

Lessons from 1984 Food Self-Sufficiency for Prabowo Era

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Indonesia's 1984 food self-sufficiency program and identifies strategic lessons relevant to agricultural policy under the administration of President Prabowo Subianto. The 1984 program achieved food self-sufficiency in the short term through intensive agricultural production, extensive input subsidies, irrigation development, and strong government intervention. However, its implementation also generated significant challenges, including fiscal pressures affecting poverty alleviation, environmental degradation, and declining agricultural productivity in the long term. This study aims to analyse the success, limitations, and policy relevance of the 1984 food self-sufficiency program within the context of current agricultural policy. A historical and comparative policy analysis approach was employed. Data were collected through a literature review of government documents, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports, and relevant academic and policy publications. The research process involved collecting and assessing the authenticity and relevance of primary and secondary sources, interpreting historical evidence, and comparing policy similarities and differences between the 1984 and Prabowo administrations. The findings indicate that the experience of the 1984 program provides important policy lessons for contemporary food self-sufficiency efforts. The Prabowo administration seeks to accelerate food self-sufficiency through regulatory reforms, fertilizer subsidy revitalization, irrigation pumping, new paddy-field development, and food estate programs. Although contemporary conditions differ substantially due to climate change, land constraints, technological developments, and increasingly complex global markets, the fundamental principles of intensive production and institutional support remain relevant. However, these principles should be adapted through sustainable, technology-driven, and inclusive approaches to ensure long-term food security and agricultural productivity.

Keywords: Food Self-Sufficiency, New Order, Government Policy, Prabowo Subianto

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INTRODUCTION

Food security serves as a strategic foundation for a nation's economic, social, and political stability. With a population exceeding 270 million, Indonesia faces complex challenges in meeting national food needs amidst the dynamics of climate change, limited productive land, and global market pressures. History records that Indonesia achieved a remarkable milestone in rice self-sufficiency in 1984—an accomplishment recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and a source of national pride. At the outset of the administration of President Prabowo Subianto and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka (2024–2025), food self-sufficiency has once again become a top priority on the national development agenda. Minister of Agriculture Andi Amran Sulaiman has been directed to accelerate the self-sufficiency target, shortening the projected timeline from the initial four years to just one year—an ambitious goal requiring a strategy that is measurable, integrated, and grounded in historical lessons.

This analysis aims to comprehensively examine the 1984 food self-sufficiency program—including its objectives, strategies, successes, failures, and impacts; identify contemporary challenges and opportunities facing Indonesia's agricultural sector in the 2024–2025 period; extract strategic lessons from the 1984 program that can be adapted to the current

context; and formulate concrete, measurable, and sustainable policy recommendations to support the achievement of food self-sufficiency in the Prabowo era. The analysis is based on a review of academic literature regarding the 1984 self-sufficiency program, as well as data on current policies and agricultural challenges facing the Prabowo Subianto administration.

Comparing the 1984 food self-sufficiency policy with the agricultural policy of the Prabowo Subianto era is significant because both emerged from the same national context: the pursuit of food self-reliance as a foundation for state resilience and continuity. Indonesia successfully achieved rice self-sufficiency in 1984 through a combination of agricultural intensification policies, the development and rehabilitation of irrigation networks, subsidies for production inputs, and robust institutional support. This success established Indonesia as a developing nation capable of reducing its reliance on food imports and gaining international recognition.

Conversely, the Prabowo Subianto administration has once again prioritized food self-sufficiency as a strategic national agenda, aiming to achieve national food security through increased agricultural production, modernization of the agricultural sector, strengthened food infrastructure, and the expansion of production land. The government views food sovereignty as a crucial prerequisite for national self-reliance in the face of global economic threats, climate change, and disruptions to international supply chains.

