

Evaluation of Imported Rice Distribution Governance During Production Surplus in the Context of Realizing Food Sovereignty in Garut Regency, West Java Province

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Rice Imports; Distribution; Food Sovereignty	Indonesia, despite being an agricultural country, frequently relies on rice imports to meet domestic demand and stabilize prices. This policy often sparks debate regarding its impact on local farmers and the long-term goal of national food sovereignty. This research aims to analyze in depth the effectiveness of the rice import policy, examine the shortcomings and obstacles in its implementation, and make relevant policy recommendations to achieve food sovereignty and positively impact farmer welfare. Using a qualitative descriptive method with an evaluative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies involving key stakeholders in Garut Regency. The results of the research indicate that the governance of imported rice distribution in Garut Regency still encounters obstacles ranging from infrastructure and misappropriation to operational issues. However, relevant stakeholders in Garut Regency have made efforts by collaborating on monitoring and improvement. In addition, the import policy does not specifically impact the productivity of local farmers because the amount of rice production in Garut Regency is always surplus; however, if continued, imported rice can affect market stability. Moreover, the phenomenon of imported rice is exploited by middlemen to suppress prices for farmers, resulting in decreased farmer motivation and a reduction in the number of farmers in Garut. Import policies can hinder food sovereignty because the government focuses only on fulfilling stock levels rather than on the production process. Therefore, an evaluation of import policies is needed to achieve food sovereignty.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an agricultural country with a vast rice paddy area of approximately 7.4 million hectares. However, rice production in Indonesia has consistently experienced fluctuations. Several factors have contributed to the decline in domestic rice production. First, natural factors are a primary cause of the decline due to disasters and pests. Second, the reduction in agricultural land caused by land conversion for residential and industrial development (Liu et al., 2020; Mukhlis & Gürçam, 2022; Siregar et al., 2022; Suprehatin, 2021). Third, the decrease in the number of farmers as the younger generation is reluctant to continue farming. Fourth, insufficient availability of fertilizer to meet demand. The decline in rice production has caused public unrest, as approximately 98% of Indonesia's total population of 279 million people consume rice. To meet domestic rice needs, the government has implemented a rice import policy.

Food availability is a national responsibility to support food security in Indonesia. To meet domestic rice needs, the government has implemented an import policy (Demeke et al., 2023; Firdaus et al., 2019; Jafri et al., 2021; Kushitor, 2023; McAtee et al., 2020). According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), Indonesia's rice imports reached 3.06 million tons in 2023, originating from several countries: Thailand (1.38 million tons), Vietnam (1.15 million tons), Pakistan (309,000 tons), Myanmar (141,000 tons), and several other countries (83,000 tons). Over the past three years, based on Indonesian rice import volume data from 2022 to 2024, the import quota has increased significantly. In 2022, the rice import quota was around 429,000 tons; in 2023, it increased to 3.1 million tons; and in 2024, it reached 5.15 million tons. The government's increase in the rice import quota has sparked controversy, as the rise in import quota will impact farmers' incomes due to the competitiveness of imported rice prices being cheaper than the cost of local rice production. The Indonesian government's rationale for implementing the import policy is due to the current shortage of domestic rice supplies caused by the El Niño climate and increased demand for rice due to population growth. Consequently, the government must import less than 5 percent of the national rice requirement. Furthermore, the government's rationale for importing is to stabilize the country's fluctuating rice prices (Ageng Kurnia & Dinar Iskandar, 2020; Dudi Septiadi, Harianto, 2016; Ratih Kumala Sari, 2014; Septiadi et al., 2016; Yusiana & Nur'azkiya, 2021).

West Java Province is one of the largest rice-producing regions in Indonesia. According to data from the West Java Province Food and Horticulture Service, West Java Province ranked 3rd in National Production for the 2024 period January–April 2024, after East Java and Central Java, with a 2024 achievement of 2.285 million tons of GKG. Based on data from the West Java Province Food Security Service, the availability of rice and paddy in West Java Province for the January–April 2024 period, with a total grain production of 2,285,320 tons of GKG converted into rice, amounted to 1,319,772.64 tons, while the monthly consumption requirement was 1,359,977.21 tons, so that the shortfall was around –40,204.57 tons. The shortage of rice needs was met through production from other regions or imported quota rice. Based on data from Bulog regarding the realization of the import quota in the West Java region in January–February 2024, approximately 56,500 tons have been allocated.

