

# EATING IN A TIME OF FOOD PRICE VOLATILITY

Evidence from Three Villages in Indonesia

*Year 3 findings from the Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility Study*



Eating and food preparing activities of the sampled households (clockwise order bottom left to bottom right): in Bekasi, in Cianjur, and in Banjar. Credit: *Photos taken by local people—participatory photography, 2013*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report serves as the final report of the *Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility* research project in Indonesia, carried out in three sampled villages within three different *kabupaten* (districts), which are Kabupaten Bekasi and Kabupaten Cianjur (in West Java), and Kabupaten Banjar (in South Kalimantan). Results discussed in this report are based on the third year research activities focused on changing food habits and people's perspectives towards processed and unsafe food. The third year research activities try to obtain an in-depth perspective on how the adjustment strategies of households and individuals, especially the poor ones, in facing price volatility may influence the way they are eating and living. Factors affecting the food habits of people may include lifestyle changes in the community and the broader nation/global wide influences generally associated with modernization and urbanization; massive media advertisements; as well as pressure from peers. The research team also includes the views and knowledge of people involved in the research towards their food consumption, as well as how their views and knowledge may or may not affect the decision in their choices of food.

The methodology of this research project was explained in full in the Year 1 and 2 combined report. Beside core methodology, this study tries to enrich the findings by focusing on special topics of current interest for each year. This year, the 'special topic' will focus on understanding the adequacy and acceptability of the food people are eating in the research communities, focusing specifically on how food habits and customs are being influenced by processed foods and foods perceived to be unsafe. In addition to our regular inquiry into wellbeing, coping and social protection, the third year research activities give special attention to:

- documenting what processed foods people are buying or selling, and understanding which mechanisms influence decisions about what to purchase and consume;
- gathering people's concerns about food adequacy and safety, and exploring why they worry about it, and what is being or should be done about it;
- understanding how processed foods and concerns about food safety have influenced people's food habits and customs.

The people whose lives we have followed in this research are those who work as low-income casual workers and/or coming from vulnerable group of households for several reasons, such as head of household's status as a widow, a household of an extended family with many children, households with elderly members, and households with member(s) with disabilities. These people have been faced with a variety of upheavals and uncertainty of living each day even before having to face a major crisis. Uncertainty in their lives would involve the case when no one is calling them for work, when their employment contracts are not being renewed, when they experience bad harvest season, when the livestock animal they kept are being sold by its owner, when their business is failing, or when their household member(s) suffer(s) from illness. Some of these people live with such limited income that they can only fulfil a day meal. As food contributes so significant a share to total households' expenditure, a small shift in food prices can have a great impact on their daily lives, especially when food price is increasing.

Points highlighted in this research, as summarized below:

- In general people felt that prices in 2014 had been less volatile than in previous years we studied (2011-2013). The volatility in this year is not as big as in previous years because, according to the people, the movement of prices in 2014 has been only driven by routine seasonal factors - such as the price rises that always occur at the time of the Islamic festival Eid Mubarak and the falling prices that occur in the harvest season. This is in contrast to the price volatility in the previous years, which was also affected by rising fuel prices;
- Although it does not apply to all products, prices at the local level also shown a declining trend which took place along with the declining prices at the national level within the past year. Food prices declined the most, while prices of other basics, such as fuel, gas, agricultural inputs, and construction materials tended to increase;

- The three-year observation in this research indicates declining prospects for agriculture and increasing job opportunities in the formal sector in all research locations. But apart from this increase in opportunities, there are quite a lot of obstacles that prevent some people from having access to formal employment and to obtaining a more certain job. People also complained about the employment contract system adopted by most factories, which weakens the position of its workers, and complained about wage rate;
- Agriculture and plantations sectors in Cianjur and Banjar sites are declining slowly but surely. People - especially the younger generation in both locations are starting to lose interest in jobs in these sectors due to among others unpredictability of weather, pest attacks, expensive and scarce agricultural production items, as well as falling prices of agricultural commodities;
- Local businesses of all sizes have emerged in all research locations, providing great variety of services ranging from food vendors (ready-made food, snacks, drinks, etc.), daily amenities sellers, mobile phone vendors (also selling top-up credits), clothing sellers, laundry services, drinking water refill vendors, automobile workshops, car wash services, apothecaries, and plastic waste processors;
- The most visible impact of changes in local livelihood and labour is a trade-off between participation of people in economic work and unpaid care work within a household, particularly women's participation. Under the generally accepted norm in the society, most of the household chores are the responsibility of women, usually mothers and daughters. With an increasing number of female teenagers working outside the house, other family members feel the effect as household work falls on them. In some households, mothers and/or daughters must rearrange the division of unpaid care work after the daughter decides to work outside the home. Daughters who work outside the house also have impacts on their unpaid work in helping family businesses;
- People whose lives we followed try to cope with uncertain income and volatile prices by employing strategies to seek more income sources and trying to cut household expenditure. Among all expenditures, food has become the priority as well as the main source of concerns for a poor household. This research discovered that most efforts done by people relate greatly to food, to how they will be able to have more income to buy food for their family, as well as how to reduce expenses of purchasing food;
- This research revealed increasing demand for convenience through prepared and instant food, which are encouraged by increasing numbers of women participating in economic work, growing and volatile living cost—especially food, and supported by the availability of various food vendors in and around the neighborhood offering enticing products and attractive servings;
- This research discovered that people have limited knowledge about nutritional values and food safety in the meals they provided for their families. In addition, pressures of poverty have often made people sacrifice the quality and quantity of food they are consuming. Adjustments on food were done by the people under the consideration of price, durability, and food taste. Very few of them could afford to consider the nutritional value and quality, safety or cleanliness of the food they were eating;
- The increasing preference among children for snack foods raises the tension between parents and children. Parent's relationships with their children is no longer only measured by value from affection, but also from the value of money. In some cases, the amount of allowance given by parents is understood to reflect the form of affection they have for their children. Factors encouraging the increase in children's interests towards snacking come from peer pressure, advertisements on television and social media, and the availability of food merchants.

# ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

## A

*arisan* traditional saving group  
*asin* salted fish (anchovy)

## B

BI Bank Indonesia  
BLSM/BALSEM Bantuan Langsung Sementara Masyarakat/*unconditional cash transfer program*  
BLT *Bantuan Langsung Tunia/unconditional cash transfer program*  
BULOG Badan Urusan Logistik/*State Logistic Agency*  
*Baslup (Bakso celup)* *starchy meatball served in clear soup*  
*bakul* *rice basket*

## E

Eid Mobarak *Idul Fitri (an Islamic Festive)*  
*Endog (telur)* *egg*

## F

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization  
FGD Focus Group Discussion  
FPV Food Price Volatility

## G

*gotong royong* *community work*

## I

*Idul Fitri* Eid Mubarak  
*Idul Adha* an Islamic holiday also known as Festival of Sacrifice  
IDS Institute of Development Studies  
IrishAid *The Irish Government's official aid programme*  
*ikan gabus* Lat.: *Channa striata*  
*ikan papuyu* Lat.: *Anabasastestudineus*  
*ikan asin* salted fish

## J

*jajan* snacking/buying snack  
*jajanan* snacks  
*jengkol* dogfruit

## K

*Kabupaten* District level  
*Kecamatan* Sub-District level  
*ketoprak* rice cake served with mixed vegetables, tofu, peanut sauce dressing

## L

LPG Liquefied Petroleum Gas  
*Lebaran* led Mobarak

## M

MDGs Millennium Development Goals  
MSG monosodium glutamate

**N**

<i>nasi uduk</i>	rice cooked with coconut milk
<i>nganjuk</i>	indebt/borrowing money/borrowing foodstuffs from trader, other farmers, or middlemen
<i>ngeprik</i>	scavenging leftover paddy from harvested field
<i>pengeprik</i>	people who doing <i>ngeprik</i>

**P**

PDAM ( <i>Perusahaan Daerah Air Minum</i> )	regional state owned water company
<i>pecel lele</i>	fried catfish served as side dish to plain or coconut milk rice
<i>pepetek teri</i>	salted anchovies cake
<i>putu mayang</i>	traditional rice based cracker (made from rice paste)

**R**

<i>Ramadhan</i>	Islamic fasting month (prior to led Mubarak)
<i>rambutan</i>	<i>name of a local fruit</i>
Raskin (Beras untuk rakyat miskin)	subsidized rice for the poor
<i>rengginang</i>	traditional rice based cracker (made from sticky rice)
Rp (Rupiah)	Indonesia national currency

**S**

<i>sambal</i>	chili condiment
<i>sembako</i>	basic needs and essentials
<i>Siam Unus</i>	a type of local rice (paddy) in Banjar
SKPG ( <i>Sistem Kewaspadaan Pangan dan Gizi</i> )	Food and Nutrition Surveillance System
SRG ( <i>Sistem Resi Gudang</i> )	Warehouse Receipt System
<i>susah makan</i>	difficult to obtain food

**T**

TPI	<i>Tim Pemantauan dan Pengendalian Inflasi</i> /The Monitoring and Inflation Controlling Team <sup>1</sup>
<i>tahu</i>	tofu/bean curd
<i>tempe</i>	fermented soy bean cake
<i>taksi</i>	minibus public transportation in Banjar

**U**

UK Aid	United Kingdom Aid
UMR ( <i>Upah Minimum Regional</i> )	Regional Minimum Wage
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
<i>uwak</i>	uncle

**W**

<i>wadai</i>	traditional fritter made from rice flour
<i>warteg</i>	a type of food stalls
<i>warung</i>	stalls
WFP	World Food Programme

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<sup>1</sup> Pembentukan TPI (*Tim Pemantauan dan Pengendalian Inflasi*) didasarkan pada Surat Keputusan Bersama (SKB) Menteri Keuangan No.88/KMK.02/2005 dan Gubernur Bank Indonesia No.7/9/KEP./Formation of TPID (Inflation Monitoring and Control Team) is based on a Joint Decree of the Minister of Finance No.88/KMK.02/2005 and of the Governor of Bank Indonesia No.7/9/KEP.GBI/2005.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Living in poverty forces people to figure out how to make ends meet to eat each day. As prices continue to be volatile and with their uncertain income condition, these people must work harder, cut expenses, sell or pawn personal assets, or seek help from other people to meet their family's daily needs. The people whose lives we have followed in this research are those who work as low-income casual workers, farm labourers, smallholder farmers, contract workers, small business owners or sellers, and some are unemployed. Households may also be categorised as vulnerable for several reasons, such as head of household's status as a widow, a household of an extended family with many children, households with elderly members, and households with member(s) with disabilities. These people have been faced with a variety of upheavals and uncertainty of living each day even before having to face a major crisis. Uncertainty in their lives would involve the case when no one is calling them for work, when their employment contracts are not being renewed, when they experience bad harvest season, when the livestock animal they kept are being sold by its owner, when their business is failing, or when their household member(s) suffer(s) from illness. On the other hand, the prices of daily needs—especially food, keep on rising. Some of these people live with so limited income that they can only fulfil a day meal. As food contributes so significant a share to total households' expenditure, a small shift in food prices can have a great impact on their daily lives, especially when food price is increasing.

*Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility* is a research project initiated in 2012 by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) - University of Sussex (United Kingdom) in collaboration with Oxfam GB. The study explores how food price volatility and impacts people's lives. Through longitudinal, in depth-topical, and multisite data collection activities, it tested a series of propositions about the impacts of price volatility on dimensions of the wellbeing of different groups of poor and vulnerable people, along pathways triggered by changing food prices. The research aims to understand why and how high unpredictable prices of food and other basic needs affect the way poor and vulnerable people live, the way they respond to the changes, and how these responses create further changes in their wellbeing—which can be explained, among other things, by the conditions of people's work, eating and consumption pattern, family relations, unpaid care work arrangements (whether intra- or extra-household), social lives, and perception of as well as aspiration for the future. Furthermore, the study also tries to determine how available support systems (formal or informal) can help the people in dealing with price volatility (Hossain, King & Kelbert 2013). With funding support from UKAid and IrishAid the project involves researchers from ten countries: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Zambia undertaking local research within their country context between 2012 and 2015. In total, the study covers 23 research sites across the ten countries.

In Indonesia, a research team from SMERU Research Institute carried out the research. It sampled case study locations from three villages within three different *kabupaten* (districts), which are Kabupaten Bekasi and Kabupaten Cianjur (in West Java), and Kabupaten Banjar (in South Kalimantan). Overall, research activities were carried out for three years by conducting rapid field research visits in July-October 2012, September-October 2013, and August-September 2014. Each visit includes in-depth interviews with case study households and key informants, focus group discussion with community groups, researcher observation, participatory photography by local people, and secondary data collecting. Given the fact that food price volatility touches many aspects and dimensions, the findings are also enriched by focusing on a special topic of current interest for each year. This includes the topic of future farmers (first year) and local accountability for food security (second year). In the third year, this research focused on changing food habits and people's perspectives towards processed and unsafe food. This topic was chosen based on the emerging concern among study respondents regarding changes in their food habits. Issues of food safety



and of micro-nutrient deficiency are also becoming increasingly recognised at policy level in Indonesia.

This report serves as the final report of the *Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility* research project in Indonesia. Results discussed in this report are based on the third year research activities focused on changing food habits and people's perspectives towards processed and unsafe food. The third year research activities try to obtain an in-depth perspective on how the adjustment strategies of households and individuals, especially the poor ones, in facing price volatility may influence the way they are eating and living. Factors affecting the food habits of people may include lifestyle changes in the community and the broader nation/global wide influences generally associated with modernization and urbanization; the development of technology and rapid information influx—including massive media advertisements; as well as pressure from peers. The research team also includes the views and knowledge of people involved in the research towards their food consumption, as well as how their views and knowledge may or may not affect the decision in their choices of food.

Delivering the results of the third year research in Indonesia, the first part of this report gives a brief overview of current food price trends and mentions some efforts implemented by the government in tackling price volatility. It then moves on to give an overview of the current situation at the local level, explaining changes to local livelihood due to changes in the price of food and other costs of living, shifts on employment opportunity between informal and formal, a diminishing agricultural sector, and paid-unpaid work and care work trade off. The final section explains how people cope with hardship from volatile food prices and uncertain income and shows how the pressure influences the way people eat and changes their preference toward food.

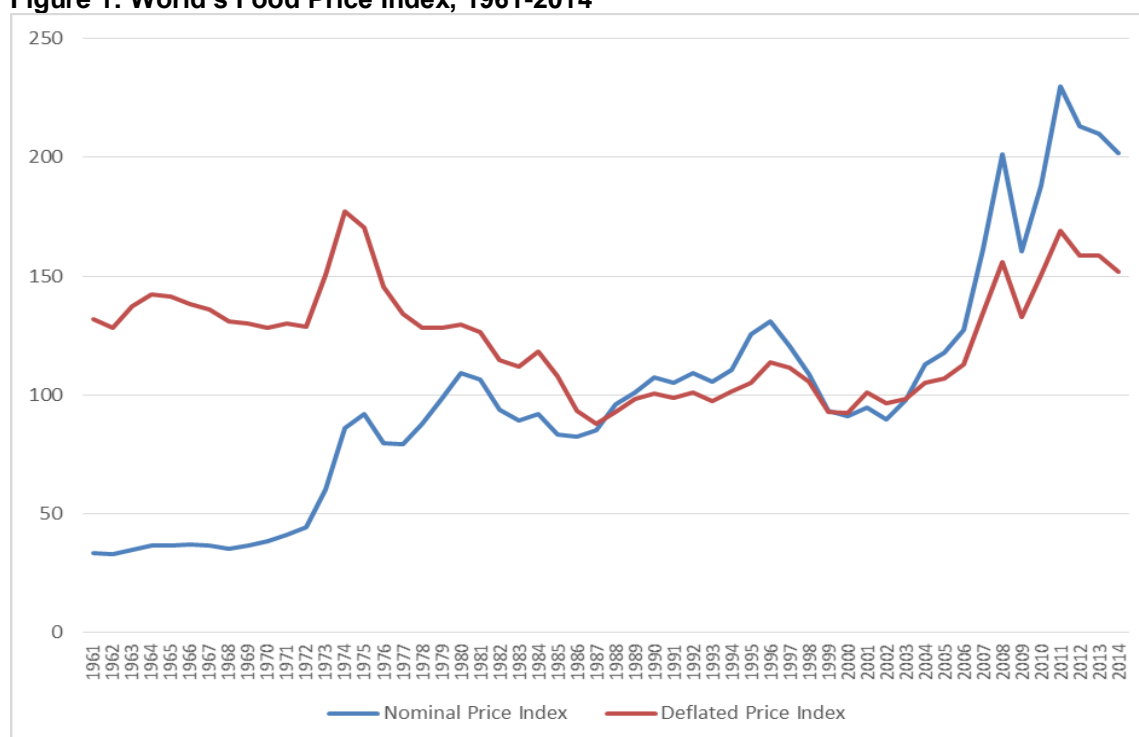
In the light of international efforts to reduce chronic malnutrition, this research expects to provide valuable inputs and insights to policy makers and people working in designing and implementing better policies on food and nutrition. Last but not least, it also has implications for policy makers in Indonesia to develop better policies and approaches which enable them to look at deeper on how food price volatility at macro level impacts on the lives of people at the micro level.