Despite sharing similar objectives, the two policies were implemented under vastly different social, economic, technological, and environmental conditions. While the primary challenge in 1984 was boosting food production to meet domestic demand, the challenges facing the Prabowo era include land-use conversion, climate change, population growth, and the imperative for sustainable agricultural development.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to address the following questions: (1) what factors contributed to the success of Indonesia's food self-sufficiency in 1984; (2) what are the characteristics of the food self-sufficiency policy under Prabowo Subianto; and (3) to what extent can the successful experience of 1984 serve as a lesson and policy reference for strengthening Indonesia's food self-sufficiency today? Thus, this study not only provides a historical understanding of Indonesia's past success in food self-sufficiency but also offers policy perspectives relevant to the future of national agricultural development.

Regarding the analysis of the 1984 Food Self-Sufficiency Program and its objectives, historical records—such as those by [Rinaldo, \(2021\)](#)—indicate that the program was designed with the primary goal of achieving national independence in rice production, given that rice is the staple food for the majority of Indonesia's population. The specific objectives of this program included increasing national rice production by boosting output through the intensification of production on existing lands and the expansion of planting areas; stabilizing food prices by maintaining stable rice prices for consumers while ensuring profitable price guarantees for farmer-producers; reducing import dependency to curtail and ultimately eliminate the need for rice imports to meet domestic consumption; improving farmer welfare by raising incomes and living standards through enhanced productivity and guaranteed market access; and strengthening national food security by building a resilient food system capable of withstanding external shocks. This program was an integral part of the New Order's economic development strategy, which emphasized political stability achieved by meeting the people's basic needs, particularly for food.

The 1984 self-sufficiency program was implemented through a multi-dimensional approach encompassing technical, economic, and institutional interventions. Key strategies included: technical intensification—the program's backbone—focusing on increasing productivity per unit of land through the introduction and dissemination of high-yielding, research-developed rice varieties that were pest- and disease-resistant and responsive to fertilizer inputs; investment in irrigation infrastructure, involving the construction and rehabilitation of irrigation networks to improve water control capabilities and enable intensive cropping systems and multiple cropping patterns (two to three planting cycles per year); a mass intensification program that established "rice centers" as pilot models to accelerate the diffusion of agricultural technology to the farm level; and input subsidies and price support,

with the government providing massive economic backing to encourage technology adoption and ensure production sustainability. Massive subsidies for chemical fertilizers (particularly urea, TSP, and NPK) were implemented to encourage intensive use and boost crop yields, alongside pesticide subsidies that ensured affordable access to pest and disease control agents. The government also established minimum purchase prices to shield farmers from adverse market fluctuations and provided credit and input distribution support. Financing and distribution systems were designed to ensure farmers' access to production inputs through agricultural credit schemes—offering low-interest or subsidized loans for purchasing inputs and agricultural investments—and state-managed subsidized distribution networks that guaranteed availability and affordability at the farm level. Strong institutional intervention by government bodies was a hallmark of this program, notably involving:

The State Logistics Agency (BULOG). BULOG plays a central role in the procurement, storage, and distribution of rice, as well as in price stabilization through market operations.

Agricultural Extension System: Strengthening the extension system to facilitate technology transfer and provide technical assistance to farmers.

Centralized Coordination: Centralized and integrated policy coordination among relevant ministries and agencies.

Table 1. summarizes the key strategies and their implementation mechanisms

Strategy	Key Mechanisms
Technical Intensification	Dissemination of high-yielding rice varieties, irrigation investment, mass intensification programs, and rice centers to increase productivity per unit of land
Input and Price Subsidies	Massive fertilizer subsidies to encourage usage, pesticide subsidies, and price floors for farmers
Credit and Distribution	Agricultural credit, distribution of subsidized inputs via state networks, and the role of BULOG in rice stockpiling and trade

Success The 1984 food self-sufficiency program recorded a number of significant successes, especially in the short term. The 1977-1982 period recorded very strong growth in rice production, with a high yield growth rate. The intensification package implemented in the initial phase of the program proved effective in increasing land productivity. Indonesia officially declared that it had achieved self-sufficiency in rice in 1983-1984, an achievement recognized by FAO and became a model for other developing countries. The stability of rice supplies and relatively successful price controls strengthened food security for consumers and provided certainty for producer farmers. The combination of increasing productivity, floor prices and input support had a positive impact on farmers' income, although the income gap with the non-agricultural sector remained. The success of this program places Indonesia as a successful example in agricultural transformation in developing countries and has received recognition from international organizations.

