Food Security and State Sovereignty:
A Comparative Analysis of Indonesia and Malaysia

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Abstract: Food security has emerged as a critical policy concern in Southeast Asia, where demographic pressures, climate change, and global market volatility increasingly challenge national food systems. This study provides a comparative analysis of food governance in Indonesia and Malaysia, examining how institutional structures, production strategies, supply chain performance, and import dependency shape each country's ability to safeguard food security and maintain state sovereignty. Using a qualitative comparative approach supported by policy documents, statistical reports, and scholarly literature, the research identifies fundamental contrasts between the two national models. Indonesia adopts a sovereignty-oriented, multi-agency governance structure that prioritizes rice self-sufficiency and state-led intervention, resulting in strong staple production but limited diversification and logistical inefficiencies. Conversely, Malaysia relies on a centralized, efficiency-driven model characterized by technological integration, rapid policy coordination, and diversified production, yet remains structurally dependent on imported rice. The findings reveal that neither sovereignty-focused nor efficiency-focused approaches alone are sufficient to achieve long-term resilience. Indonesia's strong domestic production is undermined by reliance on imported inputs, while Malaysia's advanced logistics cannot fully compensate for dependency on external staple sources. The study argues that hybrid governance models—combining strategic staple sovereignty with diversified, technology-enabled supply chains—offer a more robust pathway for food resilience. Furthermore, regional cooperation through ASEAN presents significant opportunities for complementary integration, leveraging Indonesia's production strengths and Malaysia's logistical capacities. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the political economy of food systems in Southeast Asia and highlights the need for adaptive, multi-dimensional strategies to strengthen regional food security.

Kata Kunci: *Food security; Food sovereignty; Governance efficiency; Indonesia–Malaysia comparison*

Introduction

Food security has increasingly emerged as one of the most strategic pillars shaping national stability and regional resilience. At the domestic level, a state's ability to ensure the availability, accessibility, and stability of food is essential for maintaining social cohesion, safeguarding political legitimacy, and supporting long-term economic development (FAO, 2023). When food insecurity occurs, the consequences extend far beyond rising inflation or declining household purchasing power; disruptions in food distribution can trigger social unrest, exacerbate inequality, stimulate horizontal conflicts, and erode public trust in government institutions (Smith, 2020).

Within the wider Southeast Asian region, food is no longer viewed merely as a domestic commodity but has evolved into a strategic geoeconomic instrument that influences a nation's bargaining power amid global crises, supply chain disruptions, and intensifying competition over resources and agricultural technology (Wright & Prasetyanto, 2021).

Indonesia and Malaysia, as two of the leading countries in Southeast Asia, face similar structural pressures. Both countries contend with rapid population growth, climate variability, degradation of agricultural land, and volatility in global food markets (ASEAN, 2022). However, their policy responses diverge substantially. Indonesia maintains a relatively high level of rice self-sufficiency, reaching 95.2 percent in 2023, with national

rice stocks of 3.1 million tons in 2024 (Bapanas, 2024). Malaysia, by contrast, recorded a rice self-sufficiency ratio of only 56.2 percent in 2023 and relies on food imports valued at RM 78.79 billion annually (MOA Malaysia, 2023). Despite these vulnerabilities, Malaysia outperforms Indonesia in food system efficiency, diversification of agricultural commodities, and logistical integration supported by modern technology (Rahman & Daud, 2021). These differences demonstrate that food security is shaped not only by domestic production capacity but also by the institutional design, adaptability, and governance quality of national food systems (Clapp, 2017).

In the broader discourse on national sovereignty, comparing Indonesia and Malaysia becomes even more relevant. Food sovereignty emphasizes a nation's ability to control its food system and reduce excessive reliance on global markets (Patel, 2009). Indonesia explicitly adopts this principle, as reflected in Law No. 18/2012 on Food and the implementation of the Food Estate program aimed at expanding domestic production of rice, maize, and other strategic commodities (Kementan RI, 2022). Malaysia, in contrast, adopts a more pragmatic and market-oriented approach through the National Agro-Food Policy 2.0 (2021–2030), which emphasizes agricultural modernization, efficient supply chains, and the use of digital technologies in production and distribution (Mardi, 2021). Empirical evidence shows that Indonesia relies on domestic production as the backbone of its food sovereignty strategy, whereas Malaysia prioritizes supply chain efficiency and pricing stability to maintain its food security (Teng & Oliver, 2020). These contrasting models reveal how policy choices directly influence each nation's ability to navigate the political and economic vulnerabilities of the global food system.

