

SAWAH POKOK MURAH IN WEST SUMATRA: A LOCALIZED, SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE CAPITALIST GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM

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Abstract: This article explores the Sawah Pokok Murah (SPM) initiative in West Sumatra as a localized, reconstructive response to the capitalist-driven global food system. Through a historical sociology approach and food sovereignty framework, the study investigates how SPM challenges structural inequalities in global food markets by promoting sustainable farming practices and community empowerment. The paper analyzes the historical context of SPM, its socio-economic impact, and its role in resisting neoliberal agricultural policies. Key findings reveal that SPM empowers local farmers, reduces dependency on global supply chains, and fosters economic resilience, thereby providing a viable alternative to market-driven agriculture. However, challenges such as youth engagement and regional disparities highlight the need for targeted policy interventions. This study highlights the role of local innovation in reforming the global agricultural system toward greater justice and sustainability within the framework of food sovereignty.

Keywords: Sawah Pokok Murah, historical sociology, global food system, neoliberalism, West Sumatra, agricultural innovation

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INTRODUCTION

The global food system has increasingly been shaped by neoliberal economic policies, which prioritize profit maximization over sustainability and social welfare (Harvey, 2005). Since the 1980s, capitalist-driven agricultural practices have reinforced dependency on global supply chains (Wallerstein, 2004), often to the detriment of local food security and sovereignty (McMichael, 2005; Kick, Tiezzi & Castedo Peña, 2017). The term *global supply chain* is used by multinational corporations to describe the material

and logistical processes involved in organizing production across geographically dispersed global production platforms (Suwandi, Jonna & Foster, 2019). As large multinational corporations dominate food production and distribution, local farmers are increasingly marginalized, facing rising costs, reduced access to resources, and an unsustainable dependence on global markets (Patel, 2009a). This phenomenon is especially evident in developing countries like Indonesia, where the push for agricultural modernization has resulted in the erosion of traditional, sustainable farming practices and the growing influence of corporate agribusinesses. Despite being a major rice producer, Indonesia remains heavily reliant on imports. The country's internal supply chain is hindered by underdeveloped logistics, including uneven transportation infrastructure, limited storage capacity, and poor coordination among supply chain actors, leading to delayed distribution and increased consumer prices (Nugroho & Jamilatuzzahro, 2024). In 2024, rice imports reached 4.52 million tons, but the government announced a significant reduction target for 2025, aiming to import only 800,000 tons, a sharp cut of 3.9 million tons from the previous year (Foster, 2025).

Within this context, the SPM initiative in West Sumatra represents a novel solution that challenges the capitalist food system by promoting food sovereignty. *Food sovereignty*, a concept central to the La Via Campesina (LVC) movement, emphasizes the right of communities to define their own food and agricultural systems rather than submitting to the forces of global trade and multinational agribusinesses (Altieri, 2009). By focusing on local production, sustainable farming methods, and the empowerment of smallholder farmers, agroforestry systems such as home gardens and traditional mixed farming have been shown to enhance food diversity, household income, and environmental resilience. A systematic review of 22 studies between 2000 and 2019 found that traditional systems contributed to 20% greater dietary diversity compared to commercial monocultures. Meanwhile, modern agroforestry models have the potential to increase smallholder income up to fivefold through improved land management and crop diversification (Duffy et al., 2021; Triatmo et al., 2025). SPM aims to reduce dependence on external markets and enhance food security for communities in West Sumatra, Indonesia.

Although food sovereignty has been widely discussed in global debates, its theoretical implications within the local context of Indonesia require further attention. Food security, as defined by FAO (1996), exists when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This definition is neutral regarding the source of food; it can be locally produced or imported, as long as people's needs are adequately met. Conversely, food sovereignty, introduced by the global peasant movement La Via Campesina in 1996, is defined as the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, alongside the right

to define their own food and agricultural systems (Nyéléni International Forum for Food Sovereignty, 2007). This political and ecological concept rejects corporate dominance and the exploitative nature of the global food system.

Food sovereignty offers the potential to reinforce long-term food security by reducing reliance on imports, strengthening local food production systems, and empowering smallholder farmers. Programs based on food sovereignty often promote crop diversification, supporting food utilization and stability within food security frameworks. However, tensions frequently arise between food sovereignty and food security (Patel, 2009b). Governments may pursue food security through cheap food imports, such as rice from Vietnam or Thailand, undermining the livelihoods of local farmers and contradicting the core principles of food sovereignty. Likewise, corporate-led agricultural modernization may increase yields but often at the expense of land access and autonomy for smallholders. While food security emphasizes outcomes—ensuring sufficient and nutritious food—food sovereignty focuses on control over the processes and policies shaping food systems. In times of humanitarian crisis, food security is understandably prioritized (Desmarais et al., 2010). However, for long-term, equitable, and sustainable development, food sovereignty provides a more strategic pathway, especially in agrarian nations like Indonesia, where smallholder farmers form the backbone of the food system. Understanding the complementarity and potential conflicts between these approaches is crucial for designing just and resilient food policies.