Despite achieving short-term targets, the 1984 self-sufficiency program faced a number of failures and structural limitations that prevented long-term sustainability at an unsustainable increase in production in the long term. Crop yield growth slowed after the initial surge, and self-sufficiency became difficult to maintain without ever-increasing fiscal costs. Fertilizer and BULOG operational subsidies resulted in huge public expenditure, creating unsustainable fiscal burdens and calling into question the economic efficiency of the program. long, dependence on External Inputs withpThe program creates high dependence on external inputs (chemical fertilizers, pesticides) which must be imported or produced at high costs, reduces the independence of the agricultural system, decreases Research and Extension Investment After achieving self-sufficiency, there is a decrease in investment in agricultural research and extension systems, which contributes to productivity stagnation in the following period, bias towards Rice High priority on rice diverts resources from other food commodities that have the potential to provide economic added value and better food diversification.

The 1984 rice self-sufficiency program generated multi-dimensional impacts that require comprehensive understanding. Social impacts included positive aspects such as stabilized rice supplies and prices, which bolstered food security for consumers – particularly low-income groups – and provided income support to rice farmers through floor prices and increased production. However, there were negative aspects: the income gap between farmers and the non-agricultural sector remained significant, and farmers became heavily dependent on government subsidies, which reduced incentives for efficiency and independent innovation.

Economic impacts included positive aspects such as foreign exchange savings – as reduced rice imports preserved currency reserves for development in other sectors – and macroeconomic stability, with food prices contributing to inflation control. Negative aspects included a heavy fiscal burden, as fertilizer subsidies and BULOG operations entailed massive public spending that strained the state budget; opportunity costs, where the high priority placed on rice diverted resources from other commodities with potentially higher economic value-added; and economic inefficiency, as substantial subsidies created market distortions and reduced the efficiency of resource allocation.

Environmental impacts were predominantly negative: soil degradation occurred due to the intensive and continuous use of chemical fertilizers, which lowered soil quality and organic matter content; water pollution resulted from fertilizer and pesticide runoff contaminating surface and groundwater sources; biodiversity loss arose from rice monoculture and intensive pesticide use, which diminished the biodiversity of agricultural ecosystems; and a decline in input efficiency occurred as environmental degradation necessitated increasingly higher fertilizer dosages to achieve the same yields over the long term. Food self-sufficiency became a primary goal of the Indonesian government's policy in the 1980s because food – specifically rice – held a strategic position in the nation's economic, social, and political life. During the early New Order era, Indonesia faced various food-related challenges, such as low agricultural productivity, rapid population growth, and a reliance on rice imports. As the staple food for the majority of the population, rice availability was viewed as a crucial factor in maintaining national economic and political stability. Consequently, the government prioritized increasing food production within the national development program through the various stages of the Five-Year Development Plan (Repelita).

At the international level, the global food crisis of the 1970s influenced the direction of Indonesia's policies. Fluctuating global food prices and uncertain import supplies prompted the government to reduce its dependence on international markets. In this context, food self-sufficiency was viewed as part of a national sovereignty strategy; thus, the ability to meet food needs through domestic production became a key indicator of successful national development.

The results of these policies began to materialize between the late 1970s and early 1980s, marked by a significant rise in rice production. Increased agricultural productivity was driven by the adoption of new technologies, the expansion of agricultural extension services, and improvements to irrigation systems. In 1984, Indonesia successfully achieved rice self-sufficiency and received recognition from the FAO for this accomplishment. This success was viewed not merely as an agricultural milestone but also as a symbol of successful national development and the state's capacity to ensure food security for its people. Thus, food self-sufficiency in the 1980s was not simply an agricultural production target; it was a national development strategy aimed at maintaining economic stability, improving farmers' welfare, reducing import dependency, and strengthening Indonesia's food security and sovereignty. Understanding this historical context is essential for assessing the extent to which the success of 1984 can serve as a lesson for food self-sufficiency policies in the era of Prabowo Subianto.

