

New Rice Field Expansion Policy and the Challenges of Protecting Sustainable Agricultural Land in Indonesia

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze Indonesia's new rice field expansion policy and the challenges of protecting Sustainable Food Agricultural Land (*Lahan Pertanian Pangan Berkelanjutan* or LP2B). The study focuses on the policy conflict between food production expansion and sustainable agricultural land protection within the framework of spatial planning and food security governance. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a policy analysis and legal-spatial governance perspective. Data were collected through document studies of laws and regulations, official statistics, government policy documents, spatial planning materials, media reports, and relevant academic literature on agricultural land conversion, LP2B protection, food security, and sustainable land governance. The findings show that new rice field expansion may strengthen food production capacity, but it does not automatically solve the continuing loss of productive agricultural land. The policy may become ineffective if newly opened fields are used merely to compensate for the conversion of existing fertile and irrigated rice fields. The study also finds that LP2B protection remains constrained by weak spatial planning integration, land conversion pressure, limited enforcement, and insufficient incentives for farmers and local governments. The contribution of this study lies in framing new rice field expansion as a spatial governance issue, not merely an agricultural extensification program. Food security policy should therefore balance land expansion with stronger LP2B protection, ecological safeguards, spatial consistency, and smallholder farmer protection.

Keywords: new rice field expansion; LP2B; sustainable agricultural land; food security; spatial planning; land conversion; Indonesia.

1. Introduction

The policy of expanding new rice fields has returned to the center of Indonesia's food security agenda as the government seeks to strengthen domestic food production and reduce dependence on imports. This policy is closely related to the broader national ambition to achieve food self-sufficiency through land extensification, irrigation improvement, optimization of existing agricultural areas, and the acceleration of food estate development in several regions. In 2025, the government reported that it had started approximately 225,000 hectares of new rice field development as part of its strategy to compensate for the continued loss of productive rice fields. The policy is understandable from the perspective of food availability because rice remains the main staple food for most Indonesians and the stability of rice supply has direct implications for social, economic, and political stability. However, the expansion of new rice fields also raises a fundamental governance question: whether increasing agricultural land area can be pursued without weakening the legal protection of existing sustainable agricultural land.

The urgency of this issue is strengthened by the continuing decline of agricultural land and rice production indicators in recent years. BPS estimated that Indonesia's paddy harvested area in 2024 was around 10.05 million hectares, decreasing by 167.25 thousand hectares or 1.64 percent compared with 2023, while paddy production was estimated at 52.66 million tons of dry unhusked paddy, decreasing by 1.32 million tons or 2.45 percent from the previous year (BPS, 2024). At the same time, anti-corruption and planning institutions warned that Indonesia had lost around 320,000 hectares of rice fields over the last decade due to conversion into industrial, residential, and other non-agricultural uses (KPK, 2025). These figures show that food production expansion is taking place in a context where productive agricultural land continues to shrink. Consequently, the state faces a dual challenge: creating new production areas while

preventing the conversion of existing rice fields that are often more fertile, irrigated, and closer to food distribution networks.

Table 1. Key Data on Rice Field Expansion and Agricultural Land Protection in Indonesia

Indicator	Data / Policy Information	Governance Relevance
New rice field expansion policy	Around 225,000 hectares started in 2025	Reflects the government's production expansion strategy
Potential next target mentioned in policy discourse	Up to 480,000 hectares of new rice fields by the following year	Shows the scale of planned extensification
Estimated paddy harvested area in 2024	10.05 million hectares	Indicates the current production base for rice
Decline in harvested area	167.25 thousand hectares or 1.64 percent compared with 2023	Shows pressure on rice production land
Estimated paddy production in 2024	52.66 million tons of dry unhusked paddy	Indicates a decline in production output
Decline in paddy production	1.32 million tons or 2.45 percent compared with 2023	Strengthens the argument for production support
Rice fields lost over the last decade	Approximately 320,000 hectares	Shows persistent land conversion pressure
RPJMN 2025–2029 target	87 percent of standard rice fields targeted to be designated as LP2B	Indicates the need to legally protect productive agricultural land
Number of smallholder farmers	17.25 million smallholders with less than 0.5 hectare of land	Shows that land protection is also linked to farmer livelihood security