Although scholarly attention toward food security in Southeast Asia has grown, systematic comparative analyses focusing on Indonesia and Malaysia remain limited. Existing literature tends to focus on technical aspects of agricultural production and food availability, while paying less attention to the political, institutional, and geopolitical dimensions of food governance (Armanda, 2018; Daud, 2021). Few studies integrate both quantitative indicators and qualitative policy analysis to examine how institutional arrangements influence national outcomes (Kawanishi, 2020). Meanwhile, available data suggest that Indonesia, despite its strong rice production, continues to face challenges in diversifying its food base (Suryana, 2019). Malaysia, though more diversified, remains heavily exposed to global price fluctuations due to reliance on imported staples (Hanafiah, 2022). However, the long-term implications of these differences for national sovereignty have not been fully discussed in existing research. This gap underscores the need for a comparative study that positions food policy within a broader framework of political economy and regional security (Jones & Karim, 2022).

To address these gaps, this study formulates three central research questions. The first concerns the differences in food policy approaches between Indonesia and Malaysia, particularly regarding institutional structures, production strategies, and diversification policies. The second concerns the effects of these approaches on food security outcomes and national sovereignty. The third relates to the broader implications of these differences for regional policy development within ASEAN. These research questions are designed to ensure a comprehensive assessment that captures both the operational and strategic dimensions of national food governance (Gillespie, 2021).

The objectives of this study are aligned with the above formulation. This research aims to systematically analyze the food policy strategies implemented by Indonesia and Malaysia and evaluate how these strategies affect food security and sovereignty at the national level. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges that each country faces amid global uncertainty and regional competition (Sato, 2020). By integrating statistical data with qualitative analysis of policy documents and institutional frameworks, this study provides a more holistic understanding of how food governance is practiced, contested, and transformed. The comparative approach enhances the analytical depth of the study and contributes meaningfully to theoretical discussions in political geography, international political economy, and food governance (Cotula, 2019).

This study offers several strategic benefits. Academically, it enriches discussions on food security, food sovereignty, and comparative public policy in Southeast Asia (Barrett, 2021). Practically, it provides actionable insights for policymakers in designing adaptive and responsive food strategies, particularly in addressing climate change, import dependence, and global market volatility. At the policy level, the study contributes to strengthening ASEAN cooperation through joint food reserve mechanisms, intergovernmental technology exchanges, and the harmonization of regional food policies (ASEAN Secretariat, 2023). The findings also open opportunities for developing new evaluation frameworks that are more sensitive to the political dynamics of regional food systems. Moreover, this research can serve as an important reference for developing countries seeking to design more inclusive and evidence-based food governance. Thus, the study

not only enhances academic discourse but also offers strategic direction for building resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems in Southeast Asia.

Methods

This research adopts a qualitative-comparative approach to examine the food policy frameworks of Indonesia and Malaysia and to evaluate their implications for food security and national sovereignty. A qualitative approach is employed because food governance involves political decision-making, institutional dynamics, and socio-economic structures that cannot be fully captured through numerical indicators alone (Creswell, 2018). The comparative design allows a structured examination of similarities and differences in policy orientations, institutional arrangements, and strategic behaviour across both countries, offering deeper insights into the political and structural determinants of food security in Southeast Asia (Lijphart, 1971). Indonesia and Malaysia were selected as case studies based on their comparable geographic and demographic characteristics, similar exposure to climate-related risks and global food market volatility, and contrasting policy trajectories. This form of case selection supports theoretical replication, where differences in policy models are expected to produce observable variations in food system outcomes (George & Bennett, 2005).

Data collection relied exclusively on secondary data obtained from government policy documents, national statistical publications, peer-reviewed academic literature, and international institutional reports. Government documents provided essential information on formal policy objectives and institutional mandates, including Indonesia's Food Law No. 18/2012, the Food Estate program guidelines, annual reports from the Ministry of Agriculture, and Malaysia's National Agro-Food Policy 2.0 (2021–2030) alongside publications from FAMA and MARDI. These documents were critical in revealing how each state conceptualizes food security and sovereignty within its political context. Statistical data from Bapanas, the Ministry of Agriculture Malaysia, and other national statistical bodies supplied empirical indicators related to rice self-sufficiency ratios, food import volumes, agricultural productivity, and climate impacts, allowing comparative assessment of structural vulnerabilities and strengths (OECD, 2022). Academic journal articles contributed theoretical depth and comparative insights, particularly those discussing food security, food sovereignty, and the political economy of agriculture (Clapp, 2017; Patel, 2009; Teng & Oliver, 2020). International reports from FAO, ASEAN, the

World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank were used to contextualize national patterns within wider regional and global dynamics.