In Indonesia, food sovereignty offers critical insights into how local initiatives can resist global capitalist structures. Despite a rich history of agricultural practices, Indonesia faces significant challenges imposed by neoliberal economic policies (Tisnanta, Firmansyah & Evendia, 2015; Bainus & Yulianti, 2018; Saa, 2024; Indriastuti et al., 2024). The SPM initiative in West Sumatra embodies this resistance by empowering local communities to regain control over food production and reinforcing the importance of sustainable, local agricultural practices in an era dominated by corporate farming and global markets.

This study aims to answer the following research question: How does the SPM initiative in West Sumatra serve as a local response to the capitalist global food system, and to what extent can it be considered a form of resistance to neoliberal agricultural policies? By analyzing the historical, socio-economic, and political context in which SPM was implemented, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on food sovereignty, economic justice, and sustainable development in the Global South. The study examines how SPM offers an alternative to the neoliberal food system and the practical implications of scaling such initiatives beyond West Sumatra. To critically analyze the SPM initiative, this study employs Cox's historical sociology alongside the food sovereignty framework, providing a dual lens for understanding localized resistance to the global capitalist food regime.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The global food system has long been a significant focus of research within international political economy and development studies, particularly in light of neoliberal policies that gained prominence in the late 20th century. These policies emphasize efficiency, competition, and market liberalization, which have reshaped food production and distribution systems (Harvey, 2005). Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory (2004) underscores how this capitalist-driven system marginalizes peripheral nations by positioning them as suppliers of raw materials for core nations, often at the expense of local food security and sovereignty. Scholars such as Patel (2009a) and McMichael (2012) stress that global food systems perpetuate inequalities, particularly in the Global South, where colonial-era structures have prioritized export agriculture over subsistence farming, leaving smallholder farmers vulnerable to the forces of globalization.

In response to these inequalities, *food sovereignty* has emerged as a counter-framework advocating for a food system that is not only sustainable but also grounded in local control and participatory governance. The La Via Campesina (LVC) movement has been a central voice in promoting food sovereignty, urging policies that support local farming, reduce reliance on multinational agribusinesses, and emphasize sustainability (Altieri, 2009). Gunderson and Zilberman (2017) contend that food sovereignty offers a transformative solution to the inherent inequalities of global food systems. However, practical implementation, especially in localized grassroots initiatives, remains under-explored, particularly in terms of how these smaller-scale models can challenge the capitalist food system.

Although food sovereignty has garnered significant attention globally, there remains a gap in the literature regarding localized, community-driven agricultural innovations that present viable alternatives to neoliberal food systems. Existing research often focuses on large-scale movements like LVC or national-level policies, with limited exploration of small-scale, localized initiatives offering practical, scalable solutions for smallholder farmers in specific regions (Borras & Franco, 2010). This gap is especially pertinent when considering how local innovations, such as the SPM initiative in West Sumatra, may contribute to the broader reconfiguration of global agricultural practices.

Studies on Indonesian farmers' movements highlight how local, ecologically-focused food production strategies, based on solidarity, moral economy, and small-scale practices, serve as viable alternatives to global industrial agricultural models (Reuter & MacRae, 2019; Triatmo, Suryono, Yuliar & Haryaka, 2025). This aligns well with the goals of the SPM initiative in West Sumatra. Although not specific to West Sumatra, the Southeast Asia-wide *Rikolto Sustainable Rice* program demonstrates how promoting sustainable rice practices, inclusive value chains, and market integration empowers smallholder farmers while challenging conventional agri-food systems (Rikolto, n.d.).

These principles reflect the transformative vision embodied by SPM. Research from Central Java highlights how smallholders adopting sustainable rice farming technologies—such as high-yielding, climate-smart varieties—improve productivity, income, and resilience (Connor et al., 2021). This underscores the potential of embedded innovations to enhance farmer autonomy, paralleling the objectives of SPM. A study on rice field expansion in West Sumatra further emphasizes the need for strategies such as farmer institutional empowerment and improved irrigation infrastructure to optimize rice productivity—core components of sustainable, locally-driven approaches (Reza, Noer & Satrianto, 2024).