## 2 THE CHALLENGE OF VOLATILE FOOD PRICES

World food prices show a substantial increase and unpredictable movement within recent decades (see ADB, 2012). Even though causes and intensity of potential contributors behind food price movements are still under debate, many experts believe that food prices in the future will continue to be volatile along with the increasing demand for food, while world food supply is overshadowed by production and distribution challenges. The increase in world food demand has been influenced by rising population, increasing demand from emerging countries<sup>2</sup>, rapid urbanization—which means more people will become food buyers rather than producers, and the increasing demand on food crops for biofuels (Jennings *et al.* 2015; Benson *et al.* 2008). The world food supply is also experiencing challenges from the extreme change of world's climate, rapid land conversion, aging agricultural workforce, and low technological innovation in agricultural sector—especially in developing countries. Global food commodity markets have also become more vulnerable to the risk coming from increasingly protective food trade policies of countries around the world, speculation in world commodity markets (FAO, IFAD & WFP 2011), and increasing energy prices.

World food price movements within the last decades are presented in Figure 1. As shown in the figure, world food price has been intensively volatile since the last World's Food Price Spike in 2007-2008.

**Figure 1: World's Food Price Index, 1961-2014**



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

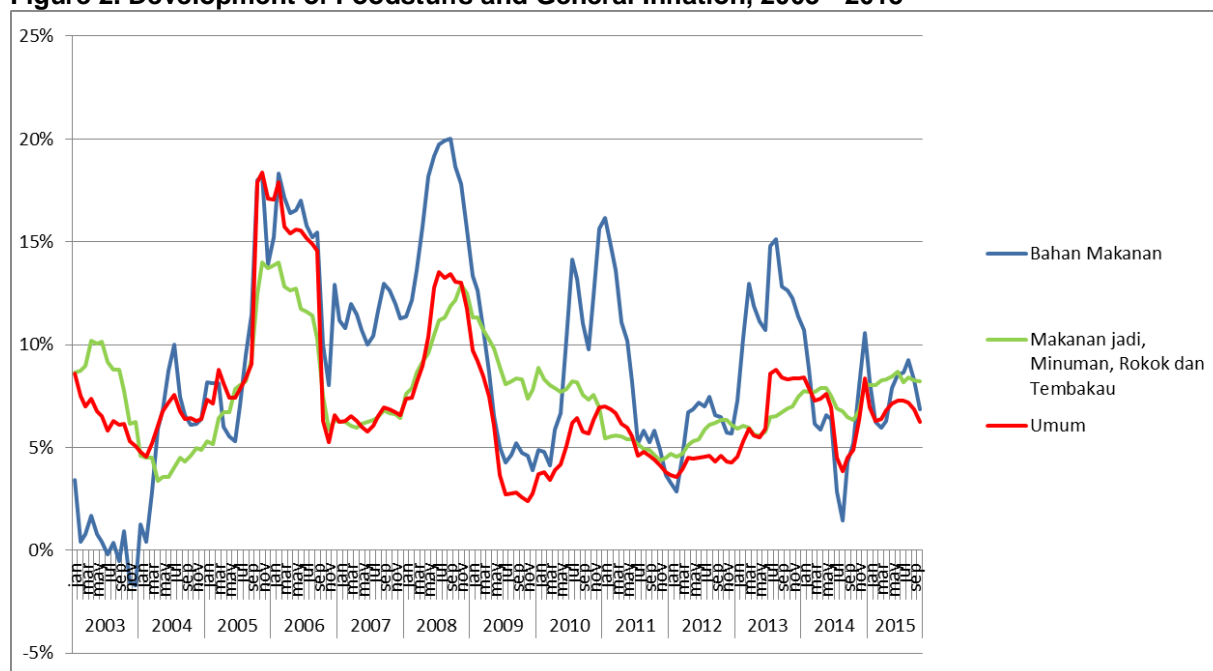
<sup>2</sup> As cited in Ramalingam *et al.* (2008) increasing demand appears higher in high-priced food commodities such as milk and meat. The increase in purchasing power of countries caused this condition to occur and will then encourage dietary changes by reducing traditional staple food consumption.

High and volatile food prices affect the lives of many people in the world, especially those living in poor households and spending a significant share of their expenditure on food. However, since most policy makers rely on macro statistical indicators, the precise nature of the social costs of food price volatility often escape attention, derived as they are from informal adjustment by households and individuals. It is estimated that the 2007-2008 international food price spike to have kept or pushed 105 million people into below poverty line, and 50 million people in the 2010-2011 spike (World Bank 2012). FAO (no date) estimated high food price during 2007-2008 international food price spike has increased the number of undernourished people 850 million in 2006 to more than 1 billion in 2009.

## 2.1 Food Price Movement

In Indonesia, national inflation indicators show a declining movement of prices from mid-2013 until the end of 2014 (see Figure 2). The fall in the inflation rate is in line with the trend in international prices, which also declined throughout 2014 (see Figure 1), and the decline in international fuel price since mid-2014. Inflation increased again after the government reduced the subsidy on fuel prices (premium and diesel) by Rp2,000 (US\$0.2) per liter on 18 November 2014 (Bank Indonesia, Kementerian Keuangan, and Kementerian Dalam Negeri 2015).<sup>3</sup> According to Bank Indonesia, the rise of inflation rate was driven by changes in volatile price indicators (such as food price) and administered commodity prices (such as fuel and transportation fare) set by the Government of Indonesia (GoI). These items contribute almost 40 percent of the national inflation rate (Bank Indonesia 2016). At the time, fuel price rose by 34%, with premium fuel priced at Rp8,500 (US\$0.85) per liter and diesel priced at Rp7,500 (US\$0.75) per liter. Amidst declining world fuel price, the decision to increase the national fuel price had to be undertaken to suppress a national budget deficit.

**Figure 2. Development of Foodstuffs and General Inflation, 2003 - 2015**



Source: Bank Indonesia, processed data.

<sup>3</sup> The fuel price changes had not occurred during the implementation of the third year's research (August – September 2014).

## 2.2 Challenges on Price Control

Volatile prices pose a challenge for Indonesia's economic stability given the high vulnerability of primary contributors of inflation, which include food prices and prices of commodities administered by the government (such as fuel, electricity, household fuels, and transportation fare). Moreover, being highly dependent to imported foodstuff, Indonesian food prices are particularly vulnerable to international food price changes, currency rates, and international trade policies (see ADB 2011). In addition, pressure also comes from fuel price changes, which affect the costs of producing and distributing food. On the other hand, efforts to control food prices in Indonesia also face constraints due to the decline of national agricultural prospects as the result of low investments in agricultural sector, rapid land conversion, damaged agricultural infrastructure, inefficient food supply distribution chain, and climate change, which make this country still depend greatly on imported food commodities (Azadi et. al., 2006; Barichello and Patunru 2009; Brighten Institute 2012; DFID, World Bank & PEACE 2007; Measey 2010; Reardon & Timmer, 2007) as have already mentioned in previous report of this study (Nurbani, Sulaksono, and Sadaly, 2015). Continuous volatility indicates the increasing burden on the efforts of controlling inflation by the government. Since people are highly dependent on energy, especially fuel, government efforts in controlling inflation in the administered energy price has enormous implications on the national budget and would often be the source of budget deficit from year to year. In 2014, the government had allocated a national budget of Rp282 trillion [US\$28.2 billion] to subsidize energy. Around 85% of the budget for energy subsidy was allocated to subsidize fuel and around 15% was allocated to subsidize electricity. The total amount spent on energy subsidies is 15% of national budget spending, which is huge if compared to the spending on social assistance, which is only 4.89% of the total spending.

In Indonesia, price control is undertaken through monetary interventions by the central bank (Bank Indonesia). Nevertheless, monetary interventions alone are not enough to control and regulate prices because price control demands consideration of many cross-sector and cross-region factors. For this purpose, Bank Indonesia formed the Monitoring and Inflation Controlling Team (TPI: *Tim Pemantauan dan Pengendalian Inflasi*). The team collaborates with various institutions, such as the Ministry of Finance, Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, Ministry of National Development Planning, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, and the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration. The formation of TPI in 2005 was stipulated by Joint Decree of the Minister of Finance No.88/KMK.02/2005 and of the Governor of Bank Indonesia No.7/9/KEP.GBI/2005. The legal basis for the implementation of TPI is set annually with Decision Letters of the Minister of Finance. TPI is tasked in the coordination of monitoring and evaluating factors affecting inflation, setting the inflation target, and providing policy recommendations to support the achievement of inflation target to the Minister of Finance, which will be used in formulating fiscal policy when necessary. To support TPI at national level, there are also TPI at regional level, tasked with coordinating the efforts of controlling inflation at regional level.

In addition through fiscal (subsidies) and monetary (interest rates and money supply) interventions, the government also established other efforts at a more limited scale and scope than the two policies. Among them are policies in importing specific food commodities, market operations, and purchasing paddy from farmers, which handled mostly by Bulog (State Logistic Agency) in coordination with other institutions such as the Ministry of Trade and Ministry of Agriculture. In order to reduce the farmers' losses due to price fluctuations, the Ministry of Trade began piloting a warehouse receipt system (*Sistem Resi Gudang*), aiming to buy and store farmers' crops inside a warehouse. This system allows farmers to redeem their crops with the normal price even though its market price has escalated. In other efforts to reduce the impact of price volatility, the government also contributes to strengthening social protection schemes which are targeted at poor people. One of the scheme is through unconditional cash transfers (*Bantuan Langsung Tunai: BLT and Bantuan Langsung Sementara Masyarakat: BLSM*) which were given to dampen the impact of fuel price increase. Social protection schemes are available and help to deal with price volatility and by projecting to increase a household's financial capacity. Such social protection schemes are not intended to directly dampen

the price volatility, but at some point, its benefits can also be felt on reinforcing the ability of a household in coping with their situation. One of the schemes can be found in form of rice subsidy (Raskin) and health insurance targeted to poor households. Despite all these policies and programmes, Indonesia continues to face volatile food price from time to time.

## 3 LOCAL LIVELIHOODS

The transmission of price fluctuations occurring at the macro level to local level is heavily dependent on the characteristics of people's livelihood and its connection to the broader economy. Many cases show that the impacts often occur at the same time as other pre-existing factors. Therefore, it is important to recognize the presence of these existing factors, as well as other factors occurring at the same time of price fluctuation, in order to understand the impact of food price volatility. Based on this, this chapter discusses the changes in prices, factors and other developments occurring in the local (micro) level, and discusses how they affect people's livelihood.

Observations during the years in this research clearly show that each site experienced changes in livelihood, although they differ from each other, depending on their respective characteristics of livelihood. The variety of characteristics of livelihood may relate to characteristics of the people, resources available in the area, location of the area, and all potential risks existing in their surroundings.

Many people living in research site in Bekasi rely for their livelihood on the existence of migrant workers working in the industrial areas. They establish rental houses or units, sell prepared foods, sell mobile phone top-up credits, and do other jobs complimentary to these types of business in the local level. Though there are also local people who work in the factories, they are fewer in number than migrant workers. The livelihood of people living in Bekasi site depends greatly upon the conditions of business in the surrounding industrial areas. It also thus depends on market demand for domestic or exported industrial products, prices of the industrial source material, energy (fuel and electricity) price, minimum wage policy, and labour regulations.

Agriculture and plantations local are the livelihoods in Banjar and Cianjur research sites. Most of the people living in Cianjur site rely on agricultural food, such as paddy (rice). Some people also plant inter seasonal crops, such as sweet potato, corn, beans, and other vegetables. Most of the people in the Cianjur site work as farm labourers, share-cropper farmers, farm owners, or other businesses providing daily necessities for local people, such as kiosks and shops. People in Banjar site are reliant on the rubber plantation industry. They are smallholder rubber plantation owners, rubber sappers, share-croppers, farm workers, rubber collectors, rubber seeders, rubber transporters (using motorcycle). Some have other occupations outside of the rubber industry, but supporting the lives of people working in rubber industry, such as selling daily necessities, running food stalls or driving vehicles.

The livelihoods of many people in Cianjur and Banjar sites rely heavily on natural and environmental factors. These factors include climate and weather, pests and plant diseases, agricultural infrastructure, and the existence of other types of industry flourishing around these areas. Garment and convection industries in Cianjur, as well as coal mining industry in Banjar, are seen as industries that are more modern and promise a better future.

### 3.1 Good Signal from Food Prices with Persisting Challenges

Although it does not apply to all products, the declining trend in prices at the local level took place along with the declining prices at the national level within the past year. Food prices declined the most, while prices of other basics, such as fuel, gas, agricultural inputs, and construction materials tended to increase.



Picture 1 Grocery shopping activities in Cianjur site (photo by Rahmat Juhandi, 2013)

## Food Prices

Respondents' views on changes in food prices were not uniform, but in general they felt that prices in 2014 had been less volatile than in previous years we studied (2011-2013). The divergent views occur because each commodity and each region has experienced a different set of price movements (Table 1). The volatility in this year is not as big as in previous years because, according to the people, the movement of prices in 2014 has been only driven by routine seasonal factors - such as the price rises that always occur at the time of the Islamic festival *Eid Mobarak* and the falling prices that occur in the harvest season. This is in contrast to the price volatility in the previous years, which was also affected by rising fuel prices.

Food prices rise ahead of *Eid Mobarak* and the month of *Ramadan*. After the *Eid Mobarak*, which in 2014 fell in late July, prices begin to decrease.

*"(Food) Prices would usually decline after led Mobarak,"* said participants of village elite FGD in Bekasi site.