The data in Table 1 demonstrate that new rice field expansion and sustainable agricultural land protection are not two separate policy issues. New rice field development is intended to increase production capacity, while the protection of Sustainable Food Agricultural Land (*Lahan Pertanian Pangan Berkelanjutan* or LP2B) is designed to prevent the loss of productive agricultural land. Both policies share the same goal of strengthening food security, but they may produce tension when implemented without spatial consistency and ecological safeguards. New rice fields are often developed in frontier areas, marginal lands, peatlands, forest-edge areas, or regions requiring major infrastructure investment, while existing rice fields are frequently located in more productive agricultural zones but face strong pressure from urbanization and industrial expansion. If new rice field expansion is used to compensate for the conversion of existing fertile land, food security policy may become reactive rather than sustainable.

The legal framework for protecting agricultural land has been established through Law No. 41 of 2009 on the Protection of Sustainable Food Agricultural Land. This law defines LP2B as agricultural land designated for consistent protection and development to support national food independence, resilience, and sovereignty. The law also requires the integration of LP2B into regional spatial planning and restricts land conversion except under strict conditions. In practice, however, implementation remains uneven because many regions have not fully designated LP2B in their spatial plans or have not enforced land conversion control effectively. The problem becomes more complicated when food production expansion policies are pursued simultaneously with infrastructure development, housing expansion, investment zones, and industrial estates, all of which compete for land in the same spatial governance system.

From a spatial planning perspective, the conflict between new rice field expansion and LP2B protection reveals a deeper policy inconsistency. On the one hand, the government promotes extensification by opening new rice fields to strengthen food self-sufficiency. On the other hand, the state is still struggling to protect existing productive rice fields from conversion. This creates a paradox: the government spends public resources to create new agricultural land while productive agricultural land in strategic locations continues to be converted. Bappenas (2025) emphasized the need to strengthen the control of rice field conversion and set a target for 87 percent of standard rice fields to be designated as LP2B in the 2025–2029 RPJMN. This policy direction shows that food security cannot rely only on land expansion; it must also depend on strong spatial governance, land-use control, and legal protection for existing agricultural areas.

Previous studies have examined LP2B, agricultural land conversion, spatial planning, and food security from several perspectives. Ayunita et al. (2021) analyzed the control of sustainable food agricultural land conversion and emphasized that weak enforcement remains a central obstacle in protecting agricultural areas. Octavianti and Nurikah (2021) found that the effectiveness of LP2B policy in supporting food security depends on local regulatory commitment, spatial planning consistency, and implementation capacity. Haris et al. (2023) examined sustainable agricultural land-use control in Soppeng Regency and highlighted the importance of integrating agricultural land protection into spatial planning instruments. Muttaqin et al. (2024) discussed agricultural spatial policy from the perspective of environmental justice and argued that agricultural land protection should consider not only production needs but also ecological and social justice dimensions. Bahuwa et al. (2024) further showed that incentive policy is important in LP2B protection because legal restriction alone is insufficient when farmers face economic pressure to convert or sell their land.

Other studies and policy discussions have also shown that agricultural land protection must be linked to farmer welfare, land tenure security, and the sustainability of food production systems. Saifuddin (2024) emphasized the need for policy strategies that combine land protection, farmer incentives, and spatial control in areas facing urban and industrial pressure. Muzqufa et al. (2025) showed through a case study in Karawang that even regions with LP2B policy commitments still face land conversion pressures due to economic interests, development permits, and weak enforcement. Farmer-related data also reinforce this concern because the 2023 Agricultural Census recorded more than 17.25 million smallholder farmers with agricultural land below 0.5 hectare (BPS, 2023). For smallholders, land is not only a production asset but also a livelihood base, so the weakening of agricultural land protection may increase rural vulnerability. These studies indicate that the challenge of LP2B protection is not only legal-formal, but also institutional, economic, and spatial.