The data collection process involved a systematic document review. Relevant documents were identified through keyword searches such as "food security," "food sovereignty," "Indonesia food governance," "Malaysia agro-food policy," and "ASEAN food systems." Only documents published between 2018 and 2024 were prioritized to ensure contemporary relevance. All documents were screened based on credibility, thematic relevance, and comprehensiveness. To facilitate analysis, the selected data were coded and organized into thematic clusters covering institutional structures, production strategies, diversification policies, distribution and logistics systems, sovereignty-related narratives, and regional cooperation mechanisms. This classification enabled an efficient comparison of policy dimensions between the two countries.

Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis combined with comparative institutional analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns in policy discourse, institutional arrangements, and strategic priorities following established steps of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through this process, key themes such as production sovereignty, supply chain efficiency, diversification strategies, and institutional fragmentation were identified and connected to broader governance frameworks. Comparative institutional analysis was applied to examine how differences in institutional structures—such as Indonesia's multi-agency food governance versus Malaysia's centralized and technologically integrated agro-food system—shape policy coherence and implementation effectiveness (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Policy outcomes were also compared using indicators such as self-sufficiency ratios, diversification levels, import dependency, food price stability, and supply chain resilience. These indicators were interpreted not merely as technical outputs but as reflections of underlying political preferences and institutional capacities.

An interpretive analytical lens was also applied to assess the sovereignty implications embedded in each country's food policy choices. Indonesia's strong emphasis on food sovereignty was analysed through its political narrative of self-sufficiency and national resilience, while Malaysia's market-oriented and efficiency-driven model was examined through the lens of economic pragmatism and global market integration (Jones & Karim, 2022). This interpretive component allowed the study to extend beyond descriptive comparison and to engage with the deeper political meanings associated with food governance in both

countries.

To enhance the validity of findings, the study employed data triangulation by integrating multiple data sources—from policy documents to statistical reports and academic analyses—which strengthens the robustness and credibility of conclusions (Denzin, 2012). Methodological triangulation was achieved through the combined use of thematic and comparative analyses, permitting cross-verification of themes and policy outcomes. Reliability was enhanced through transparent documentation of the coding process, consistent application of analytical categories, and cross-checking of statistical data using multiple official sources.

Despite its strengths, the study acknowledges several limitations. The exclusive reliance on secondary data means that the research may not capture the latest policy adjustments that are still under government deliberation or local implementation nuances. The focus on national-level policies may overlook subnational variations that exist within both Indonesia's and Malaysia's diverse administrative structures. Furthermore, the comparative scope involving only two countries limits the generalizability of the findings to other ASEAN members. Nevertheless, these limitations do not diminish the analytical value of the research, as its purpose is not broad generalization but a deep, structured comparison of two influential national models of food governance in Southeast Asia.

Results

Institutional Structures and Policy Orientations

The findings reveal sharp contrasts in the institutional structures governing the food systems of Indonesia and Malaysia. Indonesia's food governance relies on a multi-agency model involving the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Food Agency (Bapanas), the State Logistics Agency (Bulog), and multiple state-owned enterprises responsible for storage, distribution, and price stabilization. This complex institutional architecture reflects the country's political intention to embed food security within the broader framework of national sovereignty and state authority (Bapanas, 2024). However, these overlapping institutional responsibilities frequently result in bureaucratic inefficiencies, slow coordination, and fragmented policy execution, especially during periods of crisis or market instability (Suryana, 2019).

Malaysia, in contrast, adopts a centralized agro-food governance structure led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, with strong technical support from specialized agencies such as FAMA and MARDI. This centralized institutional configuration

enhances policy coherence, expedites decision-making, and integrates the food system from production to distribution. The streamlined nature of Malaysia's food governance enables rapid adaptation to market dynamics and technological advancements, helping maintain supply stability despite high import dependency (Rahman & Daud, 2021). The integration of digital systems in Malaysia's agricultural monitoring further strengthens the responsiveness and precision of policy interventions.