The government's import policy not only meets domestic rice demand but also maintains national rice price stability. To monitor national rice price stability, the government, through the National Food Agency (*BAPANAS*), releases prices daily on the platform <https://panelharga.badanpangan.go.id/> to determine retail prices for staple foods throughout Indonesia. During the 2023–2024 period, a drastic increase in rice prices occurred, sparking controversy and public unrest. The price of medium-grade rice increased significantly from Rp 11,500 per kg to Rp 17,000 per kg during the 2023–2024 period (*Bapanas* data).

Rice prices in West Java have fluctuated significantly in recent times. The price of medium-grade rice reached Rp 16,000 per kg at the end of February 2024, up from around Rp 11,000 previously. The rising rice prices have sparked controversy and public concern, leading to a decline in purchasing power. (Quoted from the online media link <https://panelharga.badanpangan.go.id/>, source data from the National Food Agency, accessed on September 12, 2024, at 11:30 a.m. WIB), the following is a list of data on rice prices entering Indonesia:

Table 1. Rice Prices in West Java for the 2023-2024 Period

No	Month	Price Rp/Kg
1.	January 2023	11,550
2.	February 2023	11,760
3.	March 2023	11,830
4.	April 2023	11,900

No	Month	Price Rp/Kg
5.	May 2023	11,880
6.	June 2023	11,850
7.	July 2023	11,900
8.	August 2023	12,070
9.	September 2023	12,840
10.	October 2023	13,210
11.	November 2023	13,170
12.	December 2023	13,190
13.	January 2024	13,187
14.	February 2024	14,162
15.	March 2024	13,965
16.	April 2024	16,100

Source: BAPANAS data, processed by researchers (2024)

The increase in domestic rice prices is due to various factors. These include supply shortages, increased demand, high production costs such as expensive fertilizers, rising wages, and distribution challenges due to the continued monopoly of rice distributors. The large number of intermediaries, from farmers to consumers, disrupts the supply chain, significantly driving up rice prices. Furthermore, inaccurate data and the presence of vested interests hinder estimates (Widi, 2024). Regarding the distribution of imported rice, the government, through the National Food Agency and the Logistics Agency (Bulog), has implemented the Food Supply and Price Stabilization (SPHP) rice distribution program, which has been in effect since 2023, as well as commercial rice.

The government will provide approximately 1.2 million tons throughout 2024, aiming to maintain price stability and the availability of rice circulating at the consumer level, as well as to control inflation due to the current increase in rice prices. Several findings of misappropriation of government-subsidized rice (SPHP) have become a new problem that needs to be anticipated. Lack of oversight and the existence of certain groups who take advantage of this provide opportunities for perpetrators to commit misappropriation. Government efforts through import policies to maintain stock and price stability through food aid programs and affordable rice have not been effective in stabilizing rice prices. Therefore, more comprehensive research is needed to find appropriate solutions and strategies so that government policies can have a positive impact on the domestic economy and national security.

The government's import policy has implications for food sovereignty. This is because import policies are a quick fix that can disrupt the sustainability of domestic farmer production. Food sovereignty is a crucial aspect in achieving national food security and resilience. Garut Regency, a region in West Java, is known for its extensive agricultural land and potential for food production, particularly rice. However, in recent years, the government has issued import policies that have sparked controversy at both the national and regional levels.

Indonesia's rice import policy is often implemented to address domestic rice shortages, maintain price stability, and meet growing public demand. However, the government's import policy also impacts local farmers, particularly those in Garut Regency. One major concern is the impact on farmers' welfare, as excessive rice imports can depress local rice prices, potentially reducing farmers' incomes and threatening the sustainability of local production. Furthermore, the rice import policy is also seen as hampering the achievement of food sovereignty, as dependence on imports can leave Indonesia vulnerable to price and supply fluctuations in the international market. The government's rice import policy requires evaluation due to persistent sectoral egos among ministries and institutions, such as the National

Food Agency (BAPANAS), the Ministry of Trade, and the Ministry of Agriculture. In determining domestic production, each institution has inconsistent data, leading to controversy over the government's rice import policy.

