

Food Sovereignty from A National Defense and Security Perspective

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Article History: Received on 16 January 2026, Revised on 22 March 2026,
Published on 2 April 2026

Abstract: Food sovereignty is a strategic pillar in maintaining national sustainability and supporting the stability of national defense and security. Dependence on food imports, unequal distribution, climate change, and global geopolitical dynamics have the potential to weaken national resilience if not managed comprehensively. This article aims to analyze the concept and role of food sovereignty from the perspective of Indonesia's national defense and security, and to identify its strategic implications for strengthening national resilience. This research uses a literature review method by reviewing various scientific sources, including reputable national and international journals, academic books, government policy documents, and reports from related institutions relevant to food, defense, and national security issues. The results of the study indicate that food sovereignty functions not only as an instrument for meeting the basic needs of the community but also as a strategic non-military element in the national defense system. Strengthening food sovereignty contributes to social stability, controlling potential conflicts, increasing national resilience against non-traditional threats, and strengthening the country's bargaining position in the global arena. Therefore, integrating food policy with national defense and security policy is an urgent strategic necessity. This article recommends the need for a cross-sectoral approach, strengthening the role of the state, and synergy between defense, security, and food development actors to support sustainable national resilience and sovereignty.

Keywords: Food Sovereignty, National Defense, National Security, National Resilience, Non-Traditional Threats

A. Introduction

Food sovereignty has become an increasingly relevant strategic issue in the context of current global and national dynamics (Lestari, 2024; P. Sibuea & Panjaitan, 2024). Dependence on food imports, fluctuations in international food prices, climate change, and disruptions to the global supply chain due to the pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, and energy crises have exposed the vulnerability of the national food system (Antoni & Febri, 2017). These conditions not only impact the economy and public welfare but also have direct implications for social stability and national security (Syahyuti et al., 2015). From a national defense perspective, food is a strategic resource

that determines the nation's resilience in facing various threats, particularly non-traditional threats such as the food crisis, social instability, and global external pressures (Gunawan, 2020).

In Indonesia, the issue of food sovereignty has a strategic dimension given its large population, unequal regional distribution, and limited food production and management capacity in some regions (Putra et al., 2024). Although the government has developed various food security policies, structural challenges such as land conversion, low agricultural productivity, and weak cross-sectoral policy integration remain major issues (Komara, 2025). In the context of national defense and security, these conditions have the potential to trigger social insecurity and horizontal conflict if not managed comprehensively. Therefore, food sovereignty needs to be understood not solely as an agricultural or economic issue, but as an integral part of the national defense strategy and efforts to maintain sustainable national resilience (Utami et al., 2021).

One of the main obstacles to achieving national food sovereignty is the persistence of structural issues within the food system, particularly agricultural land conversion, fragmented land ownership, and low agricultural productivity in various regions (H. P. Sibuea et al., 2022). The uncontrolled conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural sectors has significantly reduced domestic food production capacity, while agricultural modernization has not been fully balanced by an equitable increase in human resource and technological capacity (Elake et al., 2024). This condition has resulted in dependence on strategic food imports, which in turn increases national vulnerability to external pressures and global market volatility (Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). From a national defense perspective, this dependence can weaken national resilience and open up the potential for non-traditional threats stemming from food crises and social instability (Oktaviani, 2024). In addition to structural barriers, another major challenge lies in the weak integration of cross-sectoral policies and the suboptimal synergy between food, security, and defense actors (Aryanti, 2023). Food policies still tend to be sectoral and short-term, thus not being fully integrated into the broader framework of the national defense and security strategy. Furthermore, external challenges such as climate change, the increasing frequency of natural disasters, and the escalation of global geopolitical conflicts contribute to the increased risk of disruption to national food production and distribution (Lakumani, 2025). This situation demands a comprehensive security approach that positions food sovereignty as an integral part of the national defense system, to ensure national stability and long-term development sustainability (Sufiatna, 2024).

Various national studies and policies have prioritized food security and sovereignty as strategic development priorities, but their implementation has not yet been fully integrated into the national defense and security framework (Hafsah, 2024b). Normatively, food is positioned as a strategic resource that should be managed

through a comprehensive security approach, in line with the concept of total defense and strengthening national resilience. However, in practice, food policy in Indonesia still tends to be sectoral and economic-oriented, resulting in the defense and security dimensions not being systematically internalized (Nugraha et al., 2016). Consequently, various food vulnerabilities, such as import dependence, distribution disruptions, and the impacts of climate change, have not been fully mapped as potential non-traditional threats to national stability (Muksin & Bustang, 2014).