The governance structures of Indonesia and Malaysia differ fundamentally in how responsibilities, authority, and coordination are organized within their national food systems. Indonesia relies on a multi-agency and sovereignty-oriented framework, while Malaysia adopts a centralized, efficiency-driven model that enables faster institutional response. The contrast reflects divergent national priorities that shape the performance and adaptability of each country's food governance.
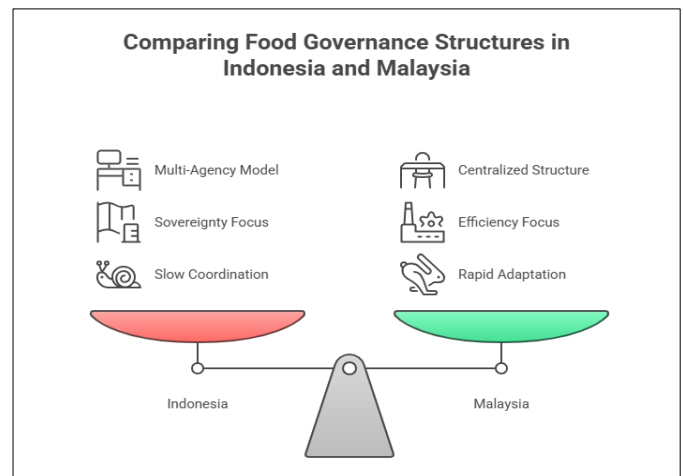

Figure 1. Comparing Food Governance Structures in Indonesia and Malaysia

Overall, the comparison shows that Indonesia's institutional structure reinforces state control and sovereignty-focused policy narratives, while Malaysia's structure enhances efficiency, coordination, and modernization. These contrasting institutional logics shape the core direction of each country's food system: Indonesia prioritizes sovereignty and self-reliance, whereas Malaysia prioritizes efficiency, innovation, and market integration. The institutional divergence forms the basis for differences observed in production outcomes, diversification, and supply chain performance.

Production, Diversification, and Supply Chain Performance

The analysis shows that Indonesia adopts a production-centered approach with a strong focus on achieving self-sufficiency in rice, which is considered both a staple commodity and a symbol of national resilience. Government investment in irrigation, seed development,

fertilizer subsidies, and programs such as the Food Estate initiative reflects Indonesia's commitment to expanding domestic production capacity (Kementan RI, 2022). These initiatives have enabled Indonesia to achieve a rice self-sufficiency ratio of 95.2% in 2023, securing domestic availability even under global market disruptions. However, this heavy emphasis on rice has limited diversification into other key commodities such as soybeans, sugar, horticulture, and protein sources (Clapp, 2017).

Malaysia presents a different pattern, as its agricultural production strategy is not designed around self-sufficiency in staple crops but rather around optimizing efficiency, high-value production, and export competitiveness. Although Malaysia's rice self-sufficiency ratio remains low at 56.2%, the country compensates through high productivity in horticulture, poultry, fisheries, and various high-value agricultural commodities (MOA Malaysia, 2023). This diversification is supported by integrated value chains and targeted technological investments, allowing Malaysia to minimize overdependence on any single commodity.

The production and supply chain outcomes of Indonesia and Malaysia reveal distinct strengths and weaknesses that influence their overall food system resilience. Indonesia demonstrates strong staple crop production, yet struggles with system-wide efficiency and vulnerability to external disruptions. Malaysia's diversified and logistics-integrated model enhances adaptability, but its reliance on imported staples remains a structural risk.
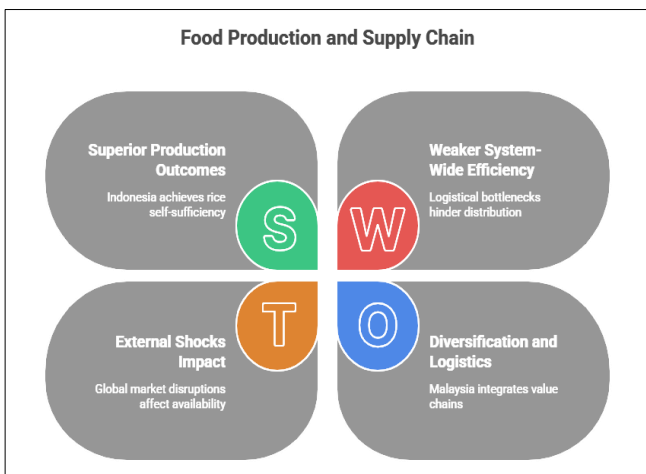

Figure 2. Food Production and Supply Chain: SWOT Comparison

A similar divergence is evident in supply chain performance. Indonesia continues to rely on Bulog as a central actor responsible for stabilizing prices, distributing food staples, and maintaining national food reserves. While Bulog's extensive infrastructure enables distribution across the archipelago, the system remains hindered by logistical bottlenecks, high transportation costs, and uneven infrastructural development, particularly in rural and remote regions (Hanafiah, 2022). These challenges contribute to spatial inequalities in food prices and occasional delays in emergency food distribution.