The research gap lies in the limited analysis of the policy conflict between new rice field expansion and sustainable agricultural land protection. Existing studies tend to discuss new rice field development as part of production expansion, while LP2B studies often focus on land conversion control, spatial planning, and legal protection. Fewer studies examine how these two policy directions interact and whether they support or contradict each other within the framework of food security governance and sustainability. This article offers a novel contribution by positioning the new rice field expansion policy as part of a broader spatial governance conflict between food production expansion and the protection of existing sustainable agricultural land. The study argues that food security policy should not only ask how much new land can be opened, but also how existing productive land can be protected, how land-use planning can prevent policy contradiction, and how expansion can be aligned with ecological sustainability and farmer welfare. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the new rice field expansion policy and the challenges of LP2B protection in Indonesia, with particular attention to spatial planning, land conversion control, sustainability, and the protection of smallholder farmers.

2. Research Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a policy analysis and legal-spatial governance perspective. This method is used because the research examines the new rice field expansion policy not only as an agricultural production program, but also as a governance issue involving land-use planning, sustainable agricultural land protection, food security, and farmer livelihood sustainability. The qualitative approach enables the study to interpret the relationship between food production expansion and the protection of Sustainable Food Agricultural Land (*Lahan Pertanian Pangan Berkelanjutan* or LP2B). Rather than measuring the statistical impact of new rice field expansion, this study focuses on explaining how the policy is designed, implemented, and aligned with spatial planning and land protection instruments. This method is relevant because the central problem of the study lies in the possible policy tension between increasing food production through extensification and preventing the conversion of existing productive agricultural land.

The case study in this research is the implementation of Indonesia's new rice field expansion policy within the broader framework of LP2B protection. This case is selected because the government has

promoted new rice field development as part of the national food self-sufficiency agenda, while at the same time Indonesia continues to face persistent agricultural land conversion. The study focuses on how new rice field expansion interacts with existing spatial planning, LP2B designation, land conversion control, and food security governance. The case is important because opening new agricultural land may increase production potential, but it may also create ecological, social, and institutional risks if not integrated with sustainable land protection. The study therefore analyzes whether the policy strengthens food security governance or merely compensates for the continuing loss of productive rice fields.

The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data may be obtained through semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders, including officials from agricultural agencies, spatial planning agencies, regional development planning agencies, land offices, local governments, farmer groups, environmental experts, and policy analysts. These interviews are directed at understanding the implementation of new rice field expansion, the challenges of LP2B protection, the consistency of spatial planning, and the impact of land-use policy on smallholder farmers. Secondary data are collected through document studies, including laws and regulations, spatial planning documents, LP2B policy documents, government reports, BPS agricultural statistics, RPJMN documents, policy statements, media reports, and academic literature on agricultural land conversion, food security, spatial planning, and sustainable land governance.

Data collection is conducted through document study, semi-structured interviews, and limited field observation where possible. Document study is used to examine the legal basis of LP2B protection, the policy design of new rice field expansion, regional spatial planning instruments, agricultural land statistics, and official policy targets. Semi-structured interviews are used to obtain empirical insights from actors involved in agricultural planning, land protection, food production, and spatial control. Field observation may be conducted in selected areas where new rice field expansion is implemented or where productive agricultural land faces conversion pressure. This combination of techniques enables the study to connect national policy direction with local implementation realities.

The data are analyzed using qualitative interactive analysis, consisting of data reduction, data classification, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is carried out by selecting information directly related to new rice field expansion, LP2B protection, land conversion control, spatial planning, food security, and farmer welfare. Data classification is conducted by grouping findings into several analytical categories, namely production expansion, land protection, spatial consistency, institutional coordination, ecological sustainability, farmer livelihood, and policy conflict. Interpretation is then conducted by linking empirical findings with the concepts of sustainable agricultural land protection, food security governance, and spatial planning. The final stage draws conclusions on whether new rice field expansion supports sustainable food security or creates new contradictions in agricultural land governance.

