

Analyzing 'Food Insecurity' Poverty in ASEAN: A Comparative Study of Poverty Alleviation Programs in Indonesia Pre and Post-COVID-19

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Countries whose economies depend on or are supported by agriculture are called agricultural countries so agriculture is a country where the majority of the population is engaged in the farming sector. Countries that are successful as agricultural countries and can overcome poverty because they provide many jobs include Japan, the Netherlands, the United States, Australia, and China. These five countries have succeeded in alleviating poverty by maximizing their agricultural potential. This is different from other agricultural countries in ASEAN, including Indonesia, because the poverty rate is still relatively high. This is a dilemma because food-producing agricultural countries experience quite high levels of poverty. This research aims to reveal the facts of poverty in Indonesia and ASEAN as agricultural countries and analyze the relationship between poverty alleviation programs and poverty to obtain their effectiveness. Disclosure of poverty facts in Indonesia and ASEAN as agricultural countries uses secondary data, collected from various sources, such as the ASEAN Report. The relationship between types of aid and poverty in Southeast Sulawesi uses secondary data sourced from various relevant institutions/ministries. The panel data type and time series compare the performance of poverty alleviation assistance programs before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, precisely between 2018 and 2022. The panel data is then analyzed using Path Analysis by carrying out difference tests, classical tests, and linear regression tests. The results of the analysis show that there are significant differences in poverty levels before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. However, no significant differences were found in the variable number of poor people. The BPNT program does not affect poverty alleviation, while PIP and DD can reduce poverty significantly. The research findings for scientific implications are that poverty alleviation assistance with the Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT) scheme does not have a significant role in reducing poverty, while education assistance (PIP) and village funds are proven to play a role in reducing poverty. The theoretical implication is the application of these findings so that experts and researchers consider this when including it as an object (variable) in reflecting the correlation relationship with poverty alleviation. The practical implication is that the Government, through TNP2K, will continue the PIP and DD programs and revise the BPNT program. This is because the two poverty alleviation programs are effective in reducing poverty rates, while BPNT is not effective. Furthermore, the government's focus in the future will not only be on how to reduce the poverty rate but also how to reduce the number of poor people.

Keywords: Poverty, poverty alleviation assistance, non-cash food, smart Indonesia program, village funds.

INTRODUCTION

The theory of poverty used by the World Bank (World Bank, 2018) is "deprivation of well-being" or poverty as a loss of well-being. This means that poverty is those who cannot prosper, measured according to food, drink, clothing, shelter, health, and education. Referring to this theory, it is very

unlikely that poverty will be experienced by farmers, especially farmers who cultivate food crops. Because the farmers in question will not face difficulties in terms of welfare indicators by the World Bank, because their food is sufficient and abundant due to their efforts to do so. Then of course they will get drink, shelter, and health, especially if they are far from the noise of the city which is full of toxins.

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The arguments above have been widely discussed by experts. For example, [Brockington et al. \(2021\)](#) criticize the meaning of poverty and welfare in several areas that are deemed irrelevant, one of which is food problems by food crop farmers. The thoughts proposed by [Brockington \(2021\)](#); [Johnston and Abreu \(2016\)](#); [White et al. \(2012\)](#); [Alkire and Foster \(2011\)](#) that there needs to be a call to re-understand the meaning and context of wealth/welfare and poverty which vary greatly in the context of time, region and characteristics. Long before, criticized poverty measures regarding the monetary, capability, social exclusion, and participatory approaches, which became a point that was widely discussed and agreed upon. The arguments presented by [Baulch and Masset \(2003\)](#) are a summary, development, and criticism of previous study reports that require this, such as [Alkire \(2002\)](#); [Barry \(1998\)](#); [Booth et al. \(1998\)](#); [Lewis and Ulph \(1998\)](#); [Baker \(1997\)](#); [Cheli and Lemmi \(1995\)](#); [Desai \(1995\)](#).