Malaysia's supply chain, by contrast, benefits from a high level of integration facilitated by FAMA, which coordinates production planning, transportation networks, wholesale markets, and digital monitoring of supply-demand conditions. The incorporation of digital platforms enhances transparency, operational efficiency, and responsiveness, enabling Malaysia to maintain stable food prices even in times of external shock (Rahman & Daud, 2021). Overall, Malaysia exhibits stronger performance in diversification and logistics integration, while Indonesia demonstrates superior production outcomes but weaker system-wide efficiency.

Import Dependency, Vulnerabilities, and Sovereignty Implications

A major finding of the study concerns the differing patterns of import dependency and their implications for national food system vulnerabilities. Indonesia's sovereignty-oriented production strategy has successfully minimized dependence on rice imports, yet the country remains heavily reliant on the importation of key agricultural inputs such as soybeans, wheat, fertilizer, and livestock feed (FAO, 2023). This partial dependency exposes Indonesia to external risks, including export restrictions, price volatility, and geopolitical disruptions in major supplier countries. Despite strong rice production, Indonesia has not fully achieved comprehensive food sovereignty.

Malaysia displays a contrasting situation. Although highly dependent on rice imports, Malaysia diversifies its import sources and uses its strong foreign exchange reserves and efficient logistics to mitigate immediate risks (ASEAN, 2022). Its diversified production and import portfolio reduce vulnerability to disruptions in any single commodity, but the country remains structurally vulnerable during global shocks involving rice, which forms a key component of national consumption. Malaysia's reliance on external suppliers undermines its long-term food sovereignty despite its efficiency-driven governance model.

The sovereignty implications of these contrasting models are significant. Indonesia's policy model strengthens national control over critical food systems and reinforces political narratives emphasizing self-reliance and national autonomy (Patel, 2009). This enhances the state's ability to protect citizens from global volatility, particularly in staple foods. However, the

model is associated with high fiscal burdens, slow technological adaptation, and limited diversification. Malaysia's efficiency-centric model enhances competitiveness and system flexibility but offers weaker protection against geopolitical disruptions affecting staple imports. The country's dependence on the global market compromises its sovereign capacity to independently navigate international supply crises.

A more detailed comparison of institutional attributes further highlights the asymmetry between Indonesia's sovereignty-focused model and Malaysia's efficiency-centered system. While Indonesia prioritizes national control and multi-level coordination, Malaysia's streamlined structure allows for rapid policy implementation and technological integration. These institutional differences play a decisive role in shaping each country's capacity to manage food security challenges.

Figure 3. Comparative Institutional Characteristics of Indonesia and Malaysia

Finally, the results have notable implications for ASEAN regional cooperation. Indonesia's strength in staple production and Malaysia's strength in logistics present natural complementarities that could support regional food reserves, cross-border supply chain integration, and collaborative climate-resilience strategies (ASEAN Secretariat, 2023). However, both countries remain primarily focused on national strategies, limiting the development of collective ASEAN food security mechanisms. Strengthening regional collaboration would require aligning standards, improving trade facilitation, and building coordinated emergency response systems—challenges that remain unmet.

Discussion

The comparative findings on Indonesia's and Malaysia's food governance reveal two distinct yet interrelated pathways in addressing the challenges of food security and national sovereignty. The discussion synthesizes these findings by linking them to broader theoretical debates on food sovereignty, governance efficiency, political economy, and regional resilience in Southeast Asia. The contrasting institutional structures and policy orientations of the two countries illustrate different conceptions of how states should secure their food systems in an era of global uncertainty. Indonesia's multi-agency governance model represents a sovereignty-driven approach in which food is seen not only as a commodity but as an instrument of political legitimacy and national identity (Patel, 2009). This orientation explains the strong emphasis on domestic rice production, extensive state intervention, and the central role of institutions like Bulog in stabilizing prices and ensuring national food reserves. The Indonesian state positions itself as a guarantor of food security, a stance deeply rooted in historical narratives of self-sufficiency and political autonomy. Yet, while this approach strengthens national control over critical food sectors, the evidence shows that it comes at the cost of institutional efficiency and diversification, producing bureaucratic bottlenecks and vulnerabilities in non-staple commodities (Suryana, 2019).

