is said that all countries and international organizations are working together to mitigate the impact of the spread of COVID-19, one example of which is cooperation between Indonesia and Japan (Syafriyadi, 2021). During a visit to Indonesia, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga explained his country's commitment to regional peace and prosperity, believing that ASEAN plays a crucial role in realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific. Japan fully supports the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, which was first adopted by Indonesia. Japan has contributed to increasing Indonesia's disaster management capacity, particularly in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, enhancing economic resilience, and strengthening unity to achieve regional peace and prosperity (setkab.go.id, 2020).

In the meeting between the two countries, Indonesia led by President Joko Widodo and Japan led by Prime Minister Yoshishida Suga produced many discussions from cooperation, one of which was efforts to increase cooperation in the economic sector, namely Japan is required to pay attention to restrictions on import permits for agricultural, forestry and fishery products by Indonesia, efforts to increase multilateral cooperation, namely to continue to strengthen the spirit of cooperation, especially in the increasingly fierce competition between major world countries, as reflected in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) (setkab.go.id, 2020).

Considering the various situations occurring in the food system, and striving to maintain availability and ensure sustainable food security for the community, short-, medium-, and long-term policy measures and strategies need to be taken. Some short-term policy alternatives that can be implemented include (Rohmani, 2020):

1. Achieving a sufficient, diversified, and affordable food supply, such as market operations and Indonesian Farmers' Shop services.
2. Food assistance, such as fortified foods and supplements (for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and those with limited income from physical labor).
3. Intensive cash-for-work labor to strengthen the resilience and strength of rural economies. This can be done, for example, for online motorcycle taxi drivers and other daily workers (levels adjusted to skills).
4. Socialization of farmers and agricultural input suppliers to prevent COVID-19, so as not to disrupt sustainable food production.

5. Building social empathy by providing a food assistance coordination network, especially within each social environment.
6. In addition to short-term policies or strategies, Indonesia also has medium-term policies or strategies. These medium-term policies or strategies include (Rohmani, 2020):
7. Policies to strengthen production and behavioral change. This can be achieved through capital assistance and changes in the skills and entrepreneurial spirit of millennial farmers in exploring markets and opportunities for new food products.
8. Providing public understanding and behavioral change, promoted through communication and information through various channels, and education about healthy lifestyles and B2SA foods.
9. Developing farmers' markets in various regions.
10. Breakthroughs in marketing technology development serve to bring producers closer to buyers (farmers to consumers).

Furthermore, in the long term, the food and agricultural system must be strengthened in line with future challenges. A policy can be designed to foster synergy and accelerate efforts to strengthen sustainable agricultural modernization. Future food and agricultural development means ensuring the implementation of precision agriculture from upstream to downstream, so that all food processes and production can run efficiently, with added value and competitiveness. This policy was initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture through Agricultural Regulation No. 18 of 2018 concerning the development of farmer-based agricultural areas as a definite gateway to modern agriculture in Indonesia. This policy coincides with the development of cooperation and collaboration between various institutions and stakeholders, and bridging strategies, accompanied by strengthening cooperation with countries in developing food and agricultural linkage strategies, including establishing coordinated actions in handling the COVID-19 pandemic (Rohmani, 2020).

The relationship between Indonesia and Japan is inseparable from the national interests of each country, which mutually influence each other. Indonesia's national interest in collaborating with Japan during the COVID-19 pandemic was influenced by the desire for investment in Indonesia, particularly in the area of food security. Indonesia has taken strategic steps, including:

First, establishing a National Economic Recovery Plan agency, which functions to improve, protect, and maintain the national economy. PEN is part of the government's financial policy, specifically in handling the COVID-19 pandemic, based on Government Regulation Number 23 of 2020 concerning the National Economic Recovery Program.

Second, Indonesia's bilateral cooperation with Japan is part of Indonesia's strategy, influenced by the desire for investment in Indonesia, particularly in the area of food security. This cooperation is reflected in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).

Third, Indonesia's strategic efforts in food management regarding food security during the COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts are aimed at achieving national food security and must rely on local food resources, which exhibit regional diversity, and avoid dependence on food imports as much as possible. To achieve this food security, it is necessary to develop a food availability system, efficient food utilization, and food access technology.

Fourth, Indonesia's policy and strategic efforts regarding food security during the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure food availability and ensure sustainable food security for the community, short-, medium-, and long-term policy measures and strategies must be implemented. These policies can be designed to foster synergy and accelerate efforts to strengthen sustainable agricultural modernization.

Therefore, the cooperative relationship between Indonesia and Japan is part of Indonesia's food security strategy and the institutionalization of the concept of food security globally, through its crystallization and implementation in Indonesia's food governance system. This includes approaches related to food security aspects, including food availability, food utilization, and food access, as well as Indonesia's policy efforts and strategies regarding food security during the COVID-19 pandemic. The essence of food security issues is part of the achievement of improving the Indonesian economy and the welfare of the people, leading to food sovereignty. Efforts that influence the dynamics of Indonesian food security include both internal and external efforts. Food security issues arise from both domestic and international perspectives. The most important aspect of food security is how to resolve all problems, optimize potential, innovate, maximize all opportunities, and be prepared for future food crises.

CONCLUSION

During this period, the spread of COVID-19 was still evolving, and it was unclear when the pandemic would subside. This was highlighted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which warned that food shortages would occur during the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation would not only bring anxiety and fear to people's lives but would also have broader social and economic impacts, including on the agricultural sector. Therefore, food security is crucial in terms of food supply, distribution, and consumption.

On the other hand, an economic recovery strategy is needed, including establishing cooperative relationships with other countries, particularly Japan. Cooperation with Japan through JICA assistance is

necessary, given Indonesia's significant financial needs. Therefore, this JICA assistance is not only to address the needs of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sustainable food diversification is synonymous with community and place, but through creativity and innovation, it can increase productivity within sustainable competitiveness programs and contribute globally. The food industry must maintain its national identity while remaining competitive with regional and international developments, including contributing to realizing the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). Strong inter-institutional collaboration, consistency, and commitment from farmers, entrepreneurs, and all other components of the country are needed.

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