Long discussions about poverty have been carried out by academics, economists, and social observers in regional, national, and international forums. The output of the discussion results can be seen in poverty reduction policies. Gradually, poverty, both in terms of number and percentage, can be reduced. However, policies so far have only reduced, not alleviated. Because poor people also give birth to a new poor generation. Various forms of poverty reduction policies have been issued by the government. At a conceptual level, these programs are based on what causes someone to be poor ([Nurkse, 1971](#)). In developed countries, poverty alleviation is mostly carried out through social safety nets ([Brady, 2019](#)). Meanwhile, in developing countries where this problem is more complex, a more comprehensive policy package is needed ([Maria et al., 2017](#)).

The proof is that the global poverty rate in 2020 was around 9.6% or an increase of 1.2 compared to the poverty rate in 2018, namely 8.4% ([World Bank, 2020](#); [World Bank, 2022](#); [Bhalla et al., 2022](#)). If the COVID-19 pandemic is followed by global security turmoil due to war, [Bhalla et al. \(2022\)](#) estimate that the number of poor people will increase by almost 10%. This is because the pandemic turmoil and security disturbances have a direct impact on agricultural activities and related sectors, including food supplies.

Countries whose economies depend on or are supported by agriculture are called agricultural countries, or in other words, agricultural countries are countries where the majority of the population is engaged in the agricultural sector. Countries that are successful as agricultural countries and can overcome poverty because they provide many jobs include Japan, the Netherlands, the United States, Australia, including China. By maximizing their agricultural potential, these five countries have succeeded in overcoming poverty (at 0.0%).

Experts say that sector development has the potential to create jobs to reduce poverty ([Huq et al., 2009](#)). The interesting fact is that this occurs in ASEAN, which has quite a large agricultural potential in its economy. The agricultural sector

contributes more than 25% to ASEAN GDP. Unfortunately, the magnitude of this growth is inversely proportional to labor absorption data. For example, Laos, which had the highest absorption of agricultural labor between 2001-2021, showed a decline. Similar trends are also experienced by other ASEAN countries, including Indonesia (see Figure 1). The decline in labor absorption has an impact on the added value of agriculture which also shows a decline (presented in Figure 2). Ironically, poverty is more experienced by regions whose economic support is in the agricultural sector.

The fact is different from Indonesia, as an agricultural country, poverty is more widespread in villages which are centers of agricultural activities. In the last ten years, poverty disparities have become more prevalent in villages. This can be seen in 2013 around 14.42%, while in the city only 1.69% of the total population is poor. Then in 2020, the gap is still quite wide, where the poverty rate in villages is around 13.2% while in cities 1.68% of the total poor population. This fact shows that poverty is more experienced by rural communities who generally make their living as farmers. Realizing this, the government has created many farmer welfare programs, ranging from fertilizer subsidies, seed assistance, farmer insurance, agricultural operational equipment, and so on.

At the same time, there is a personal assistance program to overcome short-term poverty by fulfilling basic needs. The program was then organized by the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction ([Tim Nasional Percepatan Penanggulangan Kemiskinan/TNP2K](#)) which was formed in 2010 to develop poverty reduction and social protection policies that were coherent, focused, and non-overlapping. Looking at data on economic development, the TNP2K program is quite successful in overcoming the problem of poverty. It is proven that the poverty rate has reached the lowest level, namely less than 10 percent. This positive trend lasted from March 2018 to March 2020. Unfortunately, when the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of poor people and the percentage of poverty in Indonesia increased again. Another problem faced is the disparity in poverty from a regional perspective. Poverty data according to the large islands in Indonesia in 2023 places the percentage of poverty in the Eastern Region of Indonesia (Kawasan Timur Indonesia/KTI) higher than the Western Region of Indonesia. The percentage of poor people in Sulawesi is 10.07 percent; Bali and Nusa Tenggara are 13.36%, and Maluku and Papua are 20.36%. Meanwhile, Sumatra, Java, and Kalimantan respectively were 9.82%; 8.29%, and 5.81%.

The effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in Indonesia has been widely explored through various previous studies. [Timmer et al. \(2016\)](#) direct assistance model (person to person) in non-cash food assistance (Bantuan Pangan Non Tunai/BPNT). In cases such as assistance from the Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan/PKH) by [Hwang and Nam \(2022\)](#); [Firmansyah et al. \(2021\)](#); [Hwang and Nam \(2020\)](#); [Nazara and Rahayu \(2013\)](#). Electricity and LPG gas



energy subsidies by Nugroho *et al.* (2015). Health insurance assistance by Dartanto and Otsubo (2015); Dartanto and Patunru (2015); Rini *et al.* (2019). This is related to increasing the productivity of farming businesses to get out of poverty by Sukmajaya *et al.* (2020). The role of the Village Fund program in dealing with poverty by Mukaddas *et al.* (2023); Mukaddas (2021). The comprehensive research on poverty management in various programs was carried out by Nugroho (2019).

Because the distribution of poverty is still high in the eastern region of Indonesia, an interesting study in depth is taking the case of Southeast Sulawesi Province. This province is one of the provinces in Indonesia that has experienced a significant increase in poverty. Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that the number of poor people as of March 2021 was around 318.7 thousand people. This figure increased by 1.38 thousand people or 0.43% from September 2020. In fact, from March 2017 to September 2019, the number of poor people in this province tended to decrease. It is indicated that this increase was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic which hit all regions of the country. The increase in the number of poor people in Southeast Sulawesi during the COVID-19 pandemic shows a signal of the unsustainability of the various poverty reduction programs that have been developed and implemented. This also indicates that the various poverty reduction programs have not yet comprehensively created community resilience and empowerment in conditions of uncertainty. Proving the effectiveness of aid programs (specifically BPNT, PIP, and DD) on poverty in Southeast Sulawesi is very limited and not enough to build theoretical construction, this is where the urgency of this research lies.

The mapping results of the previous study were linked to the gaps in phenomena and facts as previously discussed, so the study which has an element of up-to-dateness to be explored is taking problems to analyze regarding poverty in food storage areas. To strengthen the analysis, it is compared with existing poverty management programs.

Starting from a description of problems regarding agricultural potential, poverty in agricultural countries, and poverty reduction assistance programs which are still open for analysis to produce theoretical and conceptual updates as well as practical implications for society and the Government as a policy formulator. There are two aims of this research, 1) Revealing the facts of poverty in Indonesia as an agricultural country, and its position in ASEAN; and 2) Analyzing the relationship between poverty alleviation programs and poverty, effectiveness, and disparities.

The theoretical implication (novelty) of this research is the relationship between social food assistance, education, and village fund programs simultaneously in reducing poverty. Meanwhile, the practical implications are; 1. Evaluation of the performance of the National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K) for a better future; and 2. Evaluation of the village fund program, including its level of

effectiveness compared to TNP2K, which of the two is more effective and can be replicated to improve performance.

Poverty: The concept of poverty starts by highlighting the fulfillment of basic needs (basic needs approach) from an economic perspective to fulfill basic food and non-food needs as measured from the expenditure side (Brady, 2019). Poverty is the loss or inability to fulfill basic needs such as health, housing, education, and food (Sen, 2000). Poverty is a situation of deprivation caused by limited capital owned, low knowledge and skills, low productivity, low income, weak exchange value for poor people's production, and limited opportunities to participate in development. The low income of the poor causes poor education and health, affecting their already low productivity and increasing community dependency (Sen, 2000).

A person is said to be poor if he or she frequently suffers from malnutrition and poor health (Hwang and Nam, 2022), has a low level of literacy or is completely illiterate, lives in a poor environment, is politically underrepresented, and earns a low income in rural areas and slums (Todaro, 2004). The World Bank sets the international poverty line at 1.25 US dollars per capita per day. This means that those who are considered poor in this world (both in countries and individuals) are those who spend less than USD 1.25 per day. This means that those who are considered poor in this world (both as a country and individually) are those who spend less than USD 1.25 per day (World Bank, 2020).