This literature review reveals a critical gap in understanding localized agricultural solutions and smallholder empowerment within the broader food sovereignty movement. While global movements and national policies are well-documented, there is a lack of focus on the practical impact of localized initiatives like SPM. Focusing on the historical sociology framework, particularly Robert Cox's (1981) work on social forces and world orders, offers a unique lens through which local actors and historical contexts shape global food systems. This theory enables the exploration of how localized initiatives, such as SPM, challenge the global capitalist food system.

By incorporating Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony (1971), this study aims to further explore the SPM initiative as a form of resistance to capitalist agricultural practices in West Sumatra. This theoretical framework allows the analysis of local resistance movements that reimagine global agricultural structures. The research seeks to contribute to the discourse on food sovereignty by examining local resilience and the power of grassroots innovations in reshaping global agricultural systems. By focusing on the SPM initiative, this study aims to provide new perspectives on how smallholder farmers can resist the global capitalist food system, offering alternative models of agricultural reform grounded in local, sustainable practices.

The literature also underscores the complementary yet distinct nature of LVC and localized initiatives like SPM. While both movements share core values of promoting smallholder autonomy, agroecology, and resistance to corporate food systems, their political depth, scale, and strategic orientation differ significantly. While LVC represents a global-scale movement advocating for transformative policies, SPM operates on a more localized, grassroots level, with its focus on building food sovereignty through community-driven agricultural practices. This contrast provides a clearer understanding of how local initiatives, like SPM, can contribute to food sovereignty without the need for alignment with larger global movements.

In conclusion, this literature review identifies a significant gap in the research concerning localized agricultural innovations and their role in reshaping food systems. The SPM initiative represents a localized response that challenges the neoliberal food regime by promoting sustainable farming and smallholder empowerment. By focusing on

community-based solutions, SPM offers an alternative to the global food system, highlighting the potential of localized food sovereignty initiatives to create more resilient and autonomous agricultural systems.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design to analyze the Sawah Pokok Murah (SPM) initiative in West Sumatra as a localized response to the capitalist-driven global food system. The choice of a qualitative approach is driven by the exploratory nature of the research, which seeks to understand the socio-economic impacts and local dynamics of the SPM program. Qualitative methods are particularly suited for capturing the complexities of this agricultural innovation within its historical and socio-political context, allowing for a deeper understanding of how SPM functions as an alternative model in the face of global food system challenges.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through a combination of archival research and semi-structured interviews. Archival research involved reviewing government reports, policy documents, and historical records related to the development and implementation of SPM in West Sumatra. These sources provided a historical context for the SPM initiative, offering insights into the policy goals, strategies, and socio-economic outcomes of the program. Archival research also helped establish a foundation for understanding the broader landscape in which the initiative is situated.

In addition to archival research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 10 participants, including local farmers, policymakers, and agricultural experts who were directly involved in or impacted by the SPM initiative. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who had valuable experience and knowledge about the program. The interviews focused on participants' experiences with SPM, its effects on local farming practices, and their views on the potential of SPM to challenge the dominant global food system. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for emerging themes.

While the sample size for the interviews was small, focusing on a targeted group of individuals directly involved in the program, the study acknowledges that a broader and more diverse sample, including government officials, international agricultural experts, and representatives from local NGOs, would have enriched the analysis. This approach would have provided a more comprehensive perspective on the potential impacts of SPM, its scalability, and the broader policy implications.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method that involves identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was chosen because it allows for the extraction of key themes that

reflect the socio-political and economic impacts of the SPM initiative. Each interview transcript and archival document was carefully reviewed to identify recurring themes related to local empowerment, sustainability practices, economic resilience, and resistance to neoliberalism.

The identified themes were then linked to the study's theoretical framework, which integrates historical sociology, particularly Robert Cox's theory of social forces and world orders (Cox, 1981), and food sovereignty as discussed by La Via Campesina (Altieri, 2009). Thematic analysis was conducted iteratively, starting with initial codes developed from the interview transcripts and archival documents. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that reflected the main socio-political and economic impacts of the SPM initiative.

Data Triangulation

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, data triangulation was employed. This process involved combining different data sources—archival research and interviews—to cross-check for consistency and discrepancies. For example, data from archival sources on the historical development of SPM were compared with the interviews conducted with local farmers and policymakers. This triangulation process helped ensure that the insights gathered from the interviews accurately reflected the broader historical and socio-political context, providing a more comprehensive and reliable understanding of the SPM initiative.