Conversely, previous studies have primarily discussed food sovereignty from the perspective of agricultural development, political economy, or social welfare, while studies explicitly linking food sovereignty to defense strategy (K, 2023) and national security are still relatively limited, particularly in the Indonesian context. This limitation has resulted in the lack of a comprehensive conceptual framework for integrating food policy into the national defense system (Samekto & Purwanti, 2021). Thus, there is a gap between the country's strategic need to strengthen food sovereignty as part of national defense and the availability of academic studies capable of bridging the two fields (Mulawarman, 2025). This gap is an important basis for this research through a literature study approach to formulate a conceptual understanding and strategic implications of food sovereignty in supporting national defense and security (Sudrajat et al., 2025).

B. Methods

This research uses a literature review method with a qualitative-descriptive approach to analyze the concept of food sovereignty from a national defense and security perspective (Mayrudin et al., 2022). The literature review was conducted by systematically reviewing various relevant scientific sources, including reputable national and international journals, academic books, government policy documents, and official reports from national and international institutions related to food, national defense, and national security issues (Mahardhika, 2025). Source selection was based on the criteria of topic relevance, publisher credibility, and the recency of references to ensure the validity and depth of the analysis.

The research stages included identifying and collecting literature, classifying and mapping key themes, critical analysis of previous research concepts and findings, and synthesizing the study results to formulate conclusions and strategic implications (Rato et al., 2020). Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques and a comparative approach to identify patterns, gaps, and the relationship between food sovereignty and the national defense and security system. The results of the analysis were then presented narratively and analytically to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategic role of food sovereignty in supporting national resilience and stability.

C. Results and Discussion

Result

Theme / Category	Number of Studies	Main Findings	Implications (National Defense & Security)
Food Sovereignty and National Security	15 studies	Food sovereignty is positioned as part of national security and an instrument of state stability. External food dependence increases a country's strategic vulnerability.	Food needs to be explicitly included in non-military defense doctrine and national resilience strategy.
Food, Conflict, and Global Geopolitics	5 studies	Wars and geopolitical conflicts (Ukraine, the Middle East) have a direct impact on global food supplies and prices. Food is used as an instrument of political pressure.	Countries must build domestic production capacity and strategic food reserves to face external pressures.
Securitization of Food (Food as a Security Issue)	4 studies	Food is increasingly being treated as a securitized issue, on par with energy and cybersecurity. Countries are beginning to link food policy to political stability.	A comprehensive security approach is needed so that food policy is not only economic but also strategic.
Climate Change and Food System Risks	4 studi	Climate change increases the risk of crop failure, distribution disruptions, and regional food crises. Food system resilience remains weak.	Climate adaptation and food infrastructure protection are part of a long-term defense strategy.
Urban and Strategic Area Food Security	3 studies	Urbanization and regional expansion reduce food land and increase the vulnerability of cities to food crises.	Strategic regional planning must consider the food aspect as an element of domestic security.
National Food Policy and State Governance	3 studies	Food policy is still sectoral, fragmented, and poorly integrated across ministries/institutions.	Integrated food governance involving defense, security, and development actors is needed.
The Role of the State and Institutions in Food Security	3 studies	The state plays a central role in ensuring access, production and distribution of food during a crisis.	Strengthening the role of the state and synergy with the TNI/security agencies is important in food emergencies.
Indonesia: Food Sovereignty and National Defense	3 studies	Indonesia faces structural challenges: food imports, land conversion, and weak integration of food defense policies.	Food sovereignty needs to be made an integral part of the overall defense system and national resilience.

Discussion

Based on the grouping of previous research themes, it appears that studies on food

sovereignty from a national defense and security perspective predominantly position food as a strategic element of the state that directly impacts national stability. The main findings of this group of studies indicate that dependence on external food sources and weak domestic production capacity can increase a country's vulnerability to economic, political, and security pressures. In this context, food sovereignty is no longer understood solely as an issue of meeting basic needs, but rather as a non-military strategic instrument that contributes to strengthening national resilience and the country's resilience in facing non-traditional threats (Asnawi, 2015).