In 2018, based on data from the Garut Regency Agriculture Office, West Java, rice production throughout 2018 experienced a surplus of 361,430 tons from a total production of 616,730 tons. However, based on data from Bulog in March 2024, the amount of rice imported for the Garut region was around 300 tons, which aimed to meet CBP needs and price stability. Therefore, the government's food policy, especially rice imports, needs to be studied more in-depth and realistically, because the impact that will occur due to errors in government policymaking in the food sector can risk national food sovereignty, especially in Garut Regency, West Java.

Import dependency can have implications for the amount of domestic rice production that continues to decline to the sustainability of farmers because the impact of imports affects farmers' income. In realizing food sovereignty, especially in the Garut Regency area, the government needs to find alternatives other than imports so that Indonesia can achieve food sovereignty and return to being a rice exporting country.

Therefore, this research aims to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the governance of imported rice distribution in Garut Regency during periods of production surplus. The specific objectives are to analyze the effectiveness of the current distribution system, identify the key obstacles and supporting factors in its implementation, and assess the policy's impact on local farmer welfare and the overarching goal of achieving food sovereignty. The benefits of this research are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to improve the governance of rice distribution, formulate more effective and sustainable food policies that prioritize local production, and ultimately contribute to the realization of genuine food sovereignty and enhanced farmer welfare in Garut Regency and Indonesia at large.

METHOD

This research was qualitative descriptive study with an evaluative approach examines the governance of imported rice distribution in Garut Regency, West Java purposively selected as a surplus-producing region affected by national import policies focusing on effectiveness, obstacles, and impacts on food sovereignty. The population spans key stakeholders across the distribution chain: officials from the Food Security Agency, Agriculture Service, and Trade Service; Bulog representatives; local farmers; rice traders; and community leaders. Key informants were chosen via purposive sampling (agency heads and field implementers) and expanded through snowball sampling, yielding 10 interviewees. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, direct observation at distribution points and local markets, and a documentation study of government reports, BPS and Bapanas publications, prior research, and reputable news to enable triangulation. Primary data derive from interviews and observations, while secondary data come from official documents and scholarly sources. Analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification—with transcripts organized, coded by theme, presented narratively, and iteratively validated to ensure credibility and reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research results contain a collection of facts, data and information objectively in accordance with the phenomena obtained in answering research questions. In this research, the

researcher will describe the results of observations and interviews in the field based on the research title, namely Evaluation of Rice Import Policy Related to Distribution Governance in the Framework of Realizing Food Sovereignty in Garut Regency, West Java Province. The success of the implementation of the rice import policy cannot be separated from the implementation of evaluations to correct deficiencies, because in the implementation of the rice import policy, various obstacles and challenges are still found in distribution governance, starting from the procurement process, goods entering from abroad to within the country, and distribution to the community which has implications for the realization of food sovereignty in Garut Regency. So that the import policy is considered irrelevant and needs to be evaluated to obtain relevant policies in realizing food sovereignty, farmer welfare and rice price stability, especially in the Garut region.

In the policy evaluation process, it is necessary to consider the evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and impact. Based on these four criteria, policy evaluation can systematically improve policy implementation and assist policymakers in improving the quality of public policy.

This research refers to the evaluation theory according to Bingham and Felbinger because the problem of rice import policy is very complex starting from the process, impact, results and meta-evaluation / as a whole, so that the results of this research can help identify various problems in the implementation of rice import distribution governance towards the realization of food sovereignty in Garut Regency.

Implementation of rice import policy in Garut Regency, and evaluation of rice import policy related to distribution governance in realizing food sovereignty in Garut Regency

Regarding the evaluation of distribution governance, the Garut Regency government has made improvements by increasing collaboration and oversight, ensuring the smooth distribution of imported rice. As explained by Mr. Windu, an employee of Bulog Garut, distribution governance does face various challenges, but relevant stakeholders have made efforts to find solutions to ensure the policy's successful implementation .