Discrepancies between data sources were carefully examined, and further discussions with participants were conducted to clarify inconsistencies. This method of triangulation enhanced the credibility of the study's findings by ensuring that the data were consistent, comprehensive, and reflective of a variety of perspectives on the SPM program.

Research Procedure

The research followed a systematic process divided into four distinct phases to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the SPM initiative in West Sumatra.

The first phase involved an extensive literature review, where existing research on global food systems, food sovereignty, and local agricultural innovations was reviewed. This phase provided the foundation for understanding the broader context in which the SPM initiative operates, offering insights into the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study. By examining previous studies, the review helped shape the research's theoretical framework, providing essential background knowledge to support the analysis of the SPM program.

In the second phase, data collection was conducted through archival research and semi-structured interviews. Archival documents, including government reports and policy records, were reviewed to gather historical and contextual information on the development of the SPM initiative. Concurrently, interviews were held with key

participants involved in the SPM initiative, including local farmers, policymakers, and agricultural experts. These interviews were designed to gain first-hand accounts of the SPM program's impact and the experiences of those involved in its implementation. The data collection process was carefully organized to ensure that multiple perspectives were captured, contributing to a richer understanding of the initiative.

Once the data were collected, the third phase focused on data analysis. The transcribed interviews and archival documents were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that involves identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within the data. This analysis was guided by the historical sociology framework, which allowed the identification of key socio-political and economic themes related to local empowerment, sustainability, and resistance to neoliberal food systems. Thematic analysis provided a structured approach to uncover the core issues affecting the SPM initiative, allowing the research to align its findings with the theoretical framework that supported the study.

In the final phase, the interpretation and reporting of the findings took place. The results were interpreted in the context of global food systems and local resistance, with a focus on how the SPM initiative functions as a localized alternative to the global capitalist food system. The findings were presented in a narrative form, with supporting quotes from the interviews and archival data to enhance the richness and depth of the analysis. By framing the results within the broader socio-political and historical context, the study aimed to offer a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the SPM initiative's potential to reshape local agricultural systems.

Figures and tables were used throughout the study to visually represent the data collection process. For example, Figure 1 illustrates the data collection process through interviews with NGO activists and students supporting the SPM initiative in June 2025, while Figure 2 presents interviews with the initiators of the program at the Dangau Inspirasi Foundation, also conducted in June 2025. These visual aids were essential for providing clarity on the research process and supporting the interpretation of the findings.

Table 1 Sources of Data Sawah Pokok Murah in West Sumatera

Sources	Date	Title	Key Points
AMC News	2025, March 20	Bupati Agam Panen Perdana Sawah Pokok Murah di Sungai Cubadak	The first harvest of SPM in Sungai Cubadak, celebrating the program's practical success and impact on local farmers.
RRI.co.id	2025, April 20	Pemkab Agam Canangkan Program Sawah Pokok Murah	Government's commitment to ensuring the success of SPM through local government initiatives and policy support.

Dinas Pertanian Kabupaten Agam	2025, April 25	Pencanangan Sawah Pokok Murah 2025	Pencanangan of SPM for 2025, enhancing food sovereignty and supporting local agricultural growth.
Diskominfo Agam	2025, April 25	Sawah Pokok Murah: Dialog Inovasi Ketahanan Pangan Agam	A dialogue on innovative solutions for food security in Agam, focusing on SPM's long-term impact on rural development.
Diskominfo Agam (Instagram)	2025, April 25	Sawah Pokok Murah: Dialog Inovasi Ketahanan Pangan Agam [Instagram]	SPM video on Instagram outlining local engagement, innovation, and its potential to scale food security solutions.
Dinas Pertanian Kabupaten Agam	2025, May 25	Sawah Pokok Murah, progr Bupati Agam menarik perhatian daerah lain	SPM's success draws attention from other regions, highlighting its replicability in other areas.
Antaranews	2025, June 7	Sawah Pokok Murah solusi bertani hemat dan ramah lingkungan	SPM as an eco-friendly solution for affordable and sustainable farming, reducing dependency on chemical inputs.
Dinas Pertanian Kabupaten Agam	2025, June 13	Program Sawah Pokok Murah Agam dapat apresiasi Komisi IV DPR RI, dinilai layak diterapkan di seluruh Indonesia	SPM gains national recognition and support from the Indonesian parliament (Komisi IV).
Pemerintah Kabupaten Agam	2025, June 13	Program Sawah Pokok Murah Agam Dapat Apresiasi Komisi IV DPR RI	The recognition of SPM by Komisi IV as a model worth adopting nationwide for sustainable farming.
Dinas Pertanian Kabupaten Agam	2025, June 20	Sekolah Lapangan Sawah Pokok Murah dimulai, petani Koto Rantang tanam padi serentak	Initiation of 'Sekolah Lapangan' to enhance rice cultivation with local farmers through practical training.
Dinas Pertanian Kabupaten Agam	2025, June 21	Agam kuatkan ketahanan pangan lewat Sawah Pokok Murah di Matur	Focus on strengthening food security in Matur through local farming initiatives.
Kompas.com	2025, June 21	Titiek Soeharto Minta Budidaya Sawah Pokok Murah Dikembangkan di Banyak Daerah	Request for expanding SPM to other regions of Indonesia by prominent political figures like Titiek Soeharto.
Dinas Pertanian Kabupaten Agam	2025, June 23	Sawah Pokok Murah berdampak nyata, dorong peningkatan pertanian dan ketahanan pangan daerah	SPM improves agricultural productivity and local food security, providing an alternative to global food systems.
Koran Jakarta	2025, June 23	Keren, Budidaya Padi Metode SPM di Agam Dorong	SPM promotes low-cost, efficient farming methods