Table 2. Analytical Indicators of the Study

Analytical Focus	Indicator	Direction of Analysis
New rice field expansion	Policy target, land location, implementation mechanism, and production objective	Assessing whether expansion is planned as a sustainable food security strategy
LP2B protection	Legal designation, spatial plan integration, conversion control, and enforcement	Evaluating whether productive agricultural land is effectively protected
Spatial planning consistency	Alignment between agricultural policy, RTRW, land-use permits, and development planning	Examining whether production expansion and land protection are spatially integrated
Food security governance	Availability, production stability, land sustainability, and institutional coordination	Assessing whether expansion strengthens long-term food security governance
Land conversion pressure	Urbanization, industrial development, housing expansion, and infrastructure projects	Identifying factors that weaken LP2B protection
Ecological sustainability	Soil suitability, water availability, irrigation, environmental carrying capacity, and land degradation risk	Evaluating whether new rice fields are environmentally viable
Farmer livelihood	Smallholder land access, tenure security, income stability, and production incentives	Assessing whether the policy protects or marginalizes small farmers

Analytical Focus	Indicator	Direction of Analysis
Institutional coordination	Role of central government, local governments, spatial planning agencies, agricultural agencies, and land offices	Examining whether implementation is coordinated across sectors
Policy conflict	Tension between extensification and land protection	Determining whether the policy creates contradiction or complementarity in food governance

Through this methodological framework, the study seeks to provide an integrated analysis of the new rice field expansion policy and the challenges of LP2B protection in Indonesia. The descriptive qualitative approach allows the research to examine policy implementation not only from the perspective of increasing food production, but also from the perspective of spatial governance, sustainability, and farmer protection. This method is useful for identifying whether agricultural extensification is supported by strong land-use planning and ecological safeguards. By applying this framework, the study contributes to the discussion on how food security policy can be aligned with sustainable agricultural land protection in Indonesia.

3. Results and Discussions

1) New Rice Field Expansion as a Production-Oriented Food Security Strategy

The findings show that Indonesia's new rice field expansion policy is primarily designed as a production-oriented response to the pressures facing national food security. The policy seeks to increase the availability of agricultural land for rice production, particularly in the context of declining harvested area, land conversion, and the need to reduce import dependence. In 2024, BPS estimated that the national paddy harvested area reached around 10.05 million hectares, declining by approximately 167 thousand hectares compared with the previous year. Paddy production was also estimated to decline to around 52.66 million tons of dry unhusked paddy, showing that food production policy was operating under real pressure from land and productivity constraints. Against this background, the government's decision to begin around 225,000 hectares of new rice field development in 2025 can be understood as an effort to expand the national production base.

However, the production logic behind new rice field expansion cannot be separated from the broader governance problem of agricultural land protection. Opening new rice fields may increase the potential area for food production, but it does not automatically solve the structural problem of losing existing productive rice fields. Productive rice fields located in irrigated, fertile, and well-connected regions often have higher immediate value for food security than newly opened land in frontier, marginal, or infrastructure-poor areas. If new land development is used merely to compensate for the continuous conversion of existing rice fields, the policy risks becoming reactive and inefficient. This finding indicates that extensification must be evaluated not only by the number of hectares opened, but also by the quality, productivity, ecological suitability, and spatial integration of the land being developed.

Table 3. Production Expansion and Agricultural Land Protection Context

Indicator	Empirical / Policy Condition	Governance Meaning
Estimated paddy harvested area in 2024	10.05 million hectares	Shows the existing national rice production base
Decline in harvested area	Approximately 167 thousand hectares	Indicates continuing pressure on agricultural land
Estimated paddy production in 2024	52.66 million tons GKG	Shows production vulnerability before expansion policy
New rice field development started in 2025	Around 225,000 hectares	Reflects extensification as a food production strategy
Rice fields lost over the last decade	Around 320,000 hectares	Shows that land conversion remains a structural threat
RPJMN 2025–2029 LP2B target	87 percent of standard rice fields to be protected	Indicates the need for stronger legal-spatial protection
Smallholder farmers	More than 17 million farmers with less than 0.5 hectare	Shows that land protection is also a livelihood issue

Table 3 shows that the new rice field policy and LP2B protection are two sides of the same food security problem. On one side, the state needs to expand or restore the production base to respond to declining harvested areas and rising food demand. On the other side, the state must prevent productive agricultural land from being converted into industrial estates, housing areas, infrastructure corridors, and commercial zones. The loss of around 320,000 hectares of rice fields over the last decade demonstrates that the problem is not only insufficient expansion, but also weak protection of existing agricultural land. This means that new rice field development cannot be treated as a substitute for land conversion control.