From a trader perspective, rice distribution has not faced significant obstacles, as traders generally require a constant supply of rice to maintain economic activity. This was expressed by Mr. Chasman, a rice trader at Guntur Market in Garut. Regarding oversight, Mr. Tirmizi, a member of the National Police Headquarters Food Task Force, stated that his team has collaborated with relevant stakeholders and conducted early detection efforts, reporting any findings to the central government to mitigate any obstacles or irregularities.

The interview results above indicate that, in general, the implementation of imported rice distribution governance in Garut has been running well, although several issues have been identified, but these have been addressed. The rice import policy in Garut has not significantly impacted farmer production, as farmers experience a production surplus. However, the challenges are related to pricing and sales. Farmers often sell local Garut rice outside Garut, citing higher prices, resulting in shortages of local rice despite a surplus. This phenomenon is exploited by middlemen to profit from local farmers' production. However, if the import policy

is implemented continuously and in large quantities, it can have a direct impact on farmers, as prices become cheaper due to excess stock.

Garut Regency

In the implementation of the rice import policy in the Garut Regency area, there are obstacles and supports. The causes of obstacles and supports for the implementation of the import policy come from various factors, but according to the Head of Horticulture at the Garut Agriculture Service, Mr. Ardhy Firdian, the government adopted the import policy to meet production requirements. One of the causes of the decline in production in Garut is natural factors. However, the Garut Agriculture Service is optimistic that farmers in Garut are able to achieve food sovereignty even though it takes time and a long process. In addition, Hari Wardhana, Head of Consumption at the Garut Food Security Service, stated that besides being able to help meet production shortages, the rice import policy can hinder food sovereignty. Because when viewed from the process, food sovereignty is the ability of a country's production to meet its domestic needs for years.

Regarding the obstacles in distribution governance revealed by the Secretary of the Garut Trade Service, it was confirmed by Iptu Tirmizi, a member of the National Police Headquarters food task force, where his party found obstacles in distribution governance, namely infrastructure problems that often become obstacles in distribution, then there are parties who want to take advantage by committing fraud. From the farmer's perspective, according to Mrs. Yani as the Advisor of the Pasundan Farmers Union, explained in an interview that one of the obstacles in the governance of rice distribution, both imported and local, is the length of the distribution chain, in addition to the price game by middlemen so that farmers are often disadvantaged, while for imported rice is managed directly by the state so that it can be controlled, only in distribution it is often misused by certain parties .

Sarimukti Village Head, Mr. Deni, expressed complaints from his residents, the majority of whom are farmers. Distribution issues often hinder infrastructure, such as warehouses and high transportation costs. This has led many farmers to sell their rice outside Garut due to the favorable price. However, the village government has taken steps to benefit farmers by establishing cooperatives and farmer groups, allowing for shared costs.

From all the opinions expressed by both key informants and supporting informants, Mr. Windu's statement as a stakeholder and implementer of the government's imported rice distribution confirmed that there were obstacles found in the distribution process, one of which was related to infrastructure and warehouses which were sometimes inadequate so that production results were not optimally stored.

Thus, interviews with various informants and various perspectives related to distribution governance confirmed the existence of both obstacles and supports. One of the obstacles is infrastructure, such as access and warehousing. Furthermore, the lengthy distribution process from upstream to downstream due to too many stakeholders, resulting in uncontrolled prices as each sector seeks to profit. Furthermore, the existence of parties committing fraud hinders the process of managing rice distribution, particularly in the Garut region. The benefits of implementing a rice import policy include: During certain times, such as reduced production,

imported rice can help meet stockpiles and ensure food security. Furthermore, imported rice can help stabilize prices when rice prices fluctuate. However, in the long term, imported rice can also have a negative impact on farmers due to their dependence on imported rice.

Efforts that have been made by the regional government in evaluating rice import policies so as to be able to realize food sovereignty in Garut Regency

Based on the interview results, information was obtained regarding the Garut Regional Government's efforts to evaluate import policies, particularly regarding rice distribution, to achieve food sovereignty. According to Mr. Windu, an employee of the West Java Bulog, the implementation of the import policy faced obstacles and challenges, but relevant stakeholders continued to support the government's policy to meet community needs.