Pasbana.com	2025, June 23	Pertanian Unggul Biaya Rendah "Sawah Pokok Murah": Revolusi Pertanian dari Nagari untuk Negeri	while enhancing food security in Agam region. SPM as a revolution in farming that empowers local communities and strengthens food sovereignty in Indonesia.
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Figure 1 Data Collection Process through Interviews with NGO Activists and Students that Supporting Sawah Pokok Murah, June 2025.



Figure 2 Data Collection Process through Interviews with the Initiators of Sawah Pokok Murah at Dangau Inspirasi Foundation, June 2025.



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the potential of the Sawah Pokok Murah (SPM) initiative in West Sumatra as a localized alternative to the capitalist-driven global food system. The results of the study are organized into key themes that emerged from the data: local empowerment, sustainability practices, economic impact, and resistance to neoliberalism.

Local Empowerment

One of the most significant findings of this study is the empowerment of local farmers through the SPM initiative. Farmers expressed a strong sense of control over their agricultural practices, as SPM allowed them to reduce their dependence on external, often expensive, inputs such as chemical fertilizers and seeds. Suhatril Isra, a farmer facilitator from FIELD Indonesia, noted that the implementation of SPM had successfully reduced chemical fertilizer use by two-thirds compared to previous practices. In the regions of Padang Pariaman, Agam, Pesisir Selatan, and Solok Selatan, farmers reported a significant decrease in their reliance on chemical fertilizers, with some even adopting organic fertilizers, such as liquid organic fertilizer made from eggshells (interview, August 7, 2025).

The SPM initiative's emphasis on utilizing local resources, such as indigenous rice varieties and traditional farming techniques, restored autonomy to farming communities that were previously under the pressures of global food markets. This empowerment aligns with the principles of food sovereignty, as farmers were able to regain control over their production methods, reducing their dependence on global supply chains and corporate agribusinesses.

Sustainability Practices

The SPM initiative demonstrated several sustainable farming practices that were highly valued by local farmers. The agroecological design of the SPM model boosted productivity while reducing the need for external inputs, including chemical fertilizers and pesticides. This resulted in both economic and environmental benefits. A field survey conducted by FIELD Indonesia across 53 demonstration plots found that the SPM method increased average rice productivity by 30.1%, with yields ranging from 2.1% to 100% higher than conventional farming methods (DIRPP, 2024).

SPM's non-flooded, mulched planting method significantly mitigated issues such as iron toxicity and golden snail infestations, common in conventional rice fields. The practice of using rice straw mulch instead of burning it preserved soil structure, enhanced moisture retention, and reduced erosion, contributing to healthier soil and a more resilient ecosystem. This sustainability is central to the concept of food sovereignty, which promotes environmentally sustainable farming practices that also empower local communities (Altieri, 2009).

In addition to its impact on rice farming, SPM's practices supported biodiversity and ecological resilience. Participants reported improved soil health and greater biodiversity, with many highlighting the initiative's emphasis on crop rotation and reduced pesticide use. These sustainable farming techniques demonstrated how local agricultural practices could offer a sustainable alternative to industrial farming models, promoting environmental sustainability and long-term resilience in farming systems.

Economic Impact of SPM on the Local Farming Community

The SPM initiative has had a profound economic impact on local farmers in West Sumatra. Participants reported increased income stability and reduced vulnerability to the volatility of global rice prices. Farmers in Solok Regency, Padang Panjang, and Agam stated that they now have more control over the pricing and production of their rice. One farmer from Solok Regency remarked, "We used to simply follow market prices. Now, we set the price of our rice ourselves because we manage everything from start to finish."