**Table 1. Food Price Development in Research Sites, 2011-2014**

Food Items	Bekasi				Cianjur				Banjar			
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rice (per litre)	3,500-6,000	7,000-9,000	7,500-11,500	7,000-10,000	4,500-7,500	6,000-8,000	6,500-7,000	7,500-9,500	5,500-8,000	5,500-9,000	6,000-8,000	6,000-11,000
Egg (per piece)	n/a	1,000	1,500	2,000	n/a	1,500	1,700	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,500
Eggs (per Kg)	10,000-14,000	16,000	19,000-21,000	21,000-22,000	13,000	14,000-17,000	18,000	20,000	12,000-16,000	17,000-19,000	20,000	20,000-21,000
Tempeh (per piece)	1,000	2,000	2,500-3,000	3,000-4,000		3,000	5,000	5,000	1,000	2,000	4,000	4,000
Chicken parting (per piece)	2,000	3,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Fish/ikan mas (per Kg)	10,000	17,000	25,000-35,000	30,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Fish/ikan tongkol (per Kg)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	30,000	40,000	26,000
Anchovies (per package)	1,000	2,000-3,500	2,500-4,000	5,000	2,500-3,000	4,000-5,000	5,000	6,000	3,000	5,000	7,000	5,000
Vegetables (per bunch)	500-1,000	1,000-2,000	1,000-2,000	2,000	500	1,200-1,500	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,500	3,000	2,000
Shallots (per Kg)	6,000	10,000	35,000	25,000	n/a	12,000	20,000	15,000-16,000	20,000	10,000-12,000	30,000-60,000	22,000
Chili peppers (per Kg)	9,000-13,000	15,000-25,000	70,000-100,000	12,000-30,000	n/a	12,000	25,000	40,000	n/a	50,000	120,000	20,000
Cooking oil (per Kg)	6,000-9,500	11,000-12,000	11,000-12,000	12,000-14,000	8,000-9,500	11,000-13,000	10,000-11,000	12,000-14,000	7,000-8,000	8,000-12,500	10,000-13,000	12,000
Sugar (per Kg)	6,000-10,000	11,000-12,000	10,000-12,000	11,500-13,000	8,000-14,000	10,000-12,000	11,000-14,000	10,000-12,000	8,000-10,000	12,000-13,000	9,000-12,500	12,000
Instant noodles (per sachet)	1,000	1,500	2,000	2,000	1,000	1,300-1,500	1,500-2,000	2,000-2,500	900	1,300	1,500	1,500

Sources: interviews and FGD, consolidated.



Not all food commodities declined. In fact, according to some people, up until the last field visit conducted in August-October 2014, there are still food commodities whose price has not dropped, or which they felt may even rise further.

Factors affecting the difference in price changes, among others, are the distribution of food commodities, local farming conditions, and market conditions. An obvious example is the price of rice. In peri-urban areas, such as Bekasi site, the price of rice tends to be more stable, or experiences slight increases. On the other hand, rural areas, such as Banjar and Cianjur sites, rice prices will increase more than Bekasi site. Dry season may be the cause of this shift in rice prices due to the diminution of harvested products in both locations.

*"Rice is now experiencing a price increase. For Siam Unus type, the current price is Rp12,000 [US\$1.2] per liter, while regular rice currently priced at Rp7,000 [US\$0,7] per liter. Farmers are having a bad harvest, therefore, the increase of rice price is unavoidable. The price rise occurred about a week prior to Ramadhan, "* said one of the participants of male FGD in Banjar site.

Significant price volatility still occurs in several areas for some food commodities, such as chillies and onions, which show a drastic price drop this year. However, in Cianjur site, the price of chilli increased due to the dry season, leading to poor harvests. The dry season in this area of the agricultural centre has also contributed to the rise in prices of vegetables.

*"Chilli price is cheaper this year compared to last year. Prior to last year's Lebaran, chili price reached Rp100,000 [US\$10] per kg. Nowadays, it is more stable unlike last year,"* said one of the staff members of Food Security Office in Bekasi.

*"Since last month, red onions (shallots) experienced drastic price drop from Rp60,000 [US\$6] per kg to Rp15,000-Rp16,000 [US\$1.5-1.6] per kg,"* participants of male FGD in Banjar site.

*"Usually, we can get half a kilo of chili for Rp5,000 [US\$0,5]. Recently, it is Rp10,000 [US\$1] for half a kilo,"* said female FGD participants in Cianjur site about the rising price of chili in their area.

Price drops not only occur in major condiments, such as chili and onion. Some traditional commodities, such as *jengkol*, beans, have also become less expensive in 2014:

*"During the Lebaran holidays, jengkol (dog fruit) price reached an astonishing Rp55,000 [US\$5.5] per kg. Its current price had reduced to Rp20,000 [US\$2] per kg,"* participants in village elite FGD in Bekasi site.

Durable foodstuffs, such as instant noodles and sugar, retain a relatively stable price range. A slight change in price might occur to these products, but it will not as significant as a non-durable foodstuff.

During the research, the topic of price change and its impact on the community has always been an interesting theme of discussion, as well as proving challenging to understand. People's daily shopping activities do not directly reflect their understanding of how much prices have changed and how these changes may affect their lives. When food prices increase, people tend to have their own strategy of dealing with the situation in order to get the same foodstuff, but at a relatively similar price. A common consumer strategy is to substitute cheaper pre-packaged foods, or purchase similar but inferior types of

ingredients at a lower price, or simply to buy less. Sellers make foodstuffs available in smaller sizes. In regards to these practices, several important points, covered in previous reports (Nurbani, Sulaksono, & Sadaly, 2015) still happen today, and therefore continue to be a concern, such as:

- Prices of commodities such as vegetables and *tempeh* (soybean cake—made from fermented soybean) seem to be unchanged, nevertheless, these products are mostly sold in smaller sizes;
- Rice, sugar, and cooking oil have different quality grades. People tend to switch to lower grade products to get the same price when the products they usually purchase become more expensive. The opposite occurs when prices go down;
- Some food commodities are available in packages, such as chilli sauce and soup ingredients. This complicates the research of unit price over one of the ingredients included in the package. Selling packaged groceries is one of the seller's strategies in making sales of their products in smaller quantities or lower quality at an affordable price despite any price increase;
- The information of prices submitted by our samples is limited to prices on commodities that are a part of their usual consumption. Meanwhile, other commodities, such as meat and chicken, have rarely included in our discussions because people on low incomes consider these products as luxury items and they hardly include them in their daily consumption;
- People find it difficult to answer the question about prices of food ingredients that they can get free of charge, such as vegetables and fruits picked from the trees, as well as fish, which they can get by themselves.

People complain that rising prices have forced them to spend more money. They also complain that over time they felt that their income is increasingly unable to balance expenditure incurred. Moreover, employment and income also felt more and more uncertain.

*"It is not enough for me spending Rp50,000 [US\$5] for shopping the household's needs mam..."*

*"Everything is more expensive now, a small bunch of vegetables is now Rp2,000 [US\$0,2]. A package of sour soup is priced at Rp1,000 [US\$0,1], in the past I could get more than what I get right now. Even the price of a package of soup increased to Rp3,000 [US\$0,3]. A piece of tofu is now Rp4,000 [US\$0,4], when it was only Rp2,000 - Rp2,500 [US\$0.2-2,5] a year ago. Rice....well it seems quite stable, and there is an option whether to buy rice priced at Rp8,000 [US\$0,8] or rice priced at Rp7,000 [US\$0,7] per liter..."*

*"I don't understand why prices always increase! "Ibu R (a 42 years old, housewife who also work as massage therapist) in Bekasi site.*

Ibu S (a food vendor aged 54 years, who lives with children and grandchildren in Bekasi) complained that the money always runs out:

*"My son does not work anymore, he got laid-off. Since before the fasting month not so long ago. (My son) is not given severance pay, he got nothing from the former company..."*

*"... As (My son) is not working anymore, it means I cannot save now. Usually I could save as much as 5,000 [US \$ 0.5] a day, sometimes 10,000 [US \$ 1]. Now, everything ran out only for cooking needs."*

## Other Prices

Although food prices showed a decline during the past year, prices of other needs, such as fuel (oil and gas--LPG) and agricultural production items are increasing and becoming more difficult to find. Some people thought product scarcity is the cause of price increase of these commodities. The rising price of fuel and agricultural production items will cause a higher cost of living, since it affects public transportation, rice milling cost, as well as other agricultural production cost. This will undoubtedly affect the level of income and expenses of the people—especially those of working in agriculture sectors in Cianjur and Banjar sites.

In 2014, the new government policy to reduce the quota of daily distribution of subsidized fuel has driven an increase in subsidized fuel price at local level, which went into effect in around August of the year.<sup>4</sup> Besides its impact in rising price, people also feel its impact in scarcity, especially those of sold at local stalls. Most users and owners of motorcycles in research sites prefer to buy fuel at local stall rather than at authorized fuel station because their vehicle only requires small volumes of fuel.



Picture 2 Local fuel stall in Cianjur site (photo by Bambang Sulaksono, 2014)

The fuel scarcity and price increase lasted only for a short time because the government ruled back to the previous regulations. Among three research sites, people in Bekasi site experienced the most severe impact due to the intensity of vehicle use in this area, which appears to be higher than other sampled locations. Similar complaints also came from people of Cianjur site, in smaller intensity, regarding the increase in the retail price of the fuel at local stalls. Subsidized fuel price at local stalls in Bekasi site went up from Rp7,500 [US\$0.75] - Rp8,000 [US\$0.8] to Rp9,000 [US\$0.9] - Rp13,000 [US\$1.3] per liter. Meanwhile, Cianjur site only saw a slight change of price from Rp7,000 [US\$0.7] to Rp7,500 [US\$0.75] per liter.

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<sup>4</sup> In November 2014, the government re-announced a reduction in fuel subsidies which caused a new increase in fuel prices, but it is not captured by this research which was conducted August-October 2014

*"Fuel prices have yet to rise this year. Although at authorized fuel stations, it has become scarcely available. Retail purchases are limited to 30 litres in response. Motorcycles may purchase a full tank of fuel. Nevertheless, prices at the fuel station are the same."*

*"(This) caused price of fuel at local stalls increased from Rp7,500 - Rp8,000 [US\$0.75-0.8] to Rp9,000 [US\$0.9]."*

*"There are times when fuel stations ran out of fuel, even if it is only in mid-afternoon!"* participants of village elite FGD in Bekasi site.

Even though it occurred for a short while, the increase in fuel price led to an increase in public transportation fares. In Bekasi, short-routed public transportation usually costs Rp2,000 [US\$0.2] and since has become Rp3,000 [US\$0.3]. In Cianjur, long-routed public transportation initially would cost only Rp3,000 [US\$0.3] and since has become Rp4,000 [US\$0.4], although it would only apply to adult passengers. Fares for school children in Cianjur remained unchanged as Rp3,000 [US\$0.3]. Meanwhile, in Banjar, fares of public transportation (locally known as *"taks"*, similar to a minibus) used by people to travel to Kota Banjarmasin has increased from Rp50,000 [US\$5] for roundtrip and since become Rp30,000 [US\$3] for one trip.

The price of LPG gas has also risen— especially those in 3 kilograms containers (subsidized LPG) which are widely used by people on lower incomes. According to respondents interviewed in this research, the scarcity of the product was the cause of the rising price of LPG.

*"All prices have gone up, including gas. It depends on the distance. The further it is then the price is more expensive."*

*"Prices of gas and basic necessities have gone up. All prices seem to have gone up,"* participants of male FGD in Cianjur site.

*"It is difficult to obtain gas tanks now, very scarce, and has become more expensive."*

*"That scarcity of gas makes it expensive."* participants of female FGD in Cianjur site.



Picture 3 A man delivering LPG from agent to local stalls in Bekasi site (photo by Rachma Nurbani, 2014)

As had happened during previous years, the high price of LPG has forced people to change their ways of cooking that is, using firewood. People usually utilize LPG and firewood interchangeably and when they already have money in their savings, they will use LPG again. Households in Cianjur and Banjar sites are commonly practicing this cooking method. During the research in 2014, there are a small number of sample households still utilize woods as a fuel for cooking.

Other than having to deal with the price increase on basic amenities goods, the pressure felt by people living in Banjar and Cianjur sites, also comes with the rising price of agricultural production items. People in both locations have reported the increase of the price of fertilizer urea and other agricultural necessities. In Banjar, last year's fertilizer urea price was Rp100,000 [US\$10] and since has become Rp125,000 [US\$12.5] per sack (ea. 50 kgs). Meanwhile in Cianjur, last year's fertilizer urea price was in the range of Rp120,000 [US\$12] - Rp130,000 [US\$13]. The current price is higher and people prefer to sell this item in retail at a price of Rp4,000 [US\$0.4] per kg. With this retail price, one sack of fertilizer urea (50 kgs) could cost Rp200,000 [US\$20]. There are also reports of rising charges for rice milling in Cianjur site. Last year, it would only cost Rp400 [US\$0.04] and its current price is Rp500 [US\$0.05]. Local people think that the rising price of diesel is the cause of this fare increase.

In addition to prices going up, complaints also came from the scarcity of agricultural production items. According to the Office of Trade of the district, the scarcity may occur due to seasonal weather factor, which causes delays in the delivery dates of items distributed via sea routes when the harvest season arrives.

## 3.2 Less Sustain Jobs, Uncertain Income

### Increasing Opportunities of Formal Jobs, but Less Sustain

The three-year observation in this research indicates increasing job opportunities in the formal sector in all research locations. But apart from this increasing opportunities, there are quite a lot of obstacles that prevent some people to have access to formal employment and to obtaining a more certain job. In other words there are increasing numbers of jobs inside formal sector industries whose conditions are actually those of the informal sector. In Bekasi site, this change was already visible since the start of the establishment of factories and industrial region in past decades. While the increase in employment opportunities in Cianjur site began appearing recently due to numerous factories established around Sukabumi and Cianjur.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, employment opportunities in Banjar site come from mining companies established around the village. These opportunities lead to changes in labour characteristics in all three locations, which is also leading to changes in levels of education and aspirations among young generation who have better and bigger opportunities in getting employment in the formal sector compared to their parents' generation.

Nevertheless, behind the vast variety of opportunities, there are also various obstacles preventing people in accessing secure, well paid employment and obtaining sufficient work insurance. In a number of discussions and interviews in Bekasi site, people complained about the employment contract system adopted by most factories, which weakens the position of its workers. Currently, factories rely more on the outsourcing system, which means workers only get work contracts through labour provider companies and not directly by related factories or employers. This practice raises the potential for neglect towards workers' rights. Respondents also addressed their complaints about the shortening duration of

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<sup>5</sup> Sukabumi is a district next to Cianjur

employment and difficult procedures or requirements needed to work in these factories. Previously, the common shortest work contract is six months. Recently, there are contracts lasting only for three months period. People also complained about deceitful practices by people from inside the company (known as *calo*), who pressure them to pay a certain amount of money in order to get a job in the said company. Participants in village elite FGD in Bekasi site addressed their complaints of such practice, as follows:

*"It is expensive to get it (the job) and, later on, they will also deduct from the salary."*

*"There is no difference between direct contract and outsourcing. When signing a contract with a company (PT), we'd probably have to pay to get in, afterwards, there is no deduction from monthly salary."*

*"Outsourcing contracts usually last for three to six months. While direct contacts with the company usually last longer, perhaps a year, but there are also direct contracts for six months."*

*"The 'entry fee' starts at Rp1 million - Rp1.5 million, some asks for Rp2.5 juta, depending on the company. That entry fee is valid for three or six months' contract. Sometimes, contracts can be terminated even before concluding the three months period."*

*"The amount of your salary will depend on which company you work for. Some may give a larger amount of salary and some only give a small amount. These companies have grades; grade A companies will give you a salary for Rp2.7 million to Rp3 million, grade B companies will pay you for Rp2.4 juta, grade C companies, such as those producing light snacks will give you even lower salary rate, some even pay you for Rp. 1.5 million."*

Competition is high in Bekasi. One of the reasons it is so attractive to migrant workers is the value of the Regional Minimum Wage (UMR: *Upah Minimum Regional*) of Bekasi is relatedly higher compared to other areas in Indonesia. The monthly wage in 2014 was Rp2,900,000 [US\$290] for workers in the automotive industry, Rp2,700,000 [US\$270] for workers in the electronic industry, and Rp2,400,000 [US\$240] for workers in food and garments industries. These wage rates had increased since 2013 when it was Rp2,400,000 [US\$240] for workers in the automotive industry, Rp2,300,000 [US\$230] for workers in the electronic industry, and Rp2,200,000 [US\$220] for workers in food and garments industries.

Local people have the impression that factories prefer to hire migrant workers because employers think they are more diligent and have the skills needed by the factories. One company directly recruits personnel from a vocational school located in another area. Age limits and worker's gender preference by several factories have also sharpened working competition in the area. Some factories prefer to hire women workers rather than men and some other factories prefer to hire younger workers compared to older workers. Workers who have passed age limits will not get their contracts renewed by the company.