From the results of the interviews that have been conducted, it shows that all parties, in this case the relevant stakeholders, have made appropriate efforts and strategies to increase farmer productivity and improvements in the implementation of imported rice distribution from upstream to downstream so that the government's policy process runs according to needs and can minimize any misappropriation efforts carried out by certain parties who want to take advantage of the government's policy.

Correlation between the evaluation of the governance of imported rice distribution with the realization of food self-sufficiency and the implementation of the Prabowo government's free nutritious meal program

In the new administration following the 2024 elections, President Prabowo has a flagship program, one of which is food self-sufficiency and the provision of free nutritious meals for schoolchildren. In implementing this policy, the government aims to meet domestic production and reduce imports, ultimately achieving food sovereignty. Improving the governance of imported rice distribution is correlated with the implementation of the free nutritious meal policy, as it requires a significant amount of food, one of which is rice. The implementation of the government's program policy in Garut Regency is currently still in the preparation stage for facilities and raw materials. Mr. Hari Wardhanan from the Food Security Agency also stated that his office is focusing on strengthening local production and developing policies that support farmer productivity, as well as preparing the necessary supplies to support government programs.

Ideally, the rice for the free lunch program would come from local farmers to support food self-sufficiency, improve farmer welfare, and reduce dependence on imports. However, to ensure the program's sustainability, the government needs to maintain a backup mechanism, either from Bulog or imports if absolutely necessary.

Interviews indicate that the government's raw material program prioritizes local production. However, if production constraints arise, imports become a solution to meet national food supply needs. The governance of imported rice distribution and the government program are closely linked, as the primary goal is to maintain stock levels and prioritize national production.

In this sub-research, the researcher will describe and discuss the data and information obtained through in-depth observations and interviews with several informants in accordance with the research title, namely the evaluation of rice import policies related to distribution governance in realizing food sovereignty in Garut Regency, West Java, in order to meet information needs.

Regarding the evaluation of rice import policies related to distribution governance in order to realize food sovereignty in Garut, from the results of research through observation techniques, interviews and literature studies in Garut, researchers found obstacles and benefits from the government's rice import policy, especially in realizing food sovereignty. The rice import policy implemented by the government aims to meet domestic rice needs and can stabilize food prices. To address obstacles arising from the rice import policy that are considered to affect food sovereignty, a policy evaluation is conducted. The policy evaluation process needs to consider evaluation criteria, namely effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact. From these four criteria, policy evaluation can provide improvements in the implementation of a policy systematically and assist policymakers in improving the quality of public policy. The discussion that will be discussed by researchers is in accordance with the Policy Evaluation Theory based on what was put forward by Bingham and Felbinger in the book (Nugroho, 2023) explaining that in the policy evaluation process there are four types, namely process evaluation, impact evaluation, outcome evaluation and meta-evaluation.

1. Process Evaluation

Process evaluation, in the context of the rice import policy and distribution governance in Garut Regency, involves a comprehensive analysis of the policy's implementation. The goal is to ensure that each stage, from planning to distribution, is aligned with established objectives and provides optimal benefits to the community.

Based on the results of research in Garut Regency, it was found that the local government had conducted an evaluation of the process of the rice import policy that had been implemented, because previously during its implementation there were obstacles such as, mismatch of import quotas with local needs, minimal distribution infrastructure, lack of supervision and transparency, and impacts on local farmers. If seen from the facts in the field, rice production in Garut always experiences a surplus, but what happens is that prices continue to fluctuate and imported rice becomes a solution in stabilizing prices. But in reality the rice import policy does not have a significant impact because of the misappropriation efforts carried out by certain parties to take more profits. Due to the shortage, the Garut Regency government conducted an evaluation such as improving coordination, Strengthening Infrastructure, Strict Supervision, Government Support for Local Farmers, Food Diversification. This was done as an improvement effort so that the process of rice distribution governance in Garut Regency can truly be felt by the community. By conducting a comprehensive process evaluation, Garut Regency can ensure that the rice import policy and its distribution governance run effectively, efficiently, and provide maximum benefits to the community.

2. Impact Evaluation

A comprehensive impact evaluation, in the context of evaluating rice import policies related to distribution governance in achieving food sovereignty in Garut Regency, requires a comprehensive approach. This evaluation aims to measure the extent to which rice import policies impact the availability, accessibility, and price stability of rice in the region.