Malaysia's governance structure, in contrast, reflects an efficiency-oriented model that prioritizes institutional coherence, market integration, and technological modernization. The centralized coordination under the Ministry of Agriculture and its associated agencies enables Malaysia to avoid bureaucratic fragmentation and establish a more agile, data-driven food system capable of responding quickly to market shocks and consumer demands. This orientation aligns with neoliberal perspectives that emphasize efficiency, specialization, and competitiveness within global value chains (Clapp, 2017). The Malaysian model demonstrates that a state does not necessarily need to pursue self-sufficiency to maintain food system stability, provided that it can leverage efficient logistics, diversified import sources,

and strong financial capacity. However, the reliance on global markets also exposes Malaysia to structural vulnerabilities during periods of international disruption, suggesting that efficiency alone cannot guarantee sovereignty or long-term resilience.

The production strategies of both countries highlight the interplay between political narratives and policy choices. Indonesia's rice-centric production reflects historical and cultural dependencies on rice as well as political motivations to achieve symbolic and practical sovereignty. The success in achieving a high rice self-sufficiency ratio reinforces the legitimacy of Indonesia's sovereignty-oriented approach. Nevertheless, this focus on rice sidelines the development of alternative commodities essential for a resilient food system. The persistence of import dependency for soybeans, sugar, garlic, and wheat suggests that Indonesia's sovereignty is partial and uneven, leaving the country susceptible to global market volatility. This pattern supports the argument that sovereignty in one commodity does not automatically translate into overall sovereignty, especially in a global economy where agricultural input chains are deeply interconnected (Teng & Oliver, 2020).

Malaysia's production strategy, on the other hand, prioritizes diversification and high-value commodities. This approach reflects an economic logic that seeks to optimize comparative advantages rather than pursue self-sufficiency. The result is a food system that performs well in non-staple categories, particularly horticulture, poultry, and fisheries, contributing to Malaysia's dietary diversification and market stability. These strengths demonstrate how diversified production can mitigate risks associated with climate variability and demand fluctuations. However, Malaysia's continuing dependency on rice imports presents a major structural vulnerability that cannot be easily resolved. This reinforces the critique that efficiency-driven models may sacrifice long-term sovereignty for short-term stability, particularly in the context of global market disruptions.

The supply chain comparison further highlights the structural trade-offs inherent in each model. Indonesia's supply chain, anchored by Bulog, reflects the state's responsibility to ensure equitable access, especially across geographically dispersed regions. While this centralized role protects citizens against extreme price fluctuations, the logistical constraints—poor infrastructure, high transportation costs, and uneven distribution capacity—indicate that sovereignty-driven models may struggle under conditions of fragmentation and limited integration (Hanafiah, 2022). Malaysia's logistics system, in contrast, benefits from digital integration, real-time monitoring, and centralized coordination through FAMA. These features enhance Malaysia's capacity to maintain stable food prices and prevent supply chain failures. Yet, this system is highly dependent on the uninterrupted flow of imported commodities, suggesting that logistical efficiency cannot substitute for local production sovereignty in times of global crisis.

The findings on import dependency reveal deeper political-economic dynamics that shape each country's vulnerabilities. Indonesia's import dependency in non-staple inputs suggests that its sovereignty narrative masks underlying structural weaknesses in the broader food system. Dependency on imported fertilizers, soybeans, and wheat undermines Indonesia's ability to autonomously control its food system, despite strong rice sovereignty. This supports the argument that food sovereignty must be understood holistically rather than through single-commodity metrics (FAO, 2023). Malaysia's high rice import dependency similarly reveals contradictions within its efficiency-driven model. While diversification and logistics efficiency strengthen Malaysia's resilience in many sectors, the reliance on imported staples introduces external vulnerabilities that may compromise national sovereignty during global supply chain disruptions. This reflects broader debates within food security scholarship regarding the limitations of market-based approaches to ensuring national resilience (Jones & Karim, 2022).