Meanwhile, in Cianjur site, people complain more on the small amount of salary or wage received by workers. The majority of employment available in and around the Cianjur site is in the garments industry. These factories pay their workers, on average, between Rp900,000 [US\$90] without overtime and Rp1,200,000 [US\$120] with overtime.

*"I am shocked that factories would sometime postpone paying their workers and they also have different salary than everybody else. It is true, that, the salary does not meet the regional minimum wage. That does not mean workers should work from 4 am to 9 pm and get the same amount of wage. When my son goes to work at 06.00, he can clock in at 07.00 and at times will*

*clock out at around 19.00. It is only recently that he is allowed to clock out at 16.00,”* said Ibu En in Cianjur site about her opinion on her son’s income, which she thinks is very small.

In Banjar, many people would like to work in the coal mining companies, especially young people living in the sampled village. Nevertheless, the current bad business climate has driven several companies to shut down their offices. In consequence, many of their employees were laid-off.

*“Many residents who work at the coal mining company were laid-off due to the price drop and unsellable state of coal,”* explained Pak S in Banjar.

## Declining Prospects in Agriculture and Plantations

Declining prospects in the agricultural sector occur almost everywhere in the world, including Indonesia. Although it is still the main sector of the national workforce, the decline is becoming more palpable each year. Younger generations no longer choose to work in the agricultural sector and are more interested in working in sectors that they consider more modern.



*Picture 4. Rubber sap in Banjar (photo by Bambang Sulaksono, 2014)*

The study recorded how the agriculture and plantations sectors in Cianjur and Banjar sites are declining slowly but surely. The younger generation in both locations is starting to lose interest in jobs in these sectors. For example, the unpredictability of weather, pest attacks, expensive and scarce agricultural production items, as well as falling prices of agricultural commodities is reducing the attraction and profitability of the agricultural sector. Declining incomes of the people working in these sectors also encourage the farming techniques, which are not environmental friendly. In Cianjur site, similar complaints from farmers that are also stated in the previous year, regarding non-uniformity of planting season, which can result in continuous pest attack (Nurbani, Sulaksono, Sadaly, 2015). Up until the last research visit in 2014, the local authorities has not taken steps or come up with solutions to address this problem. Few farmers are getting additional education or counselling from agricultural extension worker. Instead, farmers rely on more knowledge obtained orally or by taking examples from what people around them are doing to their plants. Cropping patterns applied by farmers can often make the soil saturated quickly due to the continuous usage. Farmers are unable to maintain plants optimally because fertilizer and pesticides are getting more expensive.

Meanwhile in Banjar site, the rubber trees owned by people are too old and have grown so high that they are difficult to tap. Most of the people we spoke to also complained of unscrupulous farmers that mix natural rubber with a variety of banned substances in order to increase the volume, but this kind of practice would in turn make their rubber undervalued. Rubber workers consider that all of these factors may be contributing to the decline in the rubber price.

Climate change also threatens the sustainability of the agricultural sector in the research locations. Among our respondents, farmers in Cianjur and Banjar sites complain of dry seasons that last longer than usual. In Cianjur, this complaint emerged during research visits in 2014, while in Banjar the lengthening dry season is already being felt since the first research visit in 2012. In 2014, the long dry season is also repeated in Banjar, further exacerbating the stressful living conditions at the local level.

In Cianjur site, the incidence of prolonged drought was exacerbated by poor water resources management at the local level. When people were facing drought, water sources that have been used for irrigation were used by the water company (PDAM) to distribute water to the city. Water flowed through the pipe to the water storage tanks which then flowed through the pipes to the city. As a result, water for irrigation in the village was reduced and areas located in the highlands of the village experienced drought. The longer dry season also meant that farm labourers found fewer employment opportunities. Rice fields dried up and crops failed, in way that were not only detrimental to the owner of tenants but also for farm labor, as fewer called them to work.

Pak C (47 years, a farm labor and casual labor in Cianjur site) complained for not getting any call to work at harvest season. As revealed by him, it has been three months there was no rain so many rice fields were dry:

*"... what can we do... in this lean season many farmers are screaming. The paddy field owners are facing difficulties, due to drought. Nearly three months of no rain," Pak C said.*

*"Most of us are working as farm labor, however, in this situation when there is no water for irrigation, nobody will give us a work ...," as complained of a group of women in the focus group discussions in Cianjur in 2014.*

In Banjar site, long droughts are causing low productivity of the local rubber plant. The quality and quantity of rubber declined. The farmers problems were further exacerbated by the decline in international rubber prices. People in Banjar site felt that the fall in prices is not comparable to the rising prices of the necessities of life, especially food. As revealed by Pak S (a rubber farmer, around 30 years old) in Banjar site, rice prices today reached 9,000 [US \$ 0.9] per liter, while the price of rubber is only around Rp3,500 - Rp5,000 [US \$ 0, 35 to 0.5] per kilogram – depending on quality.

All the factors above combine to undermine the prospects of agriculture in both locations. Uncertainty and the increasingly high cost of production of non-labor inputs causes demand for agricultural labour to fall. Land owners and share-cropper farmers prefer to work on their own to save labor costs. It is also common in Banjar site, where falling rubber profit encourage the owners of the plantation to tap the rubber by themselves to save expenditure.





Picture 5 Land for sell in Cianjur site (photo by Bambang Sulaksono, 2014)

In addition to the declining interest of young people towards jobs in the agricultural sector, both rural research locations show growing instances of farmland conversion into non-agricultural plots. In Cianjur site, farmlands are mostly converted into housing units. The area, where our sample village is located, has become a prime location for developers to build housing units because of its strategic location, cool climate, and abundance of water sources. Meanwhile in Banjar site, most plantations are converted into coalmines. In a location nearby to our sample village, there are farmlands and plantations being converted into housing units.

*“For how long do we expect to consume rice? People are building houses but there are no breakthroughs from the government in encouraging agriculture or building public housing. People are cutting trees without rehabilitating the area and this would cause flooding because there is no efficient spatial arrangement anymore,”* said Pak U (a 40-year-old Village Officer) in Cianjur.

*“Back then, when you travel towards Banjarmasin, you can see the panoramic view of yellowing rice fields. Nowadays, all you can see is a sporadic view of houses and warehouses,”* said Pak Er (a 35-year-old staff member of Regional Food Security Office) in Banjar.

## Local Businesses

Local businesses of all sizes have emerged in all research locations. Bekasi site is the location with the greatest variety, including food vendors (ready-made food, snacks, drinks, etc.), daily amenities sellers, mobile phone vendors (also selling top-up credits), clothing sellers, laundry services, drinking water refill vendors, automobile workshops, car wash services, apothecaries, plastic waste processors, etc. One type of business prominently supporting local economy is rental housing units for workers of the factories. This type of business is common among local landowners and their descendants. Some own tens or hundreds of flats and properties to rent. The bright prospect of rental houses and apartments has driven more people to establish similar business although on a smaller scale. There are even property owners who only possess one unit to offer.

A large animal slaughterhouse in Bekasi site serves as the transit point for livestock from various places prior to distribution to and within Jakarta’s Metropolitan Areas. The dynamics of local business depend greatly on the sustainability of large factories around the area. Some businesses have vanished along

with the decline of industrial business climate, but there are also businesses that were re-established when the business climate improved. For example, plastic waste recycling had suffered decline and seemed to have vanished. Today, however, this business is re-emerging. Another example is the home worker ('putting out') system business.<sup>6</sup> After a hiatus, the business bounced back and managed to provide employment to several sample households. As we saw a group of women are now working on bottle string for a big plastic manufacturer located nearby the sample village in Bekasi. They got the job order from one of villager whose sister working at the company, who act as a coordinator. Every certain days the company through the coordinator will send them a set of raw strings for them to ensemble it with buttons. At the end of the week the coordinator will recollect again the string and send them up to the company.



*Picture 6 A lady assembling bottle strings in Bekasi site, the order for which comes from a big plastic manufacturer nearby the village (photo by local people, 2014)*

A number of modern-style shops emerged on the side of the main road in the village in Cianjur, which stood side-by-side with more traditional kiosks. These new shops sell groceries and manufactured foods, clothing, drinking water refills, stationery, household utensils, and children's toys. Beauty salons, minimarkets, automobile workshops, and car wash services are also starting to emerge as common business type. In addition to business type offering daily needs for the society, there are also businesses selling products and services to third parties, such as clothing, or and natural stones polishers. The number and types of businesses seem to have improved each year, complementing other pre-existing businesses. Small kiosks also appear frequently not only along the village's main road but also in between local residences.

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<sup>6</sup> Based on *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, putting-out system is a production system in which merchant-employers "put out" materials to rural producer (in our case people surrounds) who usually worked in their homes but sometimes labored in workshops or in turn put out work to others. Finished products were returned to the employers for payment on a piecework or wage basis. It also called domestic system (see *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* at <http://www.britannica.com/technology/domestic-system>)



Picture 7 Local minimarket in Cianjur site, offering various modern services ranging from photocopy, internet, to payment services--mini automated teller machine, mobile phone and electricity bills (photo by Rachma Nurbani, 2014)

Aside from modern business, there are also traditional businesses, which have been around for a long time. This type of business usually becomes the hallmark of the area. For example, businesses producing *rengginang* and *putu mayang*, crackers made from rice. Women usually run this home-industry business as owners, workers, or sellers. They usually produce the goods at the owner's house and their neighbours often become the workers. Sellers collect the products from each producer and sell them itinerantly. These industries used to make use only of rice harvested in Cianjur. Recently, they also utilize rice from Raskin (the Government distribution programme) because it is cheaper. According to producers, spices mixed in the process can dilute the unpleasant taste of Raskin rice.

Several local businesses in Banjar site emerged to provide services supporting rubber industry including supplying rubber seedlings, transportation and distribution. In addition, there are also local businesses supporting the lifestyle of the people, such as daily amenities kiosks, food stall vendors, as well as itinerant food and vegetable vendors. Other businesses include furniture and automobile workshops. The development of local business in Banjar site is not as rapid as in Bekasi or Cianjur sites. The currently declining condition of rubber industry has caused a decline in local businesses conditions. The decline of coal mining sector established in and around the village has exacerbated the condition of local businesses. The low number of customers and level of turnover experienced by business owners are the signs of a declining business condition.

Observations on this research show the difference in local businesses development. Bekasi and Cianjur sites present a relatively positive progress among all of the research locations. Meanwhile, local businesses in Banjar site continuously suffer from failure. In Bekasi site, local business condition depends on the industrial business climate in and around the area, which had suffered from a decline following the increase of fuel price and a decline in local industry. In 2014, local business in Bekasi site showed progress, perhaps due to a better industrial climate during the year. In Cianjur site, the emerging modern-styled business was influenced by the influx of newcomers who decide to settle in the area. The decline of agricultural prospects also encourages people to obtain other occupations, such as establishing a business, as their main or additional income source. Meanwhile in Banjar site, local businesses continuously suffer from failure following the decline of rubber and coal industries.

Ibu S (a 28-year-old food stall vendor) in Banjar site complained about the condition of her business. She receives only a small number of customers every day. The decline of the rubber industry had decreased the number of people coming to her food stall to eat and she suffers from a decline in annual turnover:

*“Nothing has progressed. My income is still the same. My daily income is averagely the same because there are almost no customers coming in,”*

*“...the income I get from the food stall is uncertain,”* she said.

The continuous development of business does not always lead to positive effects on the local economy. In several cases, the development has caused a high level of business competition. In Bekasi site, the occurrence is very prominent, where spaces between various stores and other types of business are very narrow. Each year the research also notes complaints from fresh vegetable vendors who feel their turnover had decreased because people prefer to purchase ready-made foods from other vendors. Some other complaints also come from vendors located in the middle of the village, especially after the emergence of new vendors nearby the shopping centre across the village. Vendors who sell similar types of product within the same range of location also complain about competition and some of them decided to close their business.

### 3.3 From Formal to Informal, From Unpaid to Paid

#### What is in Between?

Changes in local livelihood occurring in each research location show an increase of working opportunities and interests in formal occupations. This research discovered that each year, the increasing number of teenagers from sample households who started working in formal sectors. The phenomenon is visible in female teenagers, especially those living in Bekasi and Cianjur sites. After graduating from junior high school or high school, teenagers would start to work at nearby factories. Some male teenagers in Bekasi site have also started to work in formal sectors. Nevertheless, most male teenagers in Bekasi site and other research locations appear to work in informal sectors, such as becoming a farmer (in Cianjur and Banjar sites), a casual worker as their parents, or working in small businesses around the neighborhood (at a shop, food vendors, car wash services, or public transportation driver).

The most visible impact of changes in local livelihood and labour is a trade-off between participation of people in economic work and unpaid care work within a household, particularly women's participation. Under the generally accepted norm in the society, most of the household chores are the responsible of women, usually mothers and daughters. With an increasing number of female teenagers working outside the house, other family members feel the effect as household work falls on them. In some households, mothers and/or daughters must rearrange the division of unpaid care work after the daughter decided to work outside the home. Daughters who work outside the house also have impacts on their unpaid work in helping family business, as experienced by Ibu Y, a 34-year-old housewife who owns kiosk and laundry service businesses in Bekasi. Her laundry business is experiencing a decline after her daughter, P (17-year-old), works in a motorcycle spare part factory. Prior to her job, P helped Ibu Y running the laundry business and her job was ironing the clothes. Since P can no longer help her mother in the laundry business, Ibu Y must sometimes pay her neighbour to finish the workload for Rp3,000 [US\$0.3] per kg. This means Ibu Y only earns Rp3,000 [US\$0.3] from the total of Rp6,000 [US\$0.6] for each kg of laundry order. She uses the money to cover for the laundry cost.

*“Before P, my daughter, works, she used to help me ironing the clothes. Nowadays, I do not have the time to iron all the clothes. I will ask Ibu Po and pay her for Rp3,000 per kilo. I only get Rp3,000 for the laundry, because the total of my service is Rp6,000 per kilo.”*

Ibu En, a 40-year-old housewife who runs a small kiosk in the front of her house in Cianjur site has had a similar experience. It has been one year since Yu (19-year-old), her daughter, started to work in a garment factory. Prior to this job, Yu used to help to care for her younger siblings at home and Ibu En was able to sell her products itinerantly with her husband. Now, after Yu decided to work, Ibu En can no longer travel around and sell her products because she needs to stay at home and care for her other young children. This has caused her household to rely solely on her husband’s precarious income. There are times when Yu also gives her money, but she cannot give out plenty due to her small income. Therefore, Ibu En decided to open a small kiosk in front of her house to get additional income, even though her kiosk closed temporarily a while ago.

## Changing Lifestyle and Trend on Care

The presence of businesses with modernized styles and offering various comforts of living has changed lifestyles and affected unpaid care. For example, many more people now eat their meals from vendors. People also can save their time from getting and boiling water because nowadays there are plenty of drinking water refill vendors available with affordable price. By only paying for Rp4.000 [US\$0.4] on the cheapest type of water or Rp15.000 [US\$1.5] on the most expensive water, people can obtain a gallon of ready-to-drink water in their households. People can also utilize laundry services to clean their clothes, by paying at least Rp4.000 [US\$0.4] to Rp6.000 [US\$0.6] per kg of dirty laundry.



Picture 8 Local laundry shop in Bekasi site (Rachma Nurbani, 2014)

The changes in lifestyle can also be seen from the ownership of household electronic devices which is increasing from time to time. People we spoke to believe that utilization of electronics devices can help

them in saving time as well as energy for doing household chores. As mentioned in previous years report (Nurbani, Sulaksono, and Sadaly, 2015), a male in Bekasi sample site has been the pioneer for the ownership of electronics home appliances among villager. He sells second hand home appliance in low price to people. Besides, the availability of credit installment scheme offered by formal and informal providers which makes energy and time saving technology devices become more affordable to poor people in research sites.