The World Bank explains that the causes of poverty include: 1) limited ownership of land and capital, 2) limited facilities and infrastructure needed, 3) biased development, 4) differences in opportunities between members of society, 5) differences in human resources and sectors economy, 6) low productivity, 7) poor culture, 8) poor governance, and 9) excessive management of natural resources. Another cause of poverty is globalization, related to development, social and consequential (Cox, 2004; Hwang and Nam, 2020), where: 1) Poverty is caused by globalization. Globalization gives birth to winning countries and losing countries. The general winners are developed countries while developing countries are often increasingly marginalized by the competition and free markets that are a prerequisite for globalization. Because developing countries are marginalized, the amount of poverty in developing countries is much greater than in developed countries; 2) Poverty related to development. The development pattern implemented has given rise to several forms of poverty, such as rural poverty, which is the condition of village areas experiencing poverty due to the development process that marginalizes rural areas; urban poverty, namely the condition of poverty caused by the nature and speed of economic growth, where not all groups benefit; 3) Social poverty, this third dimension looks at the social conditions of society that do not benefit several groups in society. For example, poverty experienced by women, children, and minority groups is poverty caused by social conditions that do



not benefit these groups. The social conditions in question include gender bias, discrimination, and economic exploitation; and 4) Consequential poverty. This fourth dimension emphasizes external factors that cause poverty. The factors in question are conflict, natural disasters, environmental damage, and high population. These factors are what cause the emergence of poverty in society.

Poverty is more common in rural areas compared to urban areas. Even though there has been a poverty reduction, it has not been accompanied by a reduction in disparities or gaps between cities and rural areas. As an archipelagic (maritime) country, Indonesia's population distribution is generally found on the coast, including urban coasts. Around 1/3 of coastal areas are categorized as poor communities (Zamzam, 2011). Coastal communities generally work as fishermen and in various other fishing businesses which nationally contribute greatly to poverty levels.

According to Prakoso (2013), economic factors that cause poverty include limited capital, traditional technology, low market access, and lack of community participation in processing natural and non-economic resources such as high population growth, low levels of education, lack of level of health and limited public facilities and infrastructure in rural areas. The poverty that plagues the lives of rural communities is caused by complex factors. Not only is it related to fluctuations in fishing seasons, limited human resources, capital and access, and trade networks, but is also caused by the negative impact of agricultural modernization which encourages excessive destruction of (marginal) land resources (Ticoalu *et al.*, 2013).

Poverty Alleviation (Handling) in Indonesia: The problem of poverty is quite complex and requires joint and coordinated intervention from all parties. Various policies to reduce poverty have been repeatedly tried. In general, there are three models of poverty alleviation policies, namely direct approaches, indirect policies, and policies related to empowerment (Kuncoro, 2019). In the direct approach, the government provides social assistance or protection directly to the poor as the target group. This is realized through the provision of rice for the poor (Raskin), the Family Hope Program (PKH), Community Health Insurance (Jamkesmas), assistance for the elderly and disabled, natural disaster assistance, Direct Cash Assistance, and scholarships for children from a poor family. This direct approach is like 'giving fish' directly to the target group.

In contrast to the first approach, the indirect approach provides for the participation of the government and society together to encourage economic growth and provide basic needs for the poor. In this approach, the government rolls out community-based programs and budgets that are part of the Mandiri National Community Empowerment Program. The government acts as a facilitator who seems to teach people how to 'fish'. The final approach is the government's effort to empower communities to 'have their fishing rods and boats'

(Firmansyah *et al.*, 2021). This is done by empowering Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and improving the business climate.