The expansion policy also raises questions about land suitability and long-term productivity. Newly opened rice fields often require significant investment in irrigation, drainage, land clearing, soil improvement, road access, storage, and farmer settlement support. In several extensification experiences, new agricultural land does not immediately reach the productivity level of established rice fields because soil conditions, water availability, and cultivation infrastructure require time to develop. If ecological assessment and infrastructure planning are weak, the cost of creating new rice fields may be higher than the benefit generated by additional production. This shows that the success of new rice field expansion depends on whether the selected land is agronomically feasible, spatially appropriate, and environmentally sustainable.

From a policy implementation perspective, the expansion of new rice fields should be integrated with intensification, irrigation rehabilitation, post-harvest management, and protection of existing farmland. Production growth cannot rely solely on adding land area because food security is also shaped by productivity, farmer capacity, input access, and market certainty. A hectare of protected irrigated rice field in a productive agricultural zone may contribute more reliably to food security than a newly opened hectare that lacks water control and logistics access. This finding supports the argument that food security policy must combine extensification with strong LP2B protection. Without this integration, Indonesia may continue to open new fields while losing its most productive agricultural land.

2) LP2B Protection and the Weakness of Spatial Governance

The protection of Sustainable Food Agricultural Land, or LP2B, is legally grounded in Law No. 41 of 2009, which requires the state and local governments to designate and protect agricultural land for long-term food security. The law establishes that agricultural land protection must be integrated into spatial planning, supported by incentives, and controlled through restrictions on land conversion. In principle, this framework provides a strong legal basis to prevent the loss of productive food land. In practice, however, LP2B implementation remains uneven because many regions have not fully integrated LP2B into regional spatial plans or have not enforced land conversion restrictions consistently. This gap between legal design and implementation is one of the central problems in Indonesia's agricultural land governance.

The findings show that weak spatial governance creates a policy contradiction between food production expansion and agricultural land protection. While the central government promotes the creation of new rice fields, local governments often face pressure to convert existing agricultural land for housing, industry, infrastructure, tourism, and commercial development. This pressure is particularly strong in peri-urban areas and economically strategic corridors where land values rise rapidly. Farmers may also face incentives to sell land when agricultural income is low or when protection policies do not provide sufficient economic compensation. As a result, LP2B protection cannot rely only on legal prohibition; it must also provide economic incentives and institutional certainty for farmers to continue cultivating food crops.

Table 4. Policy Conflict between New Rice Field Expansion and LP2B Protection

Policy Dimension	New Rice Field Expansion	LP2B Protection	Potential Conflict
Main objective	Increasing production area	Preventing conversion of productive farmland	Expansion may compensate for, rather than prevent, conversion
Spatial orientation	Often directed to new or frontier areas	Focused on existing productive agricultural land	New fields may be less productive than protected old fields
Governance	Land opening, infrastructure,	Spatial designation, conversion	Institutions may work separately

Policy Dimension	New Rice Field Expansion	LP2B Protection	Potential Conflict
instrument	irrigation, farmer placement	control, incentives, sanctions	without integrated planning
Economic pressure	Requires large public investment	Faces pressure from land market and development permits	Protection may weaken when non-agricultural land value rises
Sustainability issue	Risk of ecological degradation if land is unsuitable	Risk of legal ineffectiveness if enforcement is weak	Both policies may fail without spatial consistency
Farmer implication	May create new cultivation areas	Protects existing farmer livelihood base	Small farmers may be displaced if land conversion continues

Table 4 demonstrates that the conflict between new rice field expansion and LP2B protection is not only a technical land-use issue, but also a governance conflict. The expansion policy operates through agricultural production targets, while LP2B protection operates through spatial planning and land-use control. If these two instruments are not synchronized, the government may pursue extensification in one area while permitting or tolerating conversion in another. This creates inefficiency because public funds are used to create new food production areas while existing productive areas continue to disappear. Such a pattern weakens the sustainability of food security policy.