METHOD

This study employs the historical research method with a comparative policy study approach, as it examines past policies from the era of President Soeharto's leadership – specifically focusing on several programs implemented in 1984. [Sjamsuddin, \(2012\)](#) explains

that the historical method involves the critical examination and analysis of past records and artifacts to produce a historically sound reconstruction; his work is widely referenced in Indonesian history education. The analysis follows the stages outlined by (Kuntowijoyo, 2003), wherein historical research proceeds through heuristics, verification (source criticism), interpretation, and historiography. These stages are utilized to establish historical facts that are objective and scientifically valid.

Research on Indonesia's food self-sufficiency has drawn the attention of many scholars, particularly regarding the country's success in achieving rice self-sufficiency in 1984 and the various challenges that emerged subsequently. Previous studies indicate that achieving food self-sufficiency is not determined solely by increased agricultural production but is also influenced by government policies, infrastructure development, institutional support, and socio-economic and environmental conditions.

During the heuristic phase of the research process, the researcher gathered various primary sources—including government documents, FAO reports, BPS data, and legislative regulations—complemented by secondary sources such as scholarly articles and other supporting records. Verification results indicate that government documents, FAO reports, and national statistical data possess a high level of credibility, as they originate from official institutions and can be cross-verified with various other sources. Meanwhile, popular articles and media opinion pieces served as supporting sources, subject to checks regarding the validity of the information and its consistency with primary data. The process of source criticism ensured that the facts utilized in the research possessed adequate authenticity and reliability. Relevant government documents from the 1980s include Presidential Decree No. 21 of 1984 concerning REPELITA IV (the Fourth Five-Year Development Plan), which outlined agricultural development policies supporting food self-sufficiency, as well as Presidential Instruction No. 15 of 1980 regarding government intervention to stabilize food prices during that era. These primary documents are further supported by an FAO report on food self-sufficiency, which explains that the Indonesian government prioritized rice production starting in 1968 through a series of Five-Year Development Plans (Repelita). The FAO noted that government commitment, political stability, and various agricultural programs successfully enabled Indonesia to achieve rice self-sufficiency in 1984.

Secondary source support that has been verified by researchers shows several articles, research conducted by Kasryno, Simatupang, Pasandaran, and Adiningsih in the article **Reformulasi Kebijaksanaan Perberasan Nasional** (Reformulation of National Rice Policy) explains that the achievement of rice self-sufficiency in 1984 resulted from a combination of the Green Revolution, irrigation development, the expansion of agricultural land, and comprehensive incentive policies for farmers. However, this success was short-lived; after the mid-1980s, rice production growth slowed due to stagnant technological innovation, the conversion of agricultural land, declining incentives, and the weakening of agricultural institutions. The study emphasizes that food self-sufficiency requires continuous policy renewal and cannot rely merely on short-term production increases.

In line with this research, Simatupang & Timmer, (2008), in their article **Indonesian Rice Production: Policies and Realities**, reveal that Indonesia's rice production grew rapidly between 1977 and 1982, enabling the country to achieve rice self-sufficiency in 1984. However, this success was temporary, as agricultural productivity subsequently slowed. The study concludes that achieving rice self-sufficiency depends not only on subsidy and intensification policies but also on the government's ability to sustain technological innovation, investment in agricultural research, and infrastructure development. A classic study by (Mears, 1984) titled **Swasembada Beras dan Pangan di Indonesia** (Rice and Food Self-Sufficiency in Indonesia) explains that Indonesia's success in achieving rice self-sufficiency during the New Order era was inseparable from the government's role in controlling rice prices, expanding irrigation networks, providing subsidized fertilizers, and strengthening the function of BULOG as a food stabilization agency. Mears assessed that the rice self-sufficiency policy of that time was part of a national development strategy aimed at creating political and economic stability by meeting the public's food needs. This research provides an important historical

foundation for understanding how the state utilized agricultural policy instruments to realize national food security.