Poverty alleviation is a policy and program of the central government and regional governments that is carried out systematically, planned, and in synergy with the business world and society to reduce the number of poor people to increase the level of people's welfare. Poverty reduction is carried out by considering the four main principles of comprehensive poverty reduction, namely (i) improvement and development of the social protection system; (ii) increasing access to basic services; (iii) empowerment of poor community groups; and (iv) inclusive development (Firmansyah *et al.*, 2021).

Referring to these main principles, poverty alleviation is carried out with the strategy of (i) reducing the expenditure burden on the poor; (ii) increasing the capabilities and income of the poor; (iii) developing and ensuring the sustainability of micro and small businesses; and (iv) forming a synergy of poverty reduction policies and programs. This strategy is implemented with various poverty reduction programs. Namely, activities carried out by the government, regional governments, the business world, and the community to improve the welfare of the poor through social assistance, community empowerment, empowerment of micro and small economic businesses, as well as other programs to increase economic activity (National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction, 2018).

Nationally, TNP2K groups poverty reduction programs based on targets and objectives, which are as follows. First, the family-based integrated social assistance program group. The aim is to fulfill basic rights, reduce the burden of life, and improve the quality of life of poor people. Second, a group of poverty alleviation programs based on community empowerment. The aim is to develop the potential and strengthen the capacity of poor community groups to be involved in development based on the principles of community empowerment. Third, a group of poverty alleviation programs based on empowering micro and small economic enterprises (National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction, 2018). The aim is to provide access and economic strengthening for micro and small-scale business actors. Fourth, other programs that can directly or indirectly increase economic activity and the welfare of the poor.

Research Gap: Isdijoso *et al.* (2016) stated that the social assistance program for poverty showed success but also had shortcomings, including problems with the accuracy of targeting aid recipients and distribution management of aid distribution, especially for the food subsidy assistance program. In line with this, Qodriyatun (2013) in his research stated that empowering poor coastal communities was considered less successful because the government did not guarantee community access to natural resources. Zamzam (2011) in his research reported that the government's program



for handling poor fishermen was not in line with the concept that was originally planned.

Sabarisman and Suradi (2020); Gultom *et al.* (2021); Anwar *et al.* (2023) evaluated the performance of handling poverty through food aid (BNPT), in terms of distribution it could be said to be not optimal because the high budget disbursed did not make poverty decreases.

Other poverty reduction programs such as the Smart Indonesia Program (Progran Indonesia Pintar/PIP) and Village Funds (Dana Desa/DD) can reduce poverty significantly. Several previous studies that are in line with this research include Fan *et al.* (2002); Fan and Zhang (2008); Diao *et al.* (2010); Karini (2018); Sunu and Utama (2019); Wahyuddin *et al.* (2019); Saifuloh and Anwar (2022) that PIP is needed by the poor because catching up with science and technology can only be done by getting an education. But then these results contradict the results of Astuti (2018) research where PIP only reduces education costs and does not reduce poverty.

There is still a gap in the results of previous research regarding the success and effectiveness of aid programs such as BPNT, PIP, and DD in alleviating poverty. To present new evidence, this research tries to reanalyze the relationship between the three types of assistance about poverty alleviation. The results will be able to add new treasures as well as reveal gaps as an important recommendation for improving the performance of aid distribution which is expected to be able to eradicate poverty which has been a problem in agricultural-based countries.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was located in Southeast Sulawesi Province which has 17 districts/cities. A total of 17 regions were then used as cross-section data. Meanwhile, in terms of years, the data range was taken between 2018 and 2022. During the five years, observations were used as time series data.

The approach was taken quantitatively, so the data was carried out using Path Analysis because it combines cross-section and time series data. This analysis is used to determine the effect of government programs on poverty alleviation. Paired sample difference tests and effectiveness calculations were carried out to determine disparities and program effectiveness. The model created in this research is as follows,

$$POV_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 BPNT_{it} + \beta_2 PIP_{it} + \beta_3 DD_{it} + e$$

Description of Research Data: Table 2 shows an overview of poverty data before Covid-19 (2018) and after Covid-19 (2022). The table shows an overview of the data on the variables involved in the model from 15 districts/cities for 5 years (2018 – 2022).