The RPJMN 2025–2029 target to designate 87 percent of standard rice fields as LP2B reflects the government’s recognition that land protection must become a national priority. This target is important because standard rice fields represent the core production base that should not be easily converted. However, achieving the target requires strong coordination among the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning, the Ministry of Agriculture, Bappenas, local governments, land offices, and law enforcement institutions. It also requires accurate spatial data, legally binding maps, integration into RTRW, and effective monitoring of land-use permits. Without these elements, the LP2B target may remain a planning commitment rather than an enforceable land protection regime.

Previous studies support this finding by showing that LP2B protection depends heavily on local implementation capacity and spatial planning consistency. Ayunita et al. (2021) emphasized that the control of sustainable food agricultural land conversion is weakened by enforcement problems and inconsistent local policy. Octavianti and Nurikah (2021) found that the effectiveness of LP2B policy depends on regulatory commitment and implementation capacity at the regional level. Haris et al. (2023) also showed that sustainable agricultural land-use control requires integration between legal instruments and spatial planning. These findings confirm that LP2B protection cannot function effectively if it is treated only as a formal designation without clear institutional responsibility and enforcement.

3) Sustainability, Farmer Protection, and an Integrated Land Governance Model

The results of the analysis show that the sustainability of new rice field expansion depends on ecological feasibility, farmer readiness, and institutional coordination. New rice fields require sufficient water availability, suitable soil conditions, climate compatibility, irrigation infrastructure, and protection from environmental degradation. If expansion is carried out on ecologically fragile land, the policy may create new environmental problems such as peat degradation, deforestation risk, water conflict, biodiversity loss, or declining soil quality. Food security policy should not sacrifice ecological sustainability because long-term food production depends on stable ecosystems. This means that every new rice field project should be preceded by environmental carrying capacity assessment, land suitability analysis, and transparent spatial review.

Farmer protection is equally important because agricultural land policy directly affects rural livelihoods. The 2023 Agricultural Census recorded more than 17 million smallholder farmers with less than 0.5 hectare of land, showing that Indonesia’s agricultural structure remains dominated by small-scale producers. For these farmers, land is not merely an economic asset, but also a source of livelihood, identity, and intergenerational security. When existing rice fields are converted, small farmers may lose production space and become wage laborers or informal workers. When new rice fields are opened without adequate support, farmers may face new risks related to land tenure, irrigation access, production costs, and market uncertainty.

Table 5. Required Safeguards for Sustainable Rice Field Expansion and LP2B Protection

Governance Area	Main Risk	Required Safeguard
Spatial planning	Expansion and protection policies operate separately	Integrate new rice field policy with RTRW and LP2B maps
Land suitability	New fields are opened in unsuitable or fragile areas	Require soil, water, and ecological feasibility assessment
Land conversion control	Existing productive rice fields continue to disappear	Strengthen permits, monitoring, sanctions, and public reporting
Farmer livelihood	Small farmers lose land or fail to benefit from expansion	Provide tenure security, incentives, extension, and market access
Irrigation and infrastructure	New fields cannot reach productive capacity	Ensure irrigation, roads, storage, and post-harvest facilities
Institutional coordination	Agencies pursue different policy targets	Establish cross-sector coordination among agriculture, spatial planning, and land agencies
Data governance	Inaccurate land maps weaken protection	Use integrated geospatial data for LP2B, LSD, RTRW, and land permits
Sustainability	Expansion creates ecological degradation	Apply environmental safeguards and long-term monitoring

Table 5 outlines the minimum safeguards required to prevent new rice field expansion from contradicting LP2B protection. The first safeguard is spatial integration, because agricultural expansion should not be planned separately from protected agricultural land maps and regional spatial plans. The second safeguard is ecological feasibility, because new rice fields must be suitable for long-term cultivation rather than only meeting short-term hectare targets. The third safeguard is farmer protection, because food security cannot be achieved if the farmers who produce food become more vulnerable. These safeguards show that sustainable food security depends on land governance, not merely land availability.