Furthermore, research by [Rifqi, \(2023\)](#) regarding the achievements and issues of rice self-sufficiency during the New Order era (1984) indicates that the success in achieving self-sufficiency had positive impacts, such as increased food availability and reduced reliance on rice imports. However, the study also identified various problems, including dependence on chemical fertilizers, an increased fiscal burden on the government due to substantial subsidies, and environmental degradation resulting from agricultural intensification practices. These findings suggest that the success of food self-sufficiency must be balanced with principles of sustainability to avoid creating new problems in the future.

A more recent study was conducted by [\(Septiana Dewi, 2024\)](#) titled **Swasembada dan Impor Beras 1966–1998** (Rice Self-Sufficiency and Imports 1966–1998). This research explains that the success in achieving rice self-sufficiency in 1984 could not be sustained in the long term, as Indonesia reverted to being a rice-importing nation. The primary causes of this situation were rising public consumption needs, limited growth in production, and the declining effectiveness of the agricultural policies that had previously been key factors in the success of self-sufficiency. The study emphasizes the importance of policy continuity to ensure that the success of self-sufficiency is not merely fleeting. Unlike previous studies that focused on evaluating New Order policies, this study examines the relevance of the 1984 food self-sufficiency policy to the agricultural policies of the Prabowo Subianto era. The Prabowo administration has once again prioritized food self-sufficiency through the development of new agricultural land, the revitalization of fertilizer subsidies, the establishment of "food estates," and technology-driven agricultural modernization. These programs demonstrate continuity with the New Order's food self-sufficiency policies, even as they contend with distinct challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, land constraints, and global market dynamics.

The interpretation phase builds upon findings verified through the preceding heuristic and critical stages; here, the analysis synthesizes gathered documents with the context of food policies relevant to the Prabowo Subianto era. The interpretation reveals that the success of achieving food self-sufficiency in 1984 was driven not merely by increased rice production but also by the synergy between government policies—specifically the implementation of the Green Revolution—and strong political commitment. This analysis highlights a shared policy orientation between the two periods—namely, the goal of achieving national food independence and security—despite significant differences in the contexts they faced. While policies in the 1980s focused on boosting production to meet domestic food needs, the policy focus under Prabowo Subianto centers on agricultural modernization, technological adoption, land-use management, and downstream industrialization. Consequently, the success of the 1984 food self-sufficiency initiative serves not only as a historical record of past achievement but also as a foundation for formulating more adaptive and sustainable strategies for the Prabowo Subianto era.

The historiography stage involves compiling and writing the results of historical research based on facts derived from the processes of heuristics, source criticism, and interpretation. At this stage, data regarding the 1984 food self-sufficiency policy and agricultural policies during the Prabowo Subianto era are organized both chronologically and thematically to construct a comprehensive historical narrative. The writing begins by outlining the background of the food self-sufficiency policy during the New Order era, which was driven by the need to overcome dependence on rice imports, improve farmers' welfare, and maintain national stability. The narrative then shifts to the process of achieving food self-sufficiency in 1984 through various government programs—such as agricultural intensification, irrigation development, the provision of production input subsidies, and the strengthening of BULOG's role in maintaining price stability and food distribution.