Synthesizing these findings, it becomes evident that sovereignty and efficiency represent two distinct but incomplete models. Indonesia demonstrates the strengths of sovereignty-oriented governance by protecting staple food availability and reinforcing national autonomy. However, this model struggles with diversification, system-wide efficiency, and sustainability. Malaysia demonstrates the strengths of efficiency-oriented governance by promoting technological innovation, diversification, and market responsiveness. Yet, this model lacks protection against geopolitical disruptions affecting imported staples. The evidence suggests that neither sovereignty-focused nor efficiency-focused models are sufficient in isolation. Rather, hybrid approaches that combine the strengths of both models are necessary to achieve long-term resilience. Such hybrid strategies would involve integrating sovereignty in strategic staples with efficiency in diversified commodities, developing both robust local production systems and agile, technology-driven supply chains.

The regional implications of these findings are equally significant. Southeast Asia remains one of the

most climate-vulnerable regions in the world, and food supply disruptions pose transboundary risks that no single country can manage alone (ASEAN Secretariat, 2023). The complementarity between Indonesia's production strength and Malaysia's logistics sophistication creates opportunities for deeper regional cooperation. Collaborative mechanisms such as ASEAN food reserves, shared early warning systems, joint research on climate-resilient crops, and harmonized cross-border trade procedures could enhance collective resilience. However, the dominance of nationalistic narratives in food policy—especially in sovereignty-driven countries like Indonesia—continues to limit regional integration. This tension between national sovereignty and regional interdependence reflects broader challenges in the political economy of ASEAN cooperation.

The discussion also highlights theoretical implications for understanding the political geography of food systems. Indonesia's model reflects a state-centric, sovereignty-based approach aligned with developmentalist theories that prioritize national autonomy and rural livelihoods. Malaysia's model reflects an efficiency-based, market-oriented approach aligned with liberal theories emphasizing economic optimization and global integration. The divergence between these models demonstrates how food security is deeply embedded in political choices, institutional legacies, and national ideologies. It also underscores the need for theoretical frameworks that reconcile sovereignty and efficiency, acknowledging that food systems must be both politically legitimate and economically viable.

In conclusion, the comparative discussion demonstrates that Indonesia and Malaysia represent two strategic but incomplete approaches to food security. Indonesia's sovereignty-driven model provides strong protection for staple foods but struggles with diversification and operational efficiency. Malaysia's efficiency-driven model delivers strong diversification and logistical integration but exposes the country to vulnerabilities in staple food imports. These contrasting pathways highlight the necessity of hybrid models that combine sovereignty in key commodities with efficiency-based diversification and technologically integrated supply chains. Ultimately, the findings suggest that long-term food security in Southeast Asia will depend not only on national policy choices but also on the region's ability to strengthen cooperation, share risks, and build a resilient, integrated food system capable of withstanding future global disruptions.

Conclusion

This comparative study demonstrates that Indonesia and Malaysia embody two distinct approaches to achieving food security, shaped by their institutional histories, political priorities, and economic orientations. Indonesia's sovereignty-driven model emphasizes state control, staple food production, and national autonomy, resulting in significant achievements in rice self-sufficiency and a strengthened narrative of food sovereignty. However, this model remains constrained by limited diversification, logistical inefficiencies, and continued dependency on imported non-staple inputs, which undermine its broader resilience. Conversely, Malaysia's efficiency-oriented model prioritizes diversification, technological integration, and market responsiveness, producing a flexible and well-coordinated food system capable of sustaining stability across multiple commodities. Yet Malaysia's heavy reliance on rice imports exposes a critical vulnerability that constrains its strategic autonomy and leaves it susceptible to global supply disruptions.

Taken together, the findings reveal that neither sovereignty-focused nor efficiency-focused governance alone can ensure long-term food resilience in an era of global uncertainty. Indonesia needs greater diversification and supply chain modernization to complement its sovereignty commitments, while Malaysia must enhance strategic capacity in staple production or develop stronger regional safeguards. These insights point to the value of hybrid policy models that integrate state-led protection of essential commodities with market-based innovation and logistical efficiency. Moreover, regional cooperation through ASEAN—leveraging Indonesia's production strengths and Malaysia's logistical capabilities—offers an opportunity to build a more integrated and resilient regional food system. Ultimately, sustainable food security in Southeast Asia will depend not only on national reforms but also on the political will to pursue shared strategies that reduce collective vulnerability to global shocks.

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