Such care work services and electronic devices can be very useful for households, especially those of with working mothers. Moreover, the availability of the goods and services which support practicality seems lead to a change in life style. During research visits in 2014, we found some householders would purchase manufactured drinks and served them to guest visiting their house. In previous visits, they had been more likely to make their own beverages in order to serve houseguests. The existence of local kiosks within residential areas offers a form of practicality for people as reflected on how they receive their houseguests. Meanwhile, the existence of food vendors has also encouraged people to have a new habit of not serving meals at home for their children. Instead, parents would usually give pocket money to their children, which they can use to buy food at school.

Ibu H (a 56-year-old an elementary school headmistress) shared a story of students' habits of buying breakfast from food vendors at school. According to her, parents do not serve breakfast at home and in exchange, they give their children pocket money to buy food at school. Students' favourite foods include fritters, bread, and dipped meatballs (*bakso celup*).

*"Parents would usually give their children pocket money so they can buy food for breakfast at school," she said.*

Economic pressures have driven women in many households to look for additional income and this would cause lesser time spent on caring for their own households. In addition, the increasing cost of living has driven people to make adjustments by saving time and money. Even though their opinions vary on this topic, people in generally agree that buying ready-made foods, utilizing care work services, as well as utilizing electronic devices are the answers for practicality in daily life.

# 4 EATING HABITS UNDER PRESSURE

*“The fate of nations hangs upon their choice of food.”*

-Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (taken from Standage 2009)

Word of wisdom as above mentioned indicates how important the quality of food in assuring the quality of human life, which will support individual productivity and success of national development. Concern toward food quality and food safety have been emerged from earlier rounds of the research as have signs that people are economizing food consumption by reduce the quality as well as quantity of the food they consumed. One of the emerging issues is the change in eating habit related to increasing consumption of prepared (cooked out of the house), processed or fast food; manufactured food; and instant seasonings. These food are becoming important in many people’s diets and the rush of these kind of modern style food is not only happening in urban areas but also in rural areas. While they presence in the diet of people from various welfare groups, concerns are emerging for people who are poor and vulnerable which are mostly lack of resources, especially when considering its impact on nutrition which has been a challenge to break vicious cycle of poverty (see World Bank 2006).

This chapter discusses about how the people whose life we followed surviving their everyday life by strategies in seeking more income sources and trying to cut household expenditures. As discovered during this research, most efforts done by people relate greatly to food—to how they will be able to have more income to buy food for their family, as well as how to reduce expenses of purchasing food. Pressures encountered in daily life encourage those people to seek for practical yet affordable food, which is answered by the presence of ready-made and instant food, which will further induce their preference on food and eating habit.

## 4.1 In Good Times and Bad: How People Survive Everyday Life

People whose life we followed try to cope with the condition of uncertain income and volatile prices by strategies in seeking more income sources and trying to cut household expenditures. To get more income, they try to find side jobs or look for other and better jobs, sell personal assets (e.g. motorcycles and livestock), and borrow money. To save money, they buy items on credit (to be paid in installments), reduce social activities which require donations, use second-hand clothing, reduce food expenses, and buy non-prescribed medicine from kiosk nearby instead of going to health centres (which requires more money).

Table 2 summarizes strategies of the people to cope with uncertain income and volatile food prices.

**Table 2. People's Coping Strategies**

Food related strategies	Other Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buying prepared and instant food</li> <li>• Storing food supplies (e.g. rice, livestock, instant noodles)</li> <li>• Mixing regular rice with subsidized rice (Raskin)</li> <li>• Reducing consumption of preferred foods and cigarettes</li> <li>• Gathering food from the surrounding (e.g. vegetables, fish, and rice)</li> <li>• Borrowing rice from relatives</li> <li>• Asking for food from relatives</li> <li>• Reducing eating frequency</li> <li>• Reducing variation of food menu</li> <li>• Reducing certain food intake, especially animal proteins and vegetables</li> <li>• Purchasing cheaper foodstuff, even though with less quality</li> <li>• Ignoring food restriction (health related)</li> <li>• Switching to a cheaper cooking method, i.e. using firewood instead of gas stove</li> <li>• Joint cooking with relatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Searching for side jobs</li> <li>• Searching for other jobs outside their home area</li> <li>• Selling assets, e.g. motor vehicles</li> <li>• Selling livestock or its products (e.g. eggs)</li> <li>• Borrowing money</li> <li>• Purchasing items on credit</li> <li>• Reducing social activities requiring monetary donations</li> <li>• Cutting budget for shopping</li> <li>• Reducing the amount of children's pocket money</li> <li>• Using second-hand clothes and shoes</li> <li>• Purchasing non-prescription medicine from local kiosks</li> </ul>

Source: consolidated information from in-depth interviews and FGDs, 2012-2014.

The strategy and intensity of coping, as well as source of supports differ from each household, depending on their household conditions, livelihood, and opportunities available in their area. The most important concern is that the way they cope today may directly and indirectly affect their future lives.

### 4.1.1 Food Related Coping Strategies

Living in poverty and uncertainty for a long time will ultimately induce settled preferences of eating habits. From year to year we have witnessed how people from households respondent make their adjustments by consuming less varied; reducing the quality and quantity of food when hard times hit; consuming more instant and/or processed foods; collecting, growing, and breeding livestock; as well switching to cheaper cooking methods, all while still trying to give priority to children's health (see Nurbani, Sulaksono, & Sadaly, 2015). We found people preserving and storing dried food stocks, as well as compromising the desire to eat their favorite food. In some cases, we even encountered cases of people who were forced to violate their restrictions to eat particular meal due to the illness they suffer. These adjustments were done under the consideration of price, durability, and food taste. Very few of our respondents could afford to consider the nutritional value and quality, safety or cleanliness of the food they were eating. Such adjustments can be seen as a form of positive coping strategy, but they also can be seen as risky choices.

#### Consuming More Prepared and Instant Food

The consumption of prepared and instant meals has been the most considerable change revealed during this research. Each year, the presence of prepared and instant food has become more frequent in the



household food basket. People prefer to consume prepared and instant meals because of the practicality offered in obtaining them and the relatively cheaper price. Volatile prices of groceries and fresh herbs or spices, such as onion, garlic, and chili have encouraged people to switch their preference towards instant seasoning to include in their meals. Instant noodles has been a favourite for everyone, and has become an option of side dish to company rice for eating. People like to cook instant noodles as is or mix them with other ingredients such as eggs and vegetables.

People assume that buying prepared food are a practical option to save their time and effort in providing meals to their families. In addition, they prefer prepared food because they think it tastes better. The purchase of prepared food appears to be prominent in breakfast menu, which includes *nasi uduk* (steamed rice cooked with coconut milk, served with some side dishes) or *lontong sayur* (rice cake served with light vegetable curry) when people have more money to spend. Fritters, coffee, and tea are also the options for people looking to buy prepared food with more affordable price. By buying breakfast, women can have time to prepare themselves or assisting their husbands before they get to work, or to prepare their children for school.

*"I usually spend about Rp15,000 [US\$15] to buy breakfast menus, such as fried banana, coffee, and tea. My husband likes to have coffee in the morning, while the children and I will drink tea. That Rp15,000 [US\$1.5] is not enough if one of my family members wants to eat nasi uduk. It will not cover to buy both nasi uduk and tea, because nasi uduk now costs more than Rp5,000 [US\$0.5]..."*

*"For breakfast, I like to buy porridge which costs me Rp7,000 [US\$0.7] per bowl (portion). I usually buy only two bowls of porridge for my son and my husband. I do not usually eat breakfast,"* As revealed by Ibu R, a 42-year-old housewife who also works as an on-call massage-therapist living in Bekasi site.



*Picture 9 'Wadai', one kind of fritters people usually buy for breakfast in Banjar site (photo by Bambang Sulaksono, 2013)*

Some households also buy prepared food for lunch and dinner. For some people, buying prepared food is relatively cheaper than cooking by themselves. If they choose to cook, they will have to prepare everything by themselves, starting with buying groceries, preparing ingredients and seasonings, preparing cooking fuels (gas or firewood), and they still have to clean everything afterwards. By purchasing prepared food, they could also get a wider variety of foods with relatively similar price or even cheaper than when they choose to cook for themselves. They also can save time.



*Picture 10 'Pentol' another kind of starchy based fritters people usually consumed as snack in Banjar site (photo by local people, 2014)*

In the interview during the 2014 research visit in Banjar site, Pak L (a 62 years old rubber sapper) explained that his family buy two kinds of side dishes, which are stir fried vegetable with chilli for Rp3,000 [US\$0.3] and clear spinach soup for Rp2,000 [US\$0.2]. These side dishes are enough for himself and his five other family members to eat. If they choose to cook, they would have to buy raw spinach, which costs Rp2,000, and not including the cost of other ingredients, such as spices and fuel. Another factor thought as the benefit of buying prepared food is because buyers can decide the amount of food they want to buy according to the amount of money they have.

The views expressed by participants in village elite FGD held in Bekasi site in 2014 shows how the habit of consuming prepared food among people has spread widely:

*"Modern mothers prefer to buy prepared food. They seldom cook for their families."*

*"Well, I buy a lot of prepared food in warung (food stall)."*

*"I also buy jengkol (dog fruit)... and many more."*

*"Tofu, tempeh, eggs."*

*"(Women these days prefer to buy prepared food because of) laziness!"*

*"Cooking is more expensive than buying ready-made foods. I can spend only Rp10,000 [US\$1] to get meals."*

*"I buy nasi uduk for my family's breakfast and for lunch I usually have a side dish ready."*

*"I usually shop for groceries twice a day. I spend Rp20,000 grocery shopping in the morning for cooking lunch. Afterwards, I will spend another Rp20,000 [US\$2] for cooking dinner. For breakfast, I usually only buy fried snacks (fritters), etc."*

*"Nasi uduk usually costs Rp5,000 [US\$0,5], depending on which side dish you choose to have with it."*

*"I usually get ready-made from the warteg (food stall) only for Rp5,000 [US\$0,5]..."*

*"I usually buy pecel lele (fried catfish) in the afternoon for my family. If I only buy for myself, usually they also want the same meal. By spending Rp8,000-Rp10,000 [US\$0.8-US\$1] I can get a package of rice with fish, chicken, and vegetables. "*

*"Porridge and ketoprak (rice cake served with tofu and bean sprouts with peanut sauce dressing)..."*

*"Everyone likes fritters. I usually spend Rp5,000 [US\$0.5], or when I want plenty of it, I can spend up to Rp10,000 [US\$1]. Fritters are now Rp2,000 [US\$0.2] for three pieces."*

*"Instant noodles are for breakfast and sometimes also when we have no other side dish."*

In all three of our research locations, people's preference for buying prepared and instant food has significantly increased along with increasing number of shops, food stalls and vendors settled around the neighbourhood. Great influence also comes from manufacturer—national and international food brands, with food products packaged with attractive packaging and advertised in television and other media. These are then followed by copycat products produced by smaller local companies. Food merchants offer a great variety of products, from traditional homemade cuisine to "modern" processed foods as seen on television or other social media, such as hamburger, kebabs, milkshake-type of drinks. The strong attraction of modern-style food products also encourages the widespread habit of consuming snacks among children. This research noted how children's snacking habit has developed over time.



Picture 11 Food Vendors around Bekasi site neighbourhood (photo by Bambang Sulaksono, 2014)

## Food Preservation and Storing

Food storing is an old habit found in various places in Indonesia originating from the culture of storing crops in the barn. Although increasingly rare to find farmers who have a barn at the present time, it appears that a small number of households are still preserving the food storing habit. Food stock would be a valuable thing when households are facing hard times, such as when prices are rising or when they suffer from losing their income source.

Pak J (now deceased) was a 75-year-old elderly man who lived in Bekasi site and he had always stored rice at his house. His family often experience lack of money and when they have enough money, they would purchase rice and store it for future needs. According to Pak J, it is important to ensure the supply of food for his grandchildren and great-granddaughters who live with him. A principle he served was the teaching of his parents:

*"People used to have old sayings, when you have money, always buy rice. This will come useful when you have no money, but you still have rice to eat. Even though we do not have a lot of money, as long as we have rice it will be all right,"* stated Pak J in 2013.

Storing rice became a habit customarily found in farmers' household such as occurring in Cianjur site. Farmers who own land or work as share-croppers would usually store their rice harvest as food stock which can be used or sold whenever they are in need of money. Farmers who do not own land would usually get their rice stock from *mengeprik*—scavenging leftovers paddy from harvested fields. People would mill some amount of their rice stock when they need to consume it or sell some amount of it when they need money. Some people would also lend a certain amount of rice to their relatives or neighbours in need and at times use rice as means of payment (exchanged goods).

Ibu T (a 50-year-old female farm labor) who lives in Cianjur site usually gets her rice stock from *mengeprik* and uses it to pay the electricity bill and paying off her gas stove credit:

*"Every month, I use up to five litres of rice to pay for electricity to a sibling of mine."*

*"I also pay for my stove with rice. I mean, I would sell the rice first to get the money,"* said Ibu T in 2013.

In addition, Ibu T also sells bran—the by-product from milling rice—to her neighbour who keeps ducks at a price of Rp1,000 [US\$0.1] per kg. During the 2014 research visit, Ibu T still practices this habit though with the lesser amount of rice. She currently spends more time taking care of her grandchildren and working in her small vegetable garden, therefore, she had to reduce her *ngeprik* activities.

Other households in Cianjur site use most of their rice stock for their consumption rather than selling it. Ibu Ma (a 50-year-old share-cropper farmer and part time farm labor) said that she sells only 1 quintal from the total of 5 quintals harvest rice and stores the rest as food stock, which her family will consume. She usually mills 30 kilograms of rice grain to get 15 kilograms of rice whenever her family need rice supply.

Each family has their own method of storing food and their own preferences on which food they would keep in storage. A case in Banjar site shows Pak H (a 35-year-old male rubber sapper) preserves the fish he gets from fishing in the nearby river by salting them. The fish would last longer and serve as a food supply for his family.

## Gathering, Growing, and Breeding

Food gathering, growing plants, and breeding livestock became a solution to get free food supplies in a neighbourhood with green belt areas. These types of food supply become the main source of food when food prices have become unbearable for them to handle, especially when they do not have certain and permanent income source.

The custom of food gathering and breeding livestock are common in rural research locations such as Cianjur and Banjar sites due to the available resources. Nevertheless, during the research conducted in 2012, we still can find people who gather leaves from surrounding trees and use them as cooking ingredients in an urban area such as Bekasi site. Also in Bekasi site, our 2013 research discovered an elderly woman, Ibu L (61 years old), who grows plants on land owned by another individual. Eventually, the owner sold the land to build a housing complex in 2014.

The habit of breeding livestock is common in both rural and urban study areas. In Bekasi site, Pak J (now deceased, was a 75-year-old elderly man) keeps several chickens, which he considers as a food supply for his family by harvesting their eggs or even cooking the chicken for meals.



Picture 12 A boy in Banjar site being put his chicken to the cage (photo by local people, 2014)

In Cianjur, picking food from trees or plants that grow in the surrounding of a house is a common habit. Although it is not an agricultural area, in Banjar site there are some people who grow food in their backyards. In addition, there are many plants or trees available around the neighbourhood. Ibu T (a 50-year-old female farm labor) who lives in Cianjur has access to pick vegetables in the garden owned by her relative.

*“If I could, I would prefer to get free vegetables. I usually can get free vegetables from my sibling’s garden,” she said in 2014.*

The river located nearby the village in Banjar site is also often utilized to catch fish, especially by men. For them, fishing helps in reducing expenses for food containing animal protein. Types of fish they can get from the river are common snakehead (*ikan gabus*, Lat.: *Channa striata*) and climbing gourami (*ikan papuyu*, Lat.: *Anabaras testudineus*). Pak H (a 35-year-old rubber sapper) and Pak F (a 60-year-old rubber sapper) would fish for cooking or selling. There are times when Pak F would go to other sub-district to find fish. Apart from that, Pak H and his family also keep ducks and harvest its eggs, as well as picking vegetables to provide their daily meals. At the same location, Ibu Sy (a 50-year-old janitor at the

village office) feels lucky because there are fruit trees growing in the surrounding of her house, such as rambutan, banana, and coconut trees. She never sells the fruit she gets from the trees. She serves the fruits for her own family or donates it to other people.