The subsequent section details the evolution of Indonesia's food policy during the Prabowo Subianto era, which once again positioned food self-sufficiency as a strategic national agenda. This narrative highlights various government measures, including agricultural

modernization, the development of food production zones, increased land productivity, and the strengthening of national food security in the face of global challenges. Through the construction of this narrative, the research historiography reveals a continuity in policy objectives between 1984 and the Prabowo era: the realization of national food self-reliance. However, the research also identifies differences in contexts, challenges, and implementation strategies shaped by shifting economic, social, technological, and environmental conditions. Thus, the historiography does more than reconstruct past events; it also elucidates the relevance of the 1984 food self-sufficiency experience as a source of insight for formulating Indonesia's agricultural policies in the present and future.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FAO documents indicate that rice is a strategic commodity for Indonesia; consequently, the government has prioritized it in food development since the inception of the Five-Year Development Plan (Repelita) in 1968. The FAO notes that government commitment, political stability, sustainable agricultural development, and support from various rural development programs enabled Indonesia to achieve rice self-sufficiency by 1984. Historical documents and studies show that this success was underpinned by agricultural intensification programs—such as the Green Revolution—the adoption of high-yielding varieties, the expansion of irrigation networks, subsidies for fertilizers and pesticides, agricultural credit, and the stabilization of unhusked and milled rice prices through BULOG. Rice production rose significantly in the early 1980s, allowing Indonesia to transition from a rice importer to a nation capable of meeting its own domestic rice needs.

The FAO subsequently granted international recognition to this achievement, marking the pinnacle of Indonesia's food policy success during the New Order era. The 1984 rice self-sufficiency milestone also demonstrated consistent growth in agricultural productivity, resulting from government investment in the agricultural sector and its supporting infrastructure. These empirical findings reveal that food self-sufficiency was not achieved through a single policy, but rather through the integration of mutually reinforcing policy instruments. Therefore, the food self-sufficiency policy under the Prabowo Subianto administration must maintain a comprehensive approach that combines agricultural infrastructure development, productivity enhancement, support for farmers, and the strengthening of national food institutions.

Furthermore, the experience of 1984 indicates that achieving food self-sufficiency requires long-term policy consistency. In the current context, challenges such as climate change, the conversion of agricultural land, and global food market dynamics demand policies that focus not only on increasing production but also on the sustainability of the national food system. Thus, the key lesson from the successful achievement of food self-sufficiency in 1984 is the importance of synergy among technological support, infrastructure investment, market stabilization, and a pro-farmer stance; these elements serve as the fundamental pillars for achieving and sustaining food self-sufficiency in the Prabowo Subianto era.

By constructing this narrative, the study's historiography reveals a continuity of policy objectives between 1984 and the Prabowo era—namely, the realization of national food self-reliance. However, the research also highlights differences in contexts, challenges, and implementation strategies, shaped by evolving economic, social, technological, and environmental conditions. Consequently, this historiography does more than reconstruct past events; it elucidates the relevance of the 1984 food self-sufficiency experience as a source of insight for formulating Indonesia's agricultural policies—both present and future.

Indonesia's agricultural sector in the 2024–2025 period faces a context significantly different from that of 1984, characterized by more complex challenges and opportunities. The key challenges are as follows:

Climate Change

Climate change poses a real threat, disrupting planting patterns, increasing the risk of crop failure, and reducing productivity. Increasingly extreme El Niño and La Niña phenomena cause uncertainty regarding rainfall and temperatures. Prof. Dr. Anton Agus Setyawan, a Professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, emphasizes that climate change affects global food productivity, including that of Indonesia.

Land Limitations and Degradation

The conversion of agricultural land for infrastructure and residential development reduces the area of productive land. Approximately 60 percent of irrigation networks are in a state of disrepair, further exacerbating productivity issues.

Import Dependency

Since the self-sufficiency era of 1984, Indonesia has once again become an importer of rice, corn, and soybeans. Almost all strategic food commodities rely on imports to meet domestic demand.

Fluctuating Productivity

Fluctuating agricultural productivity is a primary cause of food supply instability. During peak harvest seasons, prices plummet, causing losses for farmers; conversely, during off-seasons, supplies are limited and prices surge, triggering short-term imports.

Limited Access to Inputs

At the beginning of the Prabowo administration, fertilizer volumes dropped by up to 50 percent, and approximately 17–20 percent of farmers were unable to access subsidized fertilizer due to issues with the "farmer card" system.