This autonomy over production and pricing has significantly improved the financial resilience of smallholder farmers. Farmers practicing SPM reported an increase in yield, with some areas seeing a 100-200% increase in productivity, from 4-5 tons per hectare to 11-12 tons per hectare (Yurnaldi, 2025). Additionally, farmers in the region have diversified their income streams by rearing fish and eels in the irrigation ditches surrounding their fields, further enhancing their economic resilience (EMedia DPR RI, 2025).

The ability to manage production independently, without relying on middlemen or external market forces, has allowed farmers to stabilize their income. This control over production and pricing, combined with increased yields, has empowered farmers and reduced their exposure to fluctuations in global rice prices. Furthermore, the use of locally sourced inputs has made it easier for farmers to predict costs and profits, contributing to improved economic stability.

Resistance to Neoliberalism

The SPM initiative also serves as a form of resistance to neoliberal agricultural policies that prioritize global trade and corporate control over food systems. By reducing farmers' dependence on external inputs and corporate-driven agricultural practices, SPM pushes back against the dominance of multinational agribusinesses and the neoliberal forces that shape agricultural policy. Farmers' increased autonomy in production and pricing reflects a shift from passive laborers to active decision-makers in the agricultural process.

The findings of this study align with the historical sociology framework, particularly Robert Cox's theory of social forces (Cox, 1981), which posits that local empowerment acts as a form of resistance against global structures of power. The SPM initiative, by restoring local control over food production, counters the hegemony of global neoliberal policies and challenges the dominant paradigm of industrial, market-driven agriculture.

Social Capital and Collective Economic Resilience

The findings also highlight the importance of social capital in the success of SPM. Social capital, defined as the strength of community networks, knowledge exchange, and practices of localized food sharing, plays a critical role in building resilient food systems. Within SPM communities, farmers engage in knowledge sharing, cooperative resource management, and collective labor, which enhance agricultural productivity and economic resilience. This cooperative ethos fosters a sense of shared responsibility, which strengthens local solidarity and stabilizes the agricultural value chain within the community.

SPM's emphasis on cooperation and resource-sharing creates an economic ecosystem that buffers individual farmers from the volatility of global markets. This system of localized collaboration not only enhances production but also strengthens the financial security of farmers, making them less reliant on external actors. The findings of this study suggest that social capital—through collective action and mutual support—is a key factor in the success of localized food systems like SPM, which can help stabilize food production and distribution even in the face of external economic pressures (Nosratabadi et al., 2020; Pemerintah Kabupaten Agam, 2025).

The results of this study underscore the transformative potential of the SPM initiative as a localized response to the global capitalist food system. Through the empowerment of local farmers, the adoption of sustainable farming practices, and the creation of economic resilience, SPM offers a compelling alternative to the dominant neoliberal agricultural model. The initiative's success in increasing productivity, reducing input costs, and strengthening local control over food production reflects the core principles of food sovereignty, which prioritize local control, environmental sustainability, and economic justice. By fostering social capital and collective action, SPM also demonstrates the importance of community-driven agricultural solutions in building resilient food systems that can withstand the pressures of globalization. The findings highlight that local agricultural innovations like SPM not only contribute to food security but also offer a model for broader resistance to the hegemonic forces of global neoliberalism.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the Sawah Pokok Murah (SPM) initiative in West Sumatra, highlighting its potential as a localized response to the global capitalist food system. The key themes of local empowerment, sustainability practices, economic impact, and resistance to neoliberalism provide a comprehensive understanding of how the SPM initiative functions as a transformative model for smallholder farmers. This discussion connects the study's findings to the research objectives, examining their implications within the context of food sovereignty and local

resilience. It also explores some unexpected trends and compares these findings with prior research.

Local Empowerment and Resistance to Neoliberalism

One of the most striking findings of this study is the empowerment of local farmers, which is central to the SPM initiative. The reduction in farmers' dependency on external inputs, such as chemical fertilizers and seeds, aligns with the principles of food sovereignty, which advocates for local control over food systems. Farmers' increased autonomy in production and pricing represents a significant shift away from the power dynamics of multinational agribusinesses, which have historically marginalized smallholder farmers.

These findings support the work of Altieri (2009), who emphasized that food sovereignty is a form of resistance to global neoliberalism, empowering local communities to reclaim control over their food production systems. Similarly, this study shows that local agricultural practices, such as the use of indigenous rice varieties and traditional farming techniques, not only contribute to local food security but also challenge the exploitative practices of global agribusinesses. This aspect of the SPM initiative aligns with findings from Gundersen and Zilberman (2017), who argue that food sovereignty provides a transformative alternative to global food systems dominated by corporate interests.