Research groups linking food to conflict and global geopolitical dynamics reinforce the view that the food system is highly vulnerable to escalating international conflict and regional instability. Several studies show that war and regional conflict have a significant impact on disrupting the global food supply chain, causing price spikes, and scarcity of strategic commodities (Syahyuti et al., 2016). This situation confirms that food can be used as a tool of geopolitical pressure, placing countries lacking food self-sufficiency in a strategically weak position. The implications of these findings are the importance of strengthening domestic production, diversifying food sources, and developing strategic food reserves as part of national defense policy (Hafsah, 2024a). Furthermore, studies adopting the securitization of food and climate change risk approach demonstrate a paradigm shift in viewing food as a security issue on a par with energy and cybersecurity (Pujiriyani, 2022). Key findings from this group reveal that climate change, environmental degradation, and the increasing frequency of natural disasters increase the risk of food crises and social instability. From a national defense and security perspective, these conditions demand a comprehensive security approach that integrates climate adaptation policies, food infrastructure protection, and national food crisis preparedness. Thus, food system resilience becomes an integral part of long-term defense strategy (Seminar & Sarwoprasodjo, 2021).

Meanwhile, a research group focused on the Indonesian national context emphasizes the structural and institutional challenges in achieving sustainable food sovereignty. These findings indicate that national food policy still tends to be sectoral, lacks integration across ministries and institutions, and is not fully aligned with the overall defense framework (Roni Fajar Santoso & Sriwulan Ferindian Falatehan, 2021). The strategic implication of this condition is the need to strengthen integrated food governance that synergistically involves defense, security, and development actors. Integrating food policy into the national defense system is a strategic step to ensure national stability, strengthen community resilience, and safeguard national sovereignty in the long term (Purwanto, 2023).

The author agrees with and supports the findings of six studies that position food sovereignty as a strategic element in the national defense and security system. This argument is based on the reality that food is a basic need that determines social stability and state legitimacy. The state's inability to guarantee food availability, access, and sustainability has the potential to trigger social unrest, horizontal conflict,

and undermine public trust in the state (Demson Tiopan & Kevin Alim Rabbani, 2022). From a non-military defense perspective, this situation can develop into a real threat to national security, therefore strengthening food sovereignty must be positioned as an integral part of national resilience and overall defense strategies (Sostenes Konyep, 2021). Furthermore, dependence on strategic food imports places a country vulnerable to external pressures and global market volatility. The six studies consistently show that countries with low levels of food self-sufficiency tend to have weak strategic bargaining power in international geopolitical dynamics. The author supports this view because food sovereignty directly contributes to increasing a state's strategic autonomy, particularly in situations of global crises, regional conflicts, and disruptions to international supply chains. Thus, food policy cannot be separated from national defense interests but must be designed as an instrument for strengthening long-term national resilience (P. Sibuea, 2024). Furthermore, the author assesses that these six studies provide a relevant conceptual foundation for integrating food policy into a comprehensive security framework. This approach aligns with the development of the modern security paradigm, which is no longer limited to conventional military threats but also encompasses non-traditional threats such as food crises and social instability (Konyep, 2021).

Therefore, the authors argue that strengthening food sovereignty must be placed as a strategic national priority, supported by cross-sector synergy, the involvement of defense and security actors, and a strengthened role for the state in managing the national food system. Support for these six studies also emphasizes the urgency of making food sovereignty a key pillar in the development of sustainable national defense and security (Sihombing, 2023).

D. Conclusions

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that food sovereignty plays a strategic role in supporting national defense and security, particularly in facing non-traditional threats. Food not only serves to fulfill the basic needs of the community but also as a determining factor in social stability, national resilience, and the country's resilience to external pressures. Dependence on food imports, disruptions to the global supply chain, and the impacts of climate change indicate that weak food sovereignty has the potential to create strategic vulnerabilities that could disrupt national stability. This study also shows that although food sovereignty has been normatively recognized in various national policies, its integration into the national defense and security framework remains suboptimal. Food policy still tends to be sectoral and not fully understood as part of a non-military defense strategy. Therefore, food sovereignty needs to be positioned as one of the main pillars of the overall defense and national resilience system, with a comprehensive security approach that integrates aspects of food, defense, and security in a sustainable manner.

E. Acknowledgement

We thank all parties from Universitas Pertahanan who helped and supported us in this valuable project.

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