Distribution and Logistics Issues

Inefficient food distribution acts as a major obstacle. Even when harvests are successful, challenges in transporting and distributing food to Java – the largest consumption hub – hinder the smooth flow of supplies and exacerbate price instability.

Global Market Dynamics

Global market uncertainties – including commodity price volatility, trade barriers, and competition with other producers – add complexity to managing food security.

Plantation Sustainability Challenges

The plantation sector faces environmental and business sustainability challenges, including European Union export requirements (such as the STDB for palm oil) and climate change impacts on the production of cocoa and other commodities.

President Prabowo Subianto has issued firm directives to accelerate the achievement of food self-sufficiency, shortening the target timeline from four years to one year. The government has undertaken massive deregulation by streamlining 547 regulations (including the revocation of 291 rules) and issuing 28 new strategic regulations to boost food production. Fertilizer subsidies have been revitalized: the allocation has been restored to 9.55 million tons, prices for subsidized fertilizers (Urea & NPK) have been reduced by up to 20 percent, and access has been expanded through the use of national ID cards (KTP), enabling all farmers to obtain fertilizer without administrative hurdles. Plans are also in place to build seven new fertilizer plants, five of which are scheduled for inauguration before 2029. A pump irrigation program covering one million hectares of rain-fed land enables an increase in cropping frequency from once to up to three times per year.

The target for developing new rice fields stands at 3 million hectares – including a 500,000-hectare development area in Kalimantan – alongside the implementation of "food

estate" programs in regions such as Kalimantan and Papua to bolster national food security, despite facing operational challenges on the ground. High-yield seeds are to be deployed across 5 million hectares, targeting productivity levels of 9.52 tons/ha for irrigated land, 6–7 tons/ha for swampland, 8–9 tons/ha for rain-fed land, and 9.06 tons/ha for saline-tolerant land. Budget efficiency measures have freed up IDR 3.8 trillion, which is being redirected toward productive activities such as the provision of superior seeds, irrigation pumping systems, and agricultural machinery. Regarding technology and digitalization, there are opportunities to integrate digital tools, precision agriculture, and innovations to enhance efficiency and productivity. On January 7, 2026, President Prabowo Subianto declared the achievement of food self-sufficiency during a grand harvest event in Cilebar District, Karawang Regency, marking the program's initial success.

Adapting Lessons from the 1984 Program

Lessons from the 1984 self-sufficiency program can be adapted to the 2024–2025 context through modifications that account for contemporary challenges and opportunities. Based on an analysis of the 1984 self-sufficiency program and the agricultural policy context of the Prabowo era (2024–2025), the following are concrete, measurable, and sustainable policy recommendations:

Short-Term Recommendations (2024–2026)

Prioritize the rehabilitation of damaged irrigation networks (60%), targeting 30% completion within the first two years with a focus on key rice production areas; implement a digital monitoring system for fertilizer subsidies (9.55 million tons) to minimize leakage and ensure targeted distribution via the national ID card (KTP) system; conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the "food estate" programs in Kalimantan and Papua, focusing on soil-commodity suitability and local farmer participation. Adjust strategies based on evaluation findings; accelerate the 1-million-hectare pump irrigation program, prioritizing rain-fed lands with high productivity potential.

Strengthening Distribution and Logistics Systems

Implement digital systems for rice procurement, storage, and distribution to enhance transparency and efficiency; invest in warehouses, cold storage, and transport infrastructure at strategic locations to reduce losses and expedite distribution; open opportunities for private sector participation in food logistics through clear regulations and appropriate incentives.

Climate Change Risk Mitigation

Accelerate the dissemination of climate-adaptive rice varieties (resistant to drought, floods, and salinity) to farmers; implement technology-based weather and climate early warning systems to help farmers anticipate risks; expand agricultural insurance coverage to protect farmers against crop failure caused by climate change.

Communication and Transparency

Launch a public dashboard displaying real-time progress on self-sufficiency targets, subsidy distribution, and key performance indicators; facilitate regular dialogue with farmers, academics, and the private sector to gather feedback and build trust.