The relationship between new rice field expansion and LP2B protection should be framed as complementarity, not substitution. Expansion may be necessary in certain regions, especially where land availability, water resources, and ecological conditions support sustainable agriculture. However, expansion should not become an excuse to tolerate the conversion of existing productive rice fields. The state must prioritize protecting fertile, irrigated, and strategically located agricultural land while carefully selecting new land for development. This approach would prevent a cycle in which the government continuously opens new land to replace land lost to uncontrolled conversion.

The policy also requires stronger incentive mechanisms for farmers and local governments. Farmers need incentives to maintain land as agricultural land, especially when non-agricultural land prices are much higher than farming income. Local governments need fiscal and regulatory incentives to protect LP2B because conversion often increases local economic activity and short-term revenue. Incentives may include tax relief, infrastructure support, agricultural insurance, guaranteed procurement, access to credit, and support for farmer organizations. Without incentives, LP2B protection may be perceived as a burden imposed on farmers and regions, rather than as a shared national food security commitment.

This study finds that the main challenge of Indonesia's new rice field expansion policy lies in aligning food production expansion with sustainable land protection. The policy can support food security if it is implemented on suitable land, integrated with spatial planning, supported by irrigation and infrastructure, and connected to farmer protection. It may become counterproductive if it encourages hectare-based targets while existing productive rice fields continue to be converted. The novelty of this finding lies in positioning new rice field expansion as a spatial governance issue rather than merely an agricultural extensification program. Food security policy should therefore be evaluated by asking not only how much new land is opened, but also how much productive land is protected, how farmers are safeguarded, and how land-use planning ensures long-term agricultural sustainability.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that Indonesia's new rice field expansion policy is an important production-oriented strategy to strengthen national food security, but it cannot be separated from the challenge of protecting Sustainable Food Agricultural Land (*Lahan Pertanian Pangan Berkelanjutan* or LP2B). The policy responds to declining harvested areas, land conversion, and the need to increase domestic food production. However, the findings show that opening new rice fields does not automatically solve the structural problem of agricultural land loss. If productive, irrigated, and strategically located rice fields continue to be converted while the state opens new agricultural land elsewhere, food security policy may become reactive and inefficient. New rice field expansion must therefore be integrated with land conversion control, spatial planning consistency, ecological feasibility, and farmer protection.

The main finding of this study is that the conflict between new rice field expansion and LP2B protection is essentially a spatial governance problem. Expansion policy focuses on increasing agricultural land area, while LP2B protection focuses on preserving existing productive farmland. Both policies aim to strengthen food security, but they may contradict each other when implemented through separate institutional frameworks. A sustainable food security strategy should not treat new rice fields as a substitute for protecting existing rice fields. The state must prioritize the protection of fertile and irrigated agricultural land while ensuring that new land development is carried out only in suitable areas with adequate water, infrastructure, and environmental safeguards.

The novelty of this study lies in positioning the new rice field expansion policy not merely as an agricultural extensification program, but as a policy issue involving spatial planning, sustainable land governance, and farmer livelihood protection. Previous studies have generally discussed LP2B protection, land conversion, and food production expansion separately. This study contributes by showing that food security policy must be assessed through the relationship between production expansion and agricultural land protection. The implication is that the success of food security policy should not only be measured by the number of hectares opened or the increase in production, but also by how effectively the state protects existing productive land, prevents conversion, and safeguards smallholder farmers.

This study has limitations because it relies mainly on policy documents, official statistics, legal frameworks, and conceptual analysis of land governance. Future research should conduct field-based studies in regions where new rice field expansion is implemented and where LP2B areas face strong conversion pressure. Further research should also examine the ecological suitability of new rice fields, the effectiveness of LP2B enforcement in regional spatial plans, and the impact of land policy on smallholder farmer welfare. Comparative studies across provinces would be useful to identify which land governance models are most effective in aligning food production expansion with sustainable agricultural land protection.

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