## Smart Cooking Recipes

Many households save food expenses by modifying cooking recipes. An interesting thing discovered during this study is a household shared their smart recipe in making use of leftover food and food stock available at home, and using recipes that could make favorite food looks plenty in quantity. Such methods were done by Ibu T (a 50 year-old farm labor), Ibu Ma (a 50-year-old share-cropper and part time farm labor), and Ibu A (a 34-year-old a Koran teacher and clothes seller). Many households customarily make use of leftover foods. Ibu T of Cianjur would make use of dried rice to make rice crackers by soaking dried rice in water and grinding them into pulps. After adding seasonings, Ibu T will mould and dry the dough batch in the sun before frying them as crackers.

Ibu Ma of Cianjur has plenty of rice stock, which she uses as her family's meals. Apart from that, she also uses the rice to make *pepetek teri* (salted anchovies cake). Ibu Ma will grind a certain amount of rice to make rice flour and turn it into dough mixed with salted anchovies and seasonings before frying them. She only needs a few anchovies to make this side dish because she will mix them into the dough. Therefore, she can save her expenses in purchasing salted anchovies, which are getting increasingly expensive.

Some households consider eggs to be expensive. Therefore, people try to modify and manage a recipe in order to get a larger serving portion from meals using eggs as its ingredients. Ibu A of Bekasi would mix flour with eggs to make a larger omelette for her children, while, Ibu Ma and her daughter, usually mix eggs and instant noodles (which they called *minog*—a short colloquialism from *mie* [noodle] and *endog* [egg]), the favourite meal of Ibu Ma's grandchildren.

## Joint Cooking

This specific activity is found only in the household of Ibu R, a 42-year-old housewife who also works as an on-call massage-therapist living in Bekasi. She cooks in turn with her sister who lives next door and the details of this story have become very interesting upon review. The families of Ibu R and her sister share the same cooking space. They usually cook together and divide the responsibility of grocery shopping in turns. For example, when Ibu R is responsible for doing grocery shopping for morning meals, her sister would be responsible for handling the expenses for evening meals. Ibu R and her sister cook together, and there are times when other family members (hers or her sister's children) help to cook. Ibu R feels that the system she established with her sister is very helpful in lessening the burden of their families because they do everything together. In providing rice, they usually buy three 12kg sacks of rice at once and split the expenses between them. The amount of rice they purchase should be sufficient to feed their families for 1.5 to 2 months period. In addition, they also split the expenses when buying kitchen utensils and cooking equipment.

## Mixing Regular Rice with Subsidized Rice (Raskin)

Almost all households involved in this research have access to buy Raskin even though most of them complain about the quality of the rice provided by the program. They mix the Raskin rice with regular rice, which to them, has better quality and taste. Every household has a particular measurement in mixing the

rice in accordance with their financial condition and preferences. As revealed during interviews conducted in Bekasi, Cianjur, and Banjar sites:

*"Yes, I eat rice from Raskin. I would mix them with regular rice; two litres of Raskin and two litres of regular rice,"* Ibu R (a 42-year-old housewife who also works as an on-call massage therapist) in Bekasi.

*"Sometimes I would mix the rice I eat, sometimes I only eat rice from Raskin once or twice a week,"* Pak S (a 52-year-old casual worker) in Cianjur.

*"Even though the rice has a bad odour, I still buy it. Later on, I will make a mixture of Raskin rice with ten litres of regular rice. I also add pandan leaves when cooking so it won't have bad odours anymore,"* Ibu I (a 31-year-old group chairperson of a women's savings and loan program) in Banjar.

*"...usually borrow rice for ten Deka. Later on, I will mix them with the rice I got from Raskin,"* Ibu T (a 50-year-old female farm labor) in Cianjur.

## Reducing Consumption of Favourite Foods and Cigarettes

Everyone has preferences that need fulfilling, such as favourite snacks and cigarettes. Some people we spoke to have stated that they have sacrificed these personal preferences due to hiking prices. Some have stopped consuming their favourite things, such as Ibu A (a 34-year-old Koran teacher and a clothes seller) who lives in Bekasi, Pak L (a 62-year-old rubber sapper), and Ibu Sy (a 50-year-old janitor at the village office) who live in Banjar. Bu As decided that her family will not consume *jengkol* very often due to its high price and she preferred to use the money to buy vegetables and *tempeh* instead:

*"Jengkol is Rp6,000 [US\$0.6] for a quarter of a kilogram, so, we seldom eat jengkol. We'd better eat tempeh and watercress because we can get a whole bowl with the same price."*

Pak L has had the preference of consuming cigarette brand A for many years. Nowadays the price of this brand has gone up from Rp8,000 [US\$0.8] to Rp9,000 [US\$0.9] per pack and he decided to switch to brand B priced at Rp4,000 [US\$0.4] per pack—half of the price from cigarette brand A. He even said that he is willing to compromise if he were required to quit smoking even though it would be uncomfortable to him. In the household of Ibu Sy in Banjar, limitation of money has forced her to switch consumption from coffee to tea. She also stopped consuming fresh fish, switching instead to cheaper dried fish.

## Consuming Less Animal Proteins and Vegetables

Most household respondents of this research consider foods containing animal protein, such as meat and poultry (chicken & ducks) as a luxury food. Households rely more on plant protein sources from *tempeh* and tofu because it is more affordable to fulfill their protein intake. This research noted that almost all the households seldom or never consumes meat in their daily meals, because it is the most expensive food even if compared to other animal protein sources. There is even a saying that stated, *"Poor people can only eat meat once a year, that is, on Idul Adha."*<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, consumption of chicken and duck is present in several households with limited amounts. Chicken and ducks will occasionally appear on their menu. People usually get chicken and ducks because they breed these animals or even by purchasing

<sup>7</sup> Idul Adha is an Islamic holiday festive also known as Festival of Sacrifice. On this holiday, Muslims who can afford to, will sacrifice and donate their assets, in forms of domesticated animal, and give it to poor families in need.

some. Eggs and fresh fish are animal protein sources most often consumed. People living in Banjar site consume more fresh fish than those in Cianjur and Bekasi sites, because the river is located nearby their village and people can fish for themselves free of charge. Nevertheless, instead of consuming fresh fish, people in all three locations are choosing to consume salted fish due to its cheaper price. Salted fish also last longer and has become food reserve for some households. Adults are usually the ones who like salted fish, while children prefer eggs.

Although some households are still trying to keep buying eggs for their children, other households are having to cut down due to rising prices. They would only buy eggs when they have extra money.

*"We seldom eat eggs. I would only buy eggs when I have the money, so it's not a daily thing."  
"Eggs are Rp20,000 per Kilogram. When I have plenty of money, I would buy eggs,"* as explained by Ibu So ( a 30-year old housewife who had just returned from her work abroad in the Middle East) in Cianjur site.

It has become a concern to us as we found several cases of households with small children seldom or even never cook and eat vegetables. These households do not have access to sources such as picking vegetables free of charge from a garden and, therefore, must obtain vegetables only by purchasing them. As vegetables get more expensive, they prefer to sacrifice consuming it in order to be able to buy other food ingredients, which they consider more filling and acceptable to all members of the family. Ibu Mun (a 55-year-old housewife who also works as rubber sapper and a massage therapist) and Ibu Mud (a 29-year-old female rubber sapper) in Banjar admitted their families seldom eat vegetables. Ibu Mud added that they also rarely have extra money to spend. Nevertheless, when they have more money, they would usually use it to buy tofu instead of vegetables. The main reason for this preference is because her children do not like vegetables, therefore she chooses to buy tofu or *tempeh* which can be consumed by everyone in the family.

## Cutting Back on the Frequency of Eating

Households monitored in this study show the average frequency of eating twice a day. However, there are people stating that they would like to have three meals a day if they had more money. They would usually eat at midmorning, late afternoon, or early evening.

*"I do not eat lunch, it is enough for me to eat two times a day. Well, everyone eats like that here. "  
"I usually cook in the afternoon, but my family usually eat at 7 or 8 in the evening,"* said Bu R (a 42-year-old housewife who works as an on-call massage therapist) in Bekasi.

*"I would eat lunch at around 2 or 3 in the afternoon, depending on how hungry I am."  
"I don't usually eat in the evening. I only eat twice a day,"* said Ibu N (a 55 years old rice cracker maker) in Cianjur.

Pak L (a 62 year old rubber sapper) in Banjar site revealed that his family is trying to fulfil three meals a day plan. When it is impossible, they would only eat twice a day, at noon and early evening. His children sometimes eat breakfast and sometimes they do not. Nevertheless, the important thing is they still get pocket money to buy food or snacks at school. Meanwhile, Pak H (a 35 years old rubber sapper) and his family in Banjar site only eat twice a day and they seldom eat three times a day. He would eat rice and egg in the morning although there are times when he only eats *wadai* cakes (traditional deep fried rice flour cake) and a cup of tea. His family usually eats the same menu for lunch and dinner because they



also eat the leftovers from lunch for dinner. For their meals, Pak H family used up to one litre of rice for fulfilling their daily meals.

## Choosing Not to Cook or Ignoring Food Restrictions

The option of not cooking and ignoring food restrictions (health conditions) is the worst option for a situation when a household is experiencing a lack of money. Such condition is experienced by the household of Ibu En, a 40-year-old housewife who runs a small kiosk in front of her house in Cianjur site. A similar condition is also experienced by Ibu Tu, a 51-year-old housewife suffering from uric acid in Banjar site. Ibu En has many children while her income is uncertain and at times, she does not even have any money to buy food or cook a simple meal. During such hardships, she could only feed her children warm rice with sprinkles of salt.

*“At times when I do not cook, my young children would eat (rice) with salt. I would give them warm (rice) and they would say, ‘it is delicious, Mom,’”* said Ibu En.

This appears to be her last resort when she can no longer ask for help to her relative, who lives nearby. At other times, when it is possible to get support from her relative, Bu En will tell her children to go to the relative’s house to ask for side dish. She would ask the children to bring empty plates. As she stated during the visit in 2013:

*“I would tell my children, ‘Go ahead and visit Uwak’s house. You can bring these plates and tell her that I have not finished my cooking!’”*

In another case, in Banjar site Ibu Tu’s health condition forced her not to work as she was before while her son had recently dropped out of school and only works as a rubber sapper with limited income. During this difficult time, Ibu Tu would ask permission to pick vegetables from her neighbour’s garden and make them into meals. One time, she picked cassava leaves, cooked and ate them, even though cassava leaves are dangerous for her health. She chooses to ignore her food restrictions because those are the only solid-foods she is able to get without having to pay and because she wanted to add more variety to her menu.

### 4.1.2 Other Coping Strategies and Source of Supports

The accumulation of uncertainties in life and limited assets or financial savings has stimulated people to lower their standards of living. There are a variety of government social assistance provisions received by households, ranging from subsidized rice (Raskin), conditional and unconditional cash transfers (with limited coverage), health insurance, and educational assistance channeled through the school, as well as educational assistance in the form of scholarships for the poor. The benefits and coverage of the social protection schemes, are perceived differently in different households, given the range and design of the programs. Although considered beneficial, some people are reluctant to use it because they have to spend extra money to be able to access it, as in the case of health insurance. In addition there is also the issue of quality of assistance, as is the case with Raskin. According to many people the taste and quality of Raskin rice is below the standard of regular rice. Unconditional cash transfers (BLT/*Bantuan Langsung Tunai* and BLSM/*Bantuan Langsung Sementara Masyarakat*) were very useful when people were facing rising fuel prices some time ago, and now people are wondering when the assistance is not given

anymore.<sup>8</sup> One of the big programs that people believe is very beneficial is the school operational assistance which does help poor people to have access to education at an affordable or even free cost. However, people wish that the assistance could be given not only to the school but also to households so that they could cover the cost of children going to school.

Apart from government assistance, our respondents are looking for additional income and trying to save as much money as they can in their own ways. They have started to apply coping strategies by reducing their expenses on food, health care, and social activities. In some severe cases, there are people who have to sacrifice the necessity of education and future plans. Some of their strategies cause them to pay more for fulfilling their needs though, for example, when they have borrowed money, purchased items with credit, or when they have pawned their assets that they need for income generation.

In all research sites, local stalls (*warung*) have become an important source of support for daily necessities. People usually have access to stall located nearby their houses and owned by neighbours or relatives. Some people rely on these to get their foodstuffs. Stalls offer a relatively simple system of payment, which may help to lessen the burden of people in fulfilling their families' needs. Moreover, it is customary in every part of Indonesia that traditional stalls allow their customers to pay their purchase whenever they have the money to pay.

Relatives and neighbours also appear to be another source of support during household hardships, especially those who owns a stall. In Bekasi site, prominent members of the society or rich people have an important role in helping poor households. Types of support they offer include monthly cash transfers, *zakat* (tithes) delivered on big holidays (i.e. *Idul Fitri* and *Idul Adha*), and some helps to build houses. *Zakat* appears to hold an important role as a source of support in the research locations. In Cianjur site, local mosques manage *zakat* contributions and distribute it to poor families during the holidays. There is also another type of *zakat*, that is, harvest *zakat*—given to poor families after the harvest. In Banjar site, local mosques also manage *zakat* contributions and distribute it to poor families. *Zakat* distributed may appear in forms of money or rice. An interesting point to note, some households receive a large amount of rice tithe, which would be enough to feed the family for the next one or two months.

Another type of assistance, distinct to Bekasi area, comes in forms of supports from local companies (some are through CSR/corporate social responsibility programs of the companies), such as monthly cash transfers, distribution of basic needs package (*sembako*) during the holidays, and/or providing scholarships to some poor students in the village.

Nevertheless, family and neighbours will always be the main source of supports, even though people realize they cannot always rely on them. There are cases in Banjar site when people can no longer rely on their relatives or neighbours, because they are facing the same financial troubles. The area has suffered from economic collapse for several years. Meanwhile, there are people who feel embarrassed to ask for support from their relatives or neighbours. When this occurs, people usually will try to seek support from a third party located far from their residences, such as loan sharks, employers, or even banks. Nonetheless, people still have to apply various strategies in coping with uncertain income and expensive living cost to survive.

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<sup>8</sup> BLT and BLSM are temporary unconditional cash transfer program targeted to poor people to reduce impact of fuel subsidy cut. Considering this research time, we saw only when the programs were channeled to the people in 2012 and in 2013.

## Searching for Other or Additional Jobs

People we spoke to generally hope to get permanent jobs, as well as sufficient income. In reality, life has not always been easy for them. Only by having casual jobs and precarious income, people are trying to find other sources of income to make ends meet. This has become harder for them especially when volatile prices lead to expensive living cost.

*"I like to help to make rice cracker (putu mayang) whenever someone need my help. Usually Ibu E, my husband's elder sister, asks me to help her and pays me Rp10,000 [US\$1] for a day's work. During Ramadan, I managed to earn Rp120,000 [US\$12] working for her."*

*"(Other than making rice cracker) I also get laundry orders from people and I can earn Rp25,000 [US\$2.5]. In one month, I usually get two laundry orders or none at all. I do not have continuous orders to do laundry. I sometimes help Ibu E, especially when to see is too tired from working as a caterer," explained Ibu I (a 31-year-old housewife) in Cianjur about her side jobs.*

There are times when people choose to travel far away from their home to find side jobs. Some even go abroad. During the low season in Banjar site, people will try to find jobs in other areas of South Kalimantan, where they work as farm laborers, construction workers, gold-miners, and other types of casual jobs. Women of Cianjur site usually go abroad to find jobs in Middle East countries, Hongkong, and Taiwan.

Types of side jobs and the amount of salary depend greatly on the livelihood in the area. The Banjar sites has many rubber plantations and there are people selling rubber seeds. However, this business has declined along with the decline of rubber market in general. Moreover, many companies considered as potential buyers of rubber seeds have gone bankrupt.