Medium- and Long-Term Recommendations (2026–2030)

Subsidy Transition: From Inputs to Investments

Develop a roadmap for a phased transition (5–10 years) from input subsidies (fertilizer) to investments in infrastructure (irrigation, farm roads), research and development, and extension services; introduce productivity- and quality-based subsidy schemes to encourage farmer efficiency and innovation; and accelerate the construction of seven new fertilizer plants to reduce import dependency and stabilize long-term supplies.

Investment in Sustainable Research and Innovation

Allocate at least 2% of the agricultural budget to research and development, focusing on climate-adaptive varieties, sustainable cultivation technologies, and digital innovation; establish strategic partnerships among government research agencies (BRIN, Balitbangtan), universities, and the private sector to accelerate innovation; and set up agricultural innovation centers (agri-tech hubs) across various regions to foster technology adoption and agricultural entrepreneurship.

Food and Commodity Diversification

Launch a national campaign to diversify food consumption (corn, sago, root crops) to reduce reliance on rice; boost the production of corn, soybeans, and other import-dependent food commodities through intensification and extensification programs; and integrate the development of plantation commodities (cocoa, coconut, palm oil) with food security goals and international sustainability standards.

Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Conservation

Develop and implement national sustainable agriculture standards (Good Agricultural Practices) that are mandatory for all government programs; provide incentives (subsidies, certification, premium market access) for farmers adopting sustainable practices (organic farming, Integrated Pest Management/IPM, agroforestry); implement large-scale soil and water conservation programs to prevent land degradation and maintain long-term productivity; and establish a monitoring system for the environmental impacts of agricultural intensification using clear indicators (soil quality, water quality, biodiversity).

Farmer Empowerment and Generational Renewal

Expand field school programs and technical assistance to enhance farmers' capacity in adopting technology and best practices; broaden farmers' access to formal financing with competitive interest rates through partnerships with financial institutions and fintech companies; launch targeted programs to attract the younger generation (Gen Z) to the agricultural sector through modernization and digitalization, value-added activities and agribusiness development, education and training incentives, and access to business capital for young farmers; and strengthen farmer organizations (cooperatives, farmer groups) to improve bargaining power, market access, and economies of scale.

Integration of Digital Technology and Precision Agriculture

Develop an integrated digital platform providing farmers with services such as weather information, market prices, extension services, access to inputs, and financing; promote the adoption of precision agriculture technologies (soil sensors, drones, AI) to optimize input usage and boost productivity; and build a national agricultural big data system to support evidence-based policy planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

Continuous Evaluation and Learning

Establish a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system with clear performance indicators (productivity, fiscal sustainability, environmental impact, farmer welfare); conduct periodic independent evaluations (every 2–3 years) by research institutions or academics to assess program effectiveness and provide recommendations for improvement; adopt an adaptive learning approach that allows for strategic adjustments based on evaluation results and changing contexts; and document lessons learned and best practices for dissemination to stakeholders and as a reference for future policies.

CONCLUSIONS

Indonesia's 1984 rice self-sufficiency achievement was driven by strong political commitment, agricultural intensification, irrigation development, subsidized fertilizers and credit, price support, and effective institutions such as BULOG and agricultural extension services. The key lesson is that self-sufficiency resulted not from increased production alone but from integrated government support across the agricultural value chain. However, the program also faced long-term challenges, including high fiscal costs, environmental degradation, administrative inefficiencies, declining research investment, and excessive dependence on rice. For the Prabowo Subianto administration, these lessons remain relevant but must be adapted to contemporary challenges, including climate change, land constraints, global market uncertainty, and environmental sustainability. Policies should therefore prioritize irrigation rehabilitation, climate-resilient technologies, targeted subsidies, agricultural research, digitalization, farmer empowerment, food diversification, and stronger distribution systems. Ultimately, achieving sustainable food self-sufficiency requires consistent, integrated, inclusive, and evidence-based agricultural governance rather than fragmented short-term production policies.

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