

# Review of: "Palm Oil Expansion and Subnational Food Security"

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This article provides an objective overview of food security issues in Indonesia, based quantitative and some qualitative analysis. The three main challenges identified (land grabbing, lack of economic inclusivity, and lack of adherence to sustainability standards), highlight that industrialization must be accompanied by policies that support equitable distribution of benefits and sustainability, in order to advance food security. The paper provides unique insights into how to formulate food security policies in developing countries, as it is based on empirical analysis of data within Indonesia, and offers further basis for contextualization of regulations by different analysis for the macro, meso, and micro economic levels.

Interesting findings in the article are that increasing the portions of land dedicated to palm oil cultivation, results in increasing food insecurity; and that increasing access (by improving roads and other means of transport) negatively impacts food security.

However, the article's main finding that ownership of mobile phones (digital connectivity) advances food security, should be taken cautiously for the following reasons: 1) Ownership of mobile phones is higher among financially privileged and educated people. Thus, the owners of mobile technology likely have more money and knowledge to spend than other farmers. These pre-existing educational and financial advantages might explain why the non palm oil producing regions in western Indonesia have higher levels of food security and GDP than the oil producing provinces in eastern Indonesia. The empirical analysis does not factor in these pre-existing advantages. (2) Digital technology may create a new form of dependency on multinational ICT companies that are mainly owned by other countries. This reliance will not advance food security, as payments must be made for access to essential information by payment of licenses to the multinational companies. Often small and medium scale enterprises cannot afford such payments.

Despite this note of caution, the article confirms that increasing connectivity for farmers, can positively impact food security in Indonesia, is important, and confirms some of my previous research. For further insights on the precautions that might be necessary for ensuring that digital connectivity advances food security, please see the following articles:

- Ugwu, F.U. (2021), "**Maximizing the Differentiation Principle in Regional IP Treaties to Advance Food Security: Limitations in West Africa's Regional IP and Trade Regime.**" *The Journal of World Intellectual Property*(JWIP), p.1-34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jwip.12193>
- Ugwu, F.U. (2021), "**Advancing the Use of Digital Technology by Africa's Female Farmers: Shortcomings in**

**Data Protection Regulations.”** *The African Journal of International Economic Law*(AfJIEL) (2021) vol.2, Fall, p.11-31.

- **Thesis**

Ugwu, F.U (2020), “Harnessing the Multilateral Patent and Plant Variety Protection Regimes to Advance Food Security: Implications of the EU-ECOWAS Economic Partnership Agreement” (PhD Thesis) Dept of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Faculty of Law, Common Law, University of Ottawa, Canada

- **E-BOOKS**

Ugwu, F.U (2022), *Harnessing the Multilateral Patent and Plant Variety Protection Regimes to Advance Food Security: Implications of the EU-ECOWAS Economic Partnership Agreement*, (Geneva: South Centre, 2022)