In Cianjur site, Pak S (a 52 year-old farm laborer), a neighbour of Ibu I, shared his story in getting casual jobs. He has farming related skills, but not every day will he get a job to work on someone's farm. During this time, Pak S will find another job as a grass (weed) collector and sell the weeds as livestock food. Pak S will earn Rp10.000 [US\$1] for one sack of grass. He usually manages to gather at least three to four sacks by request.

*"I usually gather some grass when someone requests me to do it. Usually it is for Pak Ja's sheep. I do not think he will request me to it anymore. He sold the sheep in Idul Adha."*

*"I only work on the farms when someone needs my help and when there is no work at all, I would just gather grass," said Pak S.*

Meanwhile in Bekasi site, many people are involved in side jobs working on orders from company nearby—through putting out system. These are outsourced jobs such as attaching buttons and folding strings on drinking bottles. As told by local people, the order comes every two days and they will receive sacks of strings that they need to work on. Ibu R (a 42-year-old housewife who works as an on-call massage therapist) usually earns Rp10 [US\$0.001] per ribbon and there are approximately 12.000 ribbons in one sack. Therefore, she can earn up to Rp12,000 [US\$1.2] per sack of ribbon and within a week, Ibu R usually able to finish seven sacks of ribbon. Women in the neighbourhood are the ones working on this project, sometimes helped by other family members (children and husbands).

*"I am the one (in the family) who works with the strings. At times, Rat (my daughter) will help me too after she gets back from school. Whenever anyone else has nothing to do, they will also help me, including my husband..."*

*"Well, this is only a side job..." said Bu R.*

Not everyone is able to get a job. Some of them are unable to work due to their health, such as what happens to Ibu Tu (a 51 years old widow) in Banjar:

*"I know there are plenty of jobs and I can get one if I am healthy. But I cannot do anything about it, because I am not as strong as before and people would not prefer to hire me in this condition. My son no longer works as a rubber farmer. He earned very little from that job. He used to farm rubber every three or four days and earned Rp.10,000 per day for four buckets of rubber. That amount of money will immediately vanish whenever we go to the kiosk. And then he told me that he no longer wants to work as rubber farmer and is hoping for another job opportunity," Ibu Tu.*

## Selling or Pawning Personal Assets

When households are facing economic hardship, they often choose to sell or pawn their assets. People who own livestock animals can sell them or their products (e.g. eggs) to get extra money. Pak H (a 35 years old rubber sapper) in Banjar site usually sells duck eggs and if necessary, he sells the ducks; Rp60,000 [US\$6] for each drake and Rp40,000 [US\$4] for each duck. Banjar is currently experiencing economic collapse and this drove its people to sell or pawn their assets. Pak Hel has already sold one of his motorcycles for only Rp1,500,000 [US\$150].

Selling assets may be an immediate solution to getting more money to fulfil emergency needs. Ibu N (a 39 years old rubber sapper, who also works as a massage therapist and laundress) in Banjar site sold her motorcycle to get more money to make ends meet. Afterwards, she no longer has means of transportation to go to work at the rubber plantation, while the distance between her house and the plantation is very far. Since then, she decided to quit her job at the plantation and is currently trying to find a job in another plantation located nearby her house.

## Borrowing Money

The most common strategy for coping with economic hardships is by borrowing money and almost all household practice this habit. Debts may start with a small amount from local kiosks to larger amounts from shops or relatives. Mothers who shop at the kiosks at times have to take up loans when they do not bring enough money to pay for their groceries. They will pay the debts on the next day or whenever they have enough money. Ibu Mu (a 35 year-old housewife) in Banjar told a story about how her household is continuously paying off debts and taking new loans from the local kiosk in order to buy cigarettes, sugar, and cooking oil. Her usual loan quantity is approximately Rp20,000 [US\$2].

*"With that amount, I can slowly pay off my debts. Instead of opening another loan account with the kiosk, I would rather do this. Even though I pay them off with fairly small amounts, the kiosk owner can rely on me paying it all in the end."*

In all honesty, Ibu Mu expressed that she does not like taking up loans or borrowing money from her neighbours, not to mention borrowing bigger amounts. She worries that she would not be able to pay the debts.

*"I think I prefer to suffer rather than making someone else suffers."*

*"They can act as if they are rich. What good it would be if in their hearts they feel insulted? How am I supposed to pay 1 million credits within one week?"*

## Purchasing Items with Credit System (Instalments)

Mankind is set always to have the need for wanting new things in life, including the people we spoke to, despite their financial conditions. This research reveals that credit system provides a solution for people to get the products they want—especially household items. People often have to pay more by purchasing the items on credits compared to when they pay in full. However, the credit system is the only payment system that they can fulfil to get the items they want even though they have little money. Ibu R of Bekasi said that some of her household items, such as a mattress, pillows, brooms, rice basket (*bakul*), steamer, and even clothing were bought with the credit system. She did realize that she must pay more money for credits, but she viewed it as the only way she will provide necessities of her family members.

*"When you buy in credits, the price will go...well... up. Yesterday I bought three items: broom, rice basket, and steamer for Rp70,000. While if I go to the market and buy them there, it would only cost me Rp50,000. I do not see how I can get the things I need without the credit system,"* she said.

In Cianjur, Ibu P (a 69 year-old rice cracker seller) shared her story in buying a mat with the credit system. She bought a mat for Rp203,000 [US\$20.3] which she can pay in two monthly instalments. She still has a Rp75,000 [US\$7.5] to pay. Ibu P also admitted that she often buy household items with the credit system and pay the instalment every week on Monday. She is the permanent customer of the same creditor.

## Reducing Participation in Social Activities

Social activity is the way people meet and share experiences or practice cultural rituals, which unites and formulate bonding within a community. There are many social activities available in all the research locations, such as Koran recitals and community savings clubs (for funerals, weddings, and holidays). Specifically, there are recital groups for every age and gender (for females, males, and young people), as well as social gatherings. Participation in social gathering requires attendees to donate a certain amount of money as savings. People can attend Koran recitals free of charge, but there are groups that ask for the voluntary amount of donation to its members. Even though it is voluntary, some people think of it as a burden, especially when they are facing financial difficulties. When a household is experiencing economic difficulties, many people decide to stop participating in recitals and social gatherings. This research noted the highest number of people quitting social gatherings appears in Banjar site, perhaps due to its current economic collapse. In addition, during the research in 2014, there was an increase in the number of people quitting social gatherings in Bekasi and Cianjur sites.

Ibu Ya (a 54 year-old widow runs small food stall in front her house) in Bekasi usually attends Yasin recitals on Thursday nights. Since her son, no longer works, she had stopped attending because she feels she can no longer afford to pay for every social gathering:

*"Well, because my son is no longer working. I do not think it is compulsory for me to attend social gatherings anymore. If I do, I have to shut down my kitchen because I cannot cook anything. Right now, there will be no social gatherings for me. Everything is allocated for the family's need,"* she said.

Meanwhile in Cianjur, Pak C (a 47 year-old farm laborer) still diligently attends Saturday night's recital and attends communal prayers five times a day at the small mosque nearby his house. However, Pak C never participates in social gatherings and it has been a while since he has attended social events, such as weddings. He feels embarrassed because he does not have money to donate to these events:

*"I seldom attend social events because I have no money. I feel a little embarrassed because I cannot give them the envelope (with money inside),"* he said.

Pak L (a 62 year-old rubber sapper) said that after he moved to Banjar, he and his wife were initially active in attending social gatherings. Afterwards, they stopped attending social gatherings because they have no money. Nevertheless, he emphasizes the importance of his participation in other events, such as communal work.

*“If I hear the word ‘gotong royong’ (community work); perhaps to assist with a funeral, weddings, or other, I will not think twice to offer my help,”* he said.

Also in Banjar, Ibu Sy (a 50 year-old janitor at the village office ) explained the average amount of donation for social gatherings in her neighbourhood is Rp20,000 [US\$2] and there are no gatherings with a lower donation, for example, Rp10,000 [US\$1]. She thinks that the amount of Rp20,000 is too high as a donation and she is confused on how to pay because she has no money. Therefore, she decided not to participate in social gatherings.

*“It is difficult for me to participate in social gatherings. I think it will only add to my problems.”*

Similar thing addressed by Pak W (a 81 year-old man) in Banjar:

*“The demanded donation is getting bigger in amount. I am afraid I cannot afford it. People may be mad at me if I cannot afford to pay. Therefore, I think it is wise for me to quit attending it.”*

## Buy Non-prescription Medicine from Kiosks

People tend to adjust their lifestyle under the pressure of financial limitation and expensive living cost, even though the adjustments may cost them their wellbeing. For example, people are saving money even when they need medical treatment or medicaments. The people we spoke to prefer to ‘self-medicate’ by purchasing non-prescription medicine available at many kiosks rather than consulting with health officers or doctor at health centres. They think that they will save more money in doing so, while consulting to health centres will lead them to spend more money on medicaments and transportation. They also think generic and or non-prescription medicaments are sufficient to deal with their illnesses:

*“If I caught flu I usually buy prmx (a medicine brand) Rp1,000 for 2 pcs at the kiosk. Prmx is very good for me. Whenever I have muscle pains, I buy Nrmzl (another medicine brand) for Rp1,000 at the kiosk owned by Agus,”* said Ibu M (a 61 years old widow) in Bekasi.

*“(If my husband is ill) he will buy some medicaments here, at the kiosk. He usually takes liquid Antangin, which costs only Rp2.000...[...] I usually drink cold Segar Sari (a type of throat refresher drink) and Mextril, or Mixagrip for flu and coughs [...] Not a long time ago, I suffered from skin irritation. I do not know why... and it had become infectious to everyone at home. So is Firman. At first, Bu E child caught this irritation and then spread to my son. His skin has dark spots. I took him to the midwife and I pay her Rp20,000,”* said Ibu I (a 31 year-old housewife ) in Cianjur site about a recent illness caught by her family members and how she dealt with it.

## Reducing Children’s Pocket Money

Providing children with pocket money is a common habit in Indonesian society. Children usually utilize their pocket money buying snacks, paying transportation fares, and savings. When the household is experiencing financial hardship, many parents decide to reduce the amount of pocket money given to

their children. In some household, the process of reducing pocket money seems to be difficult. It is mainly because their children refuse to agree with the reduced amount of pocket money given by their parents. There are also parents who feel embarrassed when their children throw a fit and make a scene in public because their parents do not give enough pocket money. Nevertheless, they have to stay determined in reducing children's pocket money due to household's financial condition.

*"When I do not have enough money, I only shop for a small amount of grocery. I will reduce my daughter's pocket money when I have no money. Recently, I have to buy many things, and every price seemed to have gone up. My daughter does not like salted fish. She prefers eggs,"* said Ibu M of Cianjur.

*"I can give my son (A) Rp5,000 [US\$0.5] for pocket money when I have some money. When I have insufficient money, I can only give him Rp3,000 [US\$0.3]. He can use the money to buy a snack and to pay for his transport fare to school in Kawung Gajah. He is using public transport, which costs Rp1,000 [US\$0.1] for one trip, which means, he will spend Rp2,000 [US\$0.2] for a roundtrip. The rest of the money he can use to save up and buy snacks if he wants to. A usually saves up to Rp2,000 [US\$0.2] to his school savings. It really depends on how much money I have. When I do not have any money, A cannot save money at the school and will only use his pocket money to buy snacks and pay for his fare,"* said Ibu At of Cianjur.

## 4.2 Food Habits Have Changed

Various efforts made by poor families to preserve the wellbeing of their households grew even harder because they still have to face precarious income and volatile price of necessities. Food has become the priority as well as the main source of concerns for a poor household. This research discovered that most efforts done by people relate greatly to food, to how they will be able to have more income to buy food for their family, as well as how to reduce expenses of purchasing food.

### 4.2.1 Demands for Convenience: Prepared and Instant Food on the Rise

For every Indonesian, rice is the staple food in their daily meal intake, including for the people involved in this research. People usually eat rice with side dishes that they either cook, buy, or are given by others. Most household respondents serve two types of side dishes, soups or vegetables or dry meals, with rice. They usually reduce the types and quantity of side dishes during financial hardship and in reverse; they will add more types and quantity of side dishes when they have extra money.

Preparing food is still mainly a task for women, even though there are also males who prepare food for the family. There are still social norms that perceive women as the most responsible for doing household chores as well as preparing food for the family. The economic pressure felt by household sometimes encourages women to find jobs in order to get extra money. Nationally, the number of women joining the workforce has increased, which has directly affected in reduced time for unpaid care work. Child rearing has become costly, as women have to sacrifice their time at work and earning money. In dealing with this issue, people prefer to purchase prepared or instant food, as they will save more time and money than cooking at home. Another reason is because for some people purchasing these types of food has made it possible for them to buy a larger amount of food at a relatively cheaper price. In addition, they also can manage their expenses accordingly. Some women we spoke to also revealed how they are now prefer

buying prepared food, is because the other family member do not really eat the food what they prepared at home, since husbands are spending more time outside home and children are eating more snacks.



Picture 13 Manufactured, instant, and prepared food available at local stalls in Cianjur site (photo by rachma Nurbani, 2014)



Instant food and seasonings also offer price stability and practicality. For example, prices of instant noodles and spices are relatively stable and better taste in the midst of price volatility.

*“Mothers nowadays do not prefer to cook at home,”* said Ibu Ai (a 43 years old sharecropper farmer) in Cianjur site.

*“We usually use instant seasonings such as Masako and Indofood,”* said participants of village elite FGD in Bekasi site.

The availability of various food vendors in and around the neighbourhood supports the increased preference of people towards prepared and instant food, which offer enticing products with attractive packaging. The high frequency of purchase within a household indicates a tendency towards preference on prepared and instant food. Many households now also purchase food not only for breakfast, but also for lunch and dinner.

*“Perhaps, my grandchildren are bored with my cooking because I cook similar food everyday. They do not prefer to eat at home and they will usually buy snacks, especially Yu, my grandson. [...] Yu likes to buy Chiki, manufactured beverage at school, Chocolate, and chocolate bars. [...] In addition, Yu also likes to buy coconut drinks everyday. Right at this moment, he already has two servings. [...] He does not want to eat my cooking. He said it does not taste good because it is too spicy. He also does not like salted fish and asks to buy rice with fried chicken from the vendor across the house,”* said Ibu S (a 54 year-old widow runs food stall) in Bekasi about the preference of her grandson on other food than those cooked by her.

Another change is the increasing snacking habits among children and adults, although the change is more visible amongst children. The tendency is observable through the number of most consumed or sold food types from various food vendors available, that is ready made convenient food items. As stated by several food vendors below:

*“I will always run out of lontong (cooked rice wrapped in a banana leaf), well, perhaps there are four or five pieces left. I sell lontong for Rp. 1,000 [US\$0.1] per piece. In one day I can earn Rp 70,000 [US\$7] [...] On the other hand, yellow rice is a bit difficult to sell. When I have plenty of leftovers, I will give it to other people like, the diesel man, the man who washes motorcycles, and vegetable vendor,”* said Ibu S (a 54 year-old widow runs a food stall) in Bekasi.

*“People in the village like to buy bread or cakes, even though they do not know their expiration dates. They have never paid attention to it and yes, there is a tendency of people prefer to buy snacks,”* as stated by a staff of Agricultural Office in Cianjur.

## 4.2.2 Children’s Snacking Habits: Anxious Parents

The increasing preference of children in snacking habit raises the tension between parents and children. Parent’s relationships with their children is no longer only measured by value from affection, but also from the value of money. In some cases, the amount of allowance given by parents is understood to reflect the form of affection they have for their children. Factors encouraging the increase in children’s interests towards snacking come from peer pressure, advertisements on television and social media, aggressive and the availability of food merchants. Nowadays, food vendor peddling around neighbourhood offering food with enticing flavours.

*“There are many vendors selling food, whatever type of food, drinks, and toys you want are available. For example, that chunkie meatball seller still can be seen after dark,”* said Ibu Y (a 34 year-old housewife running small stall and laundry) in Bekasi site.