Based on the results of research in Garut Regency, it was found that the impact of the import policy caused dependence on imported rice, Price Pressure for Local Farmers, Distribution Inequality, Decrease in Farmer Motivation, disruption of Food Sovereignty, social problems between farmers and distributors. When viewed from upstream to downstream, the rice import policy only benefits the downstream sector or traders, while at the farmer level the import policy becomes a challenge that impacts farmer productivity due to dependence on imports. From the impact evaluation conducted by the Garut Regency government, it can be seen from the Garut Regency government program that seeks to increase farmer productivity by optimizing the absorption of local rice, in addition the government also created programs to increase farmer motivation and sustainability such as, providing fertilizers and seeds, millennial farmer programs and ensuring food stability in Garut Regency does not experience disruption. In addition, the Garut Regency Government also made improvements to distribution infrastructure, and food diversification to maintain a balance between market needs and the interests of farmers.

3. Evaluation of Results

Outcome evaluation emphasizes the assessment of the actual results of a policy or program, both direct and indirect. This evaluation aims to measure the policy's effectiveness in achieving its stated objectives. In the context of evaluating the rice import policy, we examine distribution governance in achieving food sovereignty in Garut Regency.

Based on the results of the research conducted, it was found that there were shortcomings of the policy such as, the ineffectiveness of government policies, increased dependence on imports, negative impacts on local farmers, distribution is not on target, decreased local production and long-term food security vulnerabilities. However, in the context of the evaluation, the Garut Regency government has made efforts, Monitoring Rice Prices in the Market, Data Collection and Survey of Farmer Welfare, and Market Intervention and Rice Reserve Program. The efforts that have been made by the Garut Regency Government are an evaluation of the results of the rice import distribution governance policy, so that this policy can support food security and community welfare. Although the rice import policy can help maintain food supplies, evaluations must continue to be carried out to balance the positive and negative impacts on local farmers, rice prices, and dependence on imported rice.

4. Meta Evaluation

In the context of imported rice distribution governance, meta-evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness of previous evaluations in measuring and improving imported rice distribution policies and their contribution to achieving sustainable food security. Meta-evaluation will assess whether the existing evaluation system is comprehensive, objective,

and relevant, and whether previous evaluations have provided useful feedback for policy improvement. Meta-evaluation can be conducted by assessing policy evaluations based on several criteria, such as evaluating the success of previous evaluations, identifying weaknesses in the evaluation process, and providing recommendations for improvement.

Based on the results of research in Garut Regency, it was found that in the implementation of the rice distribution governance policy in Garut Regency, several problems were found, such as: Lack of data transparency, data validity cannot be accounted for, and the existence of political interests. In the meta-evaluation process, the Garut Regency government has made efforts through the trade office or food security agency, frequently evaluating rice prices in the local market. From the evaluation results, the government can intervene in the market to maintain price stability. The Garut Agriculture Office evaluated the impact of the rice import policy on the welfare of local farmers. They collected data on farmers' income and the impact of changes in rice prices on their economic lives. Evaluations of local agricultural product absorption programs by the local government, such as purchasing rice from local farmers for distribution to the market, are also carried out periodically. The evaluation process is carried out to ensure that previous evaluations are relevant, accurate, and have a positive impact on food security policies. By evaluating the evaluation process itself, we can improve and increase the effectiveness of the imported rice distribution policy to achieve better food security in the future.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the rice import policy process in Garut Regency highlights the need for significant improvements in distribution governance and local farmer empowerment, as current obstacles—such as inadequate infrastructure, limited absorption capacity, and natural factors—impede effective rice distribution. Although the import policy helps meet domestic demand during production shortfalls and stabilizes prices in the short term, it tends to favor traders over farmers, conflicting with the long-term food sovereignty goals established by Law No. 18 of 2012. The local government's initiatives to boost farmer productivity through input support and engaging millennial farmers aim to align food security with farmer welfare by prioritizing local rice sourcing. To enhance the policy's relevance and effectiveness, a comprehensive meta-evaluation of governance processes involving all stakeholders and accurate data is recommended for future research, thereby fostering sustainable food security and improved livelihoods for farmers in Garut Regency.

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