Unexpectedly, while the SPM initiative has successfully empowered farmers in many regions, the findings also revealed that younger farmers were less engaged with the initiative. This trend is significant as it indicates the challenges of transitioning younger generations to sustainable farming practices. It suggests that while SPM is gaining traction among older farmers, the younger demographic may still be drawn to more modern agricultural practices that promise quicker financial returns. This observation aligns with previous research on the generational divide in agriculture, where younger farmers often perceive modern agricultural technologies as more profitable and aligned with their aspirations for upward mobility (Reuter & MacRae, 2019). Therefore, engaging younger farmers through targeted education programs, financial incentives, or technology-driven solutions could be crucial for the long-term sustainability of initiatives like SPM.

Sustainability Practices and Agroecological Benefits

The study also found that SPM promotes sustainable farming practices that significantly benefit both the environment and the farmers' economic resilience. The initiative's use of agroecological methods—such as the reduction of chemical fertilizer use, crop rotation, and organic mulch—has been shown to enhance soil health, increase biodiversity, and improve farm productivity. These findings resonate with the principles of agroecology, as outlined by Altieri (2009), which stress the importance of sustainable farming practices that work in harmony with the environment rather than exploiting it.

Compared to conventional farming methods, SPM has resulted in a 30.1% increase in rice productivity, while also reducing the environmental impact of farming. These results are consistent with earlier studies by Duffy et al. (2021), who found that agroforestry and sustainable farming practices can significantly increase smallholder income and improve environmental resilience. This study's findings also confirm the potential of agroecological practices to enhance food security and provide a sustainable alternative to industrial agricultural systems, which are often associated with soil degradation, pesticide dependence, and monoculture cropping.

Unexpectedly, the data also revealed that the effectiveness of the SPM initiative varied across different regions of West Sumatra, with some areas experiencing greater success than others. This regional disparity highlights the importance of addressing infrastructural and institutional challenges in the scalability of such local initiatives. Areas with better access to irrigation, transportation, and government support were able to implement SPM more successfully, while regions with less infrastructure faced difficulties in fully realizing the benefits of the program. This trend reflects the challenges identified in previous research on food sovereignty and local initiatives, where the success of such programs often depends on local infrastructure and political support (Tisnanta et al., 2015).

Economic Impact and Community Resilience

Economically, the SPM initiative has contributed to increased income stability and economic resilience among smallholder farmers in West Sumatra. By providing farmers with control over production and pricing, SPM has enabled them to capture more market value and avoid the volatility of global rice prices. This shift from reliance on middlemen to direct market participation represents a significant economic empowerment for local communities.

The economic impact of SPM is consistent with the findings of Borras and Franco (2010), who argue that food sovereignty initiatives enhance the economic independence of smallholder farmers by reducing reliance on global markets and multinational agribusinesses. Additionally, the increased income stability and ability to harvest multiple crops per year have further strengthened the resilience of farmers in the face of climate change and fluctuating market conditions.

However, the study also highlighted an important factor that has been underexplored in the existing literature: the role of social capital in building local economic resilience. As the findings show, the collaborative nature of the SPM initiative, where farmers share resources, knowledge, and labor, has created a robust system of economic solidarity. This collective approach not only strengthens individual farmers' resilience but also enhances the overall productivity and sustainability of the local agricultural sector. This finding supports the work of Nosratabadi et al. (2020), who emphasize the importance of social capital in fostering resilient food systems. By nurturing collaborative ecosystems, SPM

has been able to buffer farmers from the volatility of global food markets, creating a more stable and sustainable agricultural economy.

Comparative Analysis with Previous Studies

When comparing these findings to earlier research on food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture, this study's results align with existing theories on local empowerment and resistance to global neoliberalism. For instance, research by McMichael (2005) and Patel (2009b) emphasizes that food sovereignty initiatives, such as those promoted by La Via Campesina (LVC), challenge the global food system by prioritizing local control and sustainable practices. This study adds to this body of knowledge by demonstrating that localized initiatives like SPM can function effectively at a regional scale, providing an alternative to the global neoliberal food regime.