*Picture 14 Snacks consumed by children at school in Cianjur site (in clockwise order from bottom left to bottom right: iced fruits coated with chocolate, starchy paste in stick dressed with coconut floss, fried batterd mushroom, starch cake and fried noodle) (photo by Rachma Nurbani, 2014)*

On the other hand, parents have limited knowledge of nutritional value and quality of snacks available to their children. As they have little knowledge about snacking risks, parents feel defenceless and embarrassed whenever they have to face their crying children asking for snacks in public. This research also noted that expenses to cover children’s pocket money can form a significant part of the household budget. Poor households view this as another burden to deal with. Numerous interviews discovered that parents have more concern about not being able to give pocket money to their children instead of worrying about nutritional values and the safety of each snack consumed by their children.

*“I do not know if those foods are healthy or not. I am afraid if my grandchildren buy too many snacks, I am afraid that they will not have enough money to buy snacks,”* explained Ibu Ma (a 50 year-old share-cropper farmer and part time farm laborer) in Cianjur on her grandchildren snacking habit and her worries about not being able to give them enough pocket money.

*"It is harder to fulfil children’s desire to snack. My son, does not realize that you need to work to get money. I am frustrated with him!"*

*"Nothing is harder than to fulfil my child’s desire to buy snacks. As much as it is a nuisance, I deal with it everyday."*

*“My son, does not realize that you need to work to get money. I am tired thinking about his snacking habit. We do not always have money everyday. It is another thing if we do have money.*

*I do not want to think about tomorrow. It is too heavy for me,”* complained Ibu I (a 31 year-old housewife) in Cianjur site about her son’s expenses in snacks.

*“If I do not give her the money, she will throw a fit and I am embarrassed about it.”*

*“She still does not understand if I have enough money or not to buy her various preference of snacks. And yeah, when I do not give her pocket money, she will cry and throw a fit,”* said Ibu M (a 43 year-old housewife) in Cianjur about her daughter’s snacking habit.



Picture 15 Snacking at school (photo by Nur Aini, 2014)

### 4.2.3 People’s View on Processed and Unsafe Food

This research discovered that people have limited knowledge about nutritional values and food safety in the meals they provided for their families. In addition, pressures of poverty has often made people sacrifice the quality and quantity of food they are consuming. A concerning matter emerged when it is discovered that there are some parents who actually have some nutritional knowledge but facing difficulties to give their children nutritious food because of the resistance of the children and lack of support from other family members, such as stated by Ibu Y (a 34 year-old housewife running small stall and laundry) in Bekasi site who thinks that foods with expiration dates are the foods using preservatives, thus home cooking is better than buying snacks:

*“Well, I think, when food has expiration dates it means that it uses preservatives. I usually observe each expiration dates before buying foods. If the product had passed its expiration date, then I will not buy it and I would not care if my children will cry and scream for it.”*

*“I know that cooking is better than buying snacks. We can control every ingredient we use when cooking. Meanwhile, we cannot do the same for snacks; either it uses food colouring or preservatives, I do not know...”*

*“But my children will cry as loud as they can and my husband will get agitated and only say, ‘Just give it to them and don’t think about it.’ Now what am I supposed to do?”*

On the other hand, Ibu Y feels defeated in arguing her children’s request for pocket money for buying snacks. She thinks that influence from friends and the availability of various food vendors cause her children to snack even more.

Some parents feel safe when giving their children instant food that has already mixed with ‘healthy food’ such as, egg or vegetables. In different occasion, when discussing about healthy food Ibu Y of Bekasi thinks healthy food includes eggs, milk, fish, chicken, biscuit, and bread. She thinks that it is quite healthy for her children to eat noodles with eggs. A similar view also revealed by Ibu M in Bekasi. Therefore, it is not surprising when we discovered instant noodle often present in households’ food basket. People usually cooked the instant noodle with egg and or vegetables as side dish to rice.



Picture 16 Today’s menu of a sampled household in Cianjur site: instant noodle as side dish (photo by local people, 2013)

With limited knowledge, people’s perception on food be more influenced by advertising or information or picture in the packaging that is most likely also displays advertising message about the product. In some discussions, we found people trust the content of nutrient as well as ingredient in the food they ate, even without first examined it carefully, as like when people believe that the sausages or meatball they consumed is healthy because it made from meat, orange flavoured drink consumed by children are healthy because the advertisement said that it contains vitamin C.

Among the various notions on food, the one thing that raises concern is ignorance of some people to the quality and safety of the food they consumed. They said they were aware that the food they ate will be harmful to health, but they just do not care as long as it tastes good. As revealed by Ibu So (around 30 year old mother) in Cianjur site revealed:

*“No, it is not, ‘seblak’ (hot spicy stir fried cracker) is not healthy... but delicious! Actually it is not good to eat it since it is hot, but it is already a tradition of the Sundanese (to eat hot food)”.*

Various points of view on people’s food habit toward prepared and instant food are summarized in the following table 3.

**Table 3. Parent's Concerns towards Health and Safety Risk of Prepared and Instant Food**

Positive Remarks	Negative Remarks
<p>"Thank God, even though my children like to buy snacks, but they never have health problems."</p> <p>"My kids like to buy chuankie (starchy meatball), but they never have health problems." (Ibu R, Bekasi)</p> <p>"Ya usually eats noodles with eggs and I think it is healthy, because she is eating eggs." (Ibu Mu, Bekasi)</p> <p>"Everyone likes fritters."(participants of village elite FGD, Bekasi)</p> <p>"Porridge (buy from outside) are for breakfast or afternoon. (We eat it) especially when we have digestive problems,"</p> <p>"I think nasi uduk (buy from outside) is healthy. It is even more unhealthy not to have breakfast."</p> <p>"Instant noodle is my favourite since I was a little and has become a part of my life." (participants of village elite FGD, Bekasi)</p> <p>"Sausages is healthy for me. Well, I would not let it go to waste by not eating it."</p> <p>"So far, Chiki (cracker containing flavor and MSG) has no health implications for my children."</p> <p>"If you are still healthy after eating 'baslup' (starchy meatball), it means the baslup was delicious and healthy. It is healthy if it is delicious. If the meat is good it is healthy. If it is not healthy it will not be delicious, so it will not be consumed."</p> <p>"Fried noodles are healthy because they taste good." (Ibu, M, Cianjur)</p> <p>"Soups are healthy as long as they have no flies flying around."</p> <p>"I think bakso pentol (starchy meatball) is healthy because it is made from meat. Orange drink is also healthy because it contains vitamin C." (Ibu N, Banjar)</p>	<p>"Fritters are unhealthy because they contain cholesterol!"</p> <p>"Actually, instant noodles are not very healthy,"</p> <p>"Healthy food should include the five components, but we cannot actually afford to eat all of them." (participants of village elite FGD, Bekasi)</p> <p>"Snacks at school are healthy. But a snack like rojak is not good to consume in the morning. It is too spicy. Children will have heartburn afterwards. Ice is also not healthy in the morning."</p> <p>"Children's snacks are not enough to complete their nutritional needs. Children do not think about this. What is important for them is it can fill in their stomach."</p> <p>"Yati often gets pain in her mouth, especially when she eats ice cream. It is very hard to warn her about this."</p> <p>"There are foods that use a preservative, for example tofu. It looks healthy, but we do not know if it contains formalin or not," (Ibu M, Cianjur)</p> <p>"Ice is not healthy because sometimes the water is not cooked. Most of the children get stomachache (after they drink the ice)." (Ibu Mu, Banjar 2014.</p> <p>"They eat many snacks, although it is not healthy, we still give them; the important thing is they are not crying," (Ibu Y, Bekasi)</p> <p>"Children's snacks contain preservatives and that worries us. At times, we cannot control it, because they buy for themselves. They think it's more hip to buy such things in the kiosks," (women at focus group discussion in Cianjur)</p>

# 5 DISCUSSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Food is an important element in the quality of human life. Food quality will support individual productivity and success of national development. Many countries and international organizations of the world put food security as a priority in supporting economic development. Eliminating hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and supporting sustainable agriculture are top priority in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by countries across the world as the continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which had emphasised the alleviation of poverty and hunger. In Indonesia, food sovereignty become one of the primary sector development targets in national development planning, as mentioned in its midterm development planning document (Presidential Regulation 2/2015).

While various parties declare attention to the importance of the role of food in development, food and nutrition security remains a challenge for Indonesia. Despite considerable progress in macro-economic performance, this lower-middle income country faces the need to tackle a serious food and nutrition issue. Indonesia is among of countries with highest stunting prevalence in the world and according to UNICEF, 80% of world's stunted children are living in 14 countries including Indonesia (UNICEF, 2013). With 37% of children aged under-five stunted—almost one third of Indonesian children – the country will face serious challenges in the future development of its economy. In addition, various micro-nutrient indicators also show that Indonesia is currently facing the problem of hidden hunger as indicated from the data revealed by the Ministry of Health showing 28% of children aged under-five and 22% of children aged 9-12 suffering from anemia (Kementerian Kesehatan 2013).

Efforts to achieve food security have been consistently facing challenges that are more pronounced in the future, especially for people living in poverty and those who are vulnerable. Where food expenditures constitute most of the household expenses and poor people are having to overcome the pressure of uncertain income and increasingly volatile food prices, their adjustments will tend to sacrifice quality or quantity of food consumed. In the short run, adjustment of food intake may be helping households to cope with the difficulties of life, but in the long term it will have serious consequences, especially when these adjustments involve growing children and pregnant women.

A major concern comes on the impact of price volatility towards people living in poverty or on precarious income. In line with the purpose of this research, there are many other research that have suggested the important of considering the impact of price volatility to the life of poor and vulnerable people. Although there are opinions saying that high prices mean potential profitability for farmers and producers—which are considered poor, many studies proved that almost all poorest households are net buyers of food commodities including those of working in agriculture (Ravallion, 1990; Coady, et.al., 2008; Seshan & Umali-Deininger, 2007; Byerlee, Myers, and Jayne, 2006; and Warr, 2005, all cited from Aksoy & Hoekman, 2010). Indonesia's development policy review by The World Bank stated that given the composition of food on poor household spending—which is dominant, a small number of food price changes would contribute significantly to the welfare of individuals within the household. Furthermore, among all food commodities, price of rice is the one has the greatest influence on the level of welfare of poor households, given its composition which reaches nearly a quarter of total household consumption in comparison with other foodstuffs. The World Bank's review also predicted that the 10% rise in rice prices would make national poverty rate being 1.3% higher than it would otherwise be (The World Bank, 2014).

Food price increase not only reduce disposable income of but also potentially brings great impact to the life outcomes of people living in poor households—especially those of with growing children – due to reductions in the quality and quantity of food that they eat. Price volatility make life even uncertain and forcing poor people to make continuous adjustments. During the research we have witnessed how poor people whose life we followed are juggling from day to day to maintain wellbeing while sacrificing some parts of their needs, notwithstanding scarifying the quality of their diet. Adjustments of spending by consuming cheaper and less nutritious food or reducing food consumption during economic difficulties which occur consistently or in a long time span will eventually form new eating habits. Each household member will also feel the impact of the adjustment in different ways, however, among all household members children would be the most precarious ones. For children, adjustment in food diet can unwittingly bring serious consequences to their future. A study showed that when Indonesia was involved in the Asian financial crisis, consumption of nutritious foods such as eggs and vegetables were shown decreasing trend (Block *et al.* 2002), similar to what we found during this research.

Household members are facing different consequence toward adjustment in the household, as found during this research that children may be the ones in the highest risk. Adjustments on food purchasing most likely put children and women to consume less nutritious food and although this may only occur for a temporary period, it will have consequences for their future health. Moreover in the case of poor households, any shock in income will lead them to cope by degrading the quality of diet (Tabor 2000). Another study has found that long run wellbeing of a person would be sensitive to the condition in their early life (Maccini and Yang, 2009). In their study, Maccini and Yang also suggested that low rainfall level around the time of birth of a person would affect duration of their school education, their income, and health status, which impacts are most salient to women than men.

This study observed that continuous occurrence of price volatility has been seen as a new normal for many people. Coping strategies through continual adjustments applied by the people might has lessened their burden, however there are many impacts hidden from the eyes of the people, including the impact on child nutrition, ability to saving, as well as impact on social relations. A UNDP study conducted on two African countries has showed that seasonal food price volatility that occurs consistently, has been the main cause of child nutrition. The absence of a good system and infrastructure make the authorities often fail to guarantee the stability of food prices even during harvest seasons, which in turn affect the nutritional status of the children (Cornia, Deotti & Sassi 2012). Tackling food and nutrition problems would be the key in poverty alleviation effort. However, systematic and comprehensive efforts are needed to overcome the problem of food and nutrition security.

## To Tackle Food Price Volatility

This research makes us aware that government efforts to overcome the problem of food and nutrition security will continue to struggle with the absence of effective efforts to tackle price volatility, especially food prices. Price control would certainly require a large amount of cost from the government, but if it were not done, inflation would cause more heavy losses, including social costs, which would burden the people more greatly.

This should be a reminder that adjustments are done in micro-level (individual and household) may cause high social cost and its impact may have a long-term effect. Nevertheless, the micro-level impact of food price change may have escaped the attention from policy-makers as most of them rely more on macro statistical data indicators. Given the adjustment on temporary food can bring prolonged impact, it required a system that is more responsive and comprehensive in reducing price volatility. The comprehensive system is done with the involvement of various sectors from upstream to downstream. Starting from food

production aspect (by improving agriculture sector), food distribution (by solving the problem on agriculture supply chain), food price control, through to the response to the incidence of food insecurity that may result. Monitoring food prices can also be done with the involvement of the frontline officers who interact directly with the people and to the local level market, so the update in food prices movements can be accessed in a short time by the public. The monitoring system can also take advantage of information technology that are now widely available.

## To Ensure Food Quality

Research shows that people are getting highly dependent on food available in the market, either raw or processed. There are more people who do not grow their own food, including people in rural areas that are now increasingly dependent on food coming from the market. Recent developments show even more people are dependent on instant food and snacks and they are often unable to afford, or unaware of issues of the quality and safety of the food they consume. Several discussions with local authorities, shows that food security surveys have repeatedly shown an alarming lack of attention of many people to food safety and quality, and a lack of monitoring from local authorities. Another thing that is worrisome is that regulation of the agricultural sector cannot ensure the safety and quality of food crops produced. Efforts in assuring food safety by the government are also facing many obstacle due to limited coverage, lack in socialization, and lack in coordination among authorities. This study suggests that food safety surveillance efforts should be done more frequently, and carried up to the lowest level of community. To ensure food safety and quality consumed by children, the government should also extent its effort in food safety surveillance not only for school children but also for children out of school. In addition, another thing that must be considered is the mechanism of punishment and sanction to whom endanger food safety and quality consumed by many people that is need to be strengthened.

## To Increase People's Knowledge on Food and Nutrition

As found during this research, food choices by people on low and precarious incomes in Indonesia are mostly based on price and more often override aspects of the quality of the food. In addition to its financial and time constraints, this has been encouraged by a lack of knowledge about food and nutrition. Food habits prevailing in society derive more from the knowledge and habits inherited from generation to generation, yet many of the foods people are concerned about are quite new. The results of discussions with some local authorities also show that efforts to socialize food and nutrition security are still lacking. If a few decades ago, people were familiar with the campaign "healthy four, perfect five", there is currently no similar campaign that could be a means of socialization to the public. In addition, efforts and socialization of food and nutrition security has been done through the participation of cadres at the local level, which knowledge has not been standardized. The current campaign on "balanced nutrition" has not touched many people's minds.

Departing from there, innovative efforts are needed in improving the understanding and knowledge of people to food and nutrition security. Besides through lessons in schools, the campaign can also be done through the media which have large audience, and it should be as simple as easily understood by many people. From the supply side, the government should also strengthen the capacity of its front liners—including local nutritionist, village level cadres, surveillance officers, and other front liners which dealing directly with people.



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