However, the study also diverges from previous research in some ways. While LVC operates on a global scale, advocating for policy changes and international solidarity, SPM's localized focus presents a unique model of resistance that emphasizes community-driven solutions at the grassroots level. The success of SPM in creating local food sovereignty has proven to be a viable alternative to the vulnerabilities embedded within global supply chains. At the same time, the study reveals that SPM's success is contingent upon local infrastructure, political support, and community engagement, which highlights the importance of context-specific adaptations for scaling such initiatives. This contrasts with LVC's more universal approach to food sovereignty, suggesting that while the principles of food sovereignty can be applied globally, their successful implementation depends on the specific socio-political and economic contexts in which they are introduced.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research on food sovereignty, highlighting the transformative potential of local initiatives like SPM. By promoting local control, reducing dependency on global supply chains, and fostering sustainable farming practices, SPM offers a compelling alternative to neoliberal agricultural policies. However, the study also highlights the challenges of scaling such initiatives, particularly in regions with limited infrastructure or political support. Future research should explore strategies to overcome these barriers and expand the reach of successful local models like SPM, ensuring that they can contribute to broader efforts to build resilient, sustainable, and equitable food systems.

CONCLUSION

The Sawah Pokok Murah (SPM) initiative in West Sumatra goes beyond being a localized agricultural program; it serves as a strategic response to the deep-seated structural inequalities within the global capitalist food system. Through the frameworks of historical sociology and food sovereignty, this study has demonstrated that SPM empowers smallholder farmers by reshaping the power dynamics in agriculture. By

reclaiming control over seeds, production methods, pricing, and knowledge systems, SPM exemplifies the principles of agroecology that emphasize ecological resilience, autonomy, and sustainability over dependency, extraction, and commodification.

However, the transformative potential of SPM must be understood within the context of broader political and economic structures. While SPM represents a form of local resistance and reconstruction, its success is tempered by significant structural challenges, such as neoliberal policy environments, disengagement of younger farmers, and regional disparities in infrastructure and support. These challenges underscore the necessity for multi-level interventions that bridge grassroots innovations with enabling political environments. For SPM to become a scalable model for food sovereignty, it requires strong political will, institutional backing, and generational involvement. As global food systems continue to grapple with crises of sustainability, equity, and resilience, the lessons learned from SPM offer timely insights into how local initiatives can challenge dominant agricultural paradigms and foster sustainable futures from the ground up.

The policy implications drawn from this study are crucial for advancing grassroots agricultural initiatives like SPM. Policymakers at local, regional, and national levels need to recognize the potential of community-based agricultural models to enhance food security and promote sustainable practices. To ensure the long-term sustainability and scalability of initiatives such as SPM, governments should integrate these models into national agricultural policies. Financial support, technical training, and infrastructure that enable smallholder farmers to thrive should be prioritized. Local governments play a pivotal role in this by offering subsidies for sustainable farming inputs, improving access to affordable credit, and facilitating market access for smallholder farmers. Additionally, regional governments should encourage collaborations between community organizations, NGOs, and academic institutions to support knowledge-sharing and capacity-building efforts among farmers.

At the national level, policymakers should develop policy frameworks that prioritize food sovereignty, land reform, and investment in rural infrastructure to create an enabling environment for initiatives like SPM. Policies should incentivize sustainable farming practices, support diverse farming systems, and reduce the reliance on monocultures driven by multinational agribusinesses. Furthermore, policymakers must work to ensure that smallholder farmers are not further marginalized by global market forces, and that local, eco-friendly farming systems are supported within the globalized economy.

To ensure the continued success of SPM and similar grassroots agricultural models, future research should focus on the engagement of younger farmers in sustainable agricultural practices. This demographic is often more inclined to adopt modern farming technologies that promise quicker financial returns, which can discourage participation in traditional or sustainable farming methods. Understanding the barriers to youth

engagement and developing targeted strategies, such as educational programs, financial incentives, or technology-driven solutions, is essential for ensuring the sustainability of initiatives like SPM. Research could explore how to align sustainable practices with the aspirations of younger generations, fostering greater adoption of food sovereignty principles.

Another key area for future research is the scalability of the SPM model. While this study focuses on the success of SPM in West Sumatra, it is important to explore how this model can be adapted and implemented in other regions of Indonesia or beyond. Future studies should examine regional differences in infrastructure, political support, and the specific needs of farmers to identify the contextual adaptations that would make SPM feasible in diverse environments. Additionally, comparative studies of SPM with other grassroots agricultural models could provide valuable insights into the relative strengths and limitations of different approaches to achieving food sovereignty on a local scale.

Lastly, further research could focus on the long-term impact of SPM on broader socio-economic factors, such as rural development, community cohesion, and resilience to external shocks like climate change. By understanding how these factors interact with local agricultural models, future research can help refine strategies for scaling such initiatives while ensuring they remain inclusive, sustainable, and aligned with the principles of food sovereignty.

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