The poverty rate in 2018 (before the COVID-19 pandemic) averaged 13.88% in 15 districts/cities in Southeast Sulawesi Province. In that year, the lowest poverty rate was 10.95%, while the highest poverty rate was 17.48%. The distribution

of the data obtained was 1.61. The poverty rate in 2022 (post the Covid-19 pandemic) will be an average of 13.37% lower than before the Covid-19 pandemic. This means that the average poverty level in Southeast Sulawesi Province has decreased. This situation is also accompanied by lower minimum and maximum poverty levels, namely 10.26% and 16.15%.

Table 1. Operational Research Variables.

Variable	Definition	Unit	Data types and sources
Poverty (POV)	The division between the population whose average per capita expenditure is less than the poverty line (poor population) and the total population living in districts/cities in Southeast Sulawesi Province	(%)	Secondary, from the Central Bureau of Statistics
Non-Cash Food Assistance (Bantuan Pangan Non Tunai/BPNT)	Social assistance in the form of social protection, social security, social empowerment, social rehabilitation and basic services calculated from the realization of the budget distributed by the government as a whole is accumulated in each district/city in Southeast Sulawesi Province	Rupiah (Rp)	Secondary, from the Ministry of Social Affairs
Smart Indonesia Program (Program Indonesia Pintar/PIP)	Government program in the education sector specifically aimed at students from poor families in every district/city in Southeast Sulawesi Province	Rupiah (Rp)	Secondary, from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology
Village Fund Program (Dana Desa DD)	State Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBN) funds intended for villages are transferred through the Regency/City Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) and are prioritized for implementing development and empowering village communities	Rupiah (Rp)	Ministry of Finance

The average number of poor people in Southeast Sulawesi Province in 2018 was recorded at 18,470 people. After passing through the COVID-19 pandemic, the average number of poor people increased to 18,558 people. This unexpected condition also occurred with the maximum number of poor people, namely 35,730 people, higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the minimum number of poor people after the COVID-19 pandemic was reduced to 5,470 people from the previous 5,870 people. This information is presented in full in Table 3.

If the cross-section data (15 regency/cities) is combined with time series data for the 5-year observation period (2018 – 2022), then 75 data are obtained. As far as observations were made, the lowest poverty level touched the level of 10.01 percent while the highest was at the level of 17.81%. The



Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Comparative Data.

Variable	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Poverty rate (PR) 2018	15	10.95	17.48	13.88	1.61
Poverty rate (PR) 2022	15	10.26	16.15	13.37	1.53
Number of poor people (NPP) 2018	15	5870.00	33730.00	18470.00	9124.44
Number of poor people (NPP) 2022	15	5470.00	35730.00	18558.67	9651.42

Table 3. Descriptive Statistic for Panel Data.

Variable	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
PR	75	10.01	17.81	13.6051	1.6484
NPP	75	5,470	31,670	18,481.20	9021.11
BPNT	75	872,800,000	51,163,000,000	1.48e+10	1.303e+10
PIP	75	2,184,300,000	19,283,525,000	8,669,005,667	4,312,346,987
DD	75	50,027,957,000	3e+11	1.04e+10	5.529e+10

average poverty rate during this period was 13.60%. The average poor population in Southeast Sulawesi Province for 5 years was 18,481 people, with the lowest entity being 5,470 people and the highest being 31,670 people.

There are at least three poverty alleviation programs launched by the Southeast Sulawesi Provincial Government, namely Non-Cash Food Assistance (BPNT), Smart Indonesia Program (PIP), and Village Funds (DD). If you look at the data in Table 3, the poverty alleviation program has cost a lot. On average, over five years BPNT has spent a budget of IDR 14.8 billion. A total of IDR 51.163 billion was distributed to one district/city. On average, PIP distribution also costs at least IDR 8.66 billion. Meanwhile, during this period, village funds disbursed an average of IDR 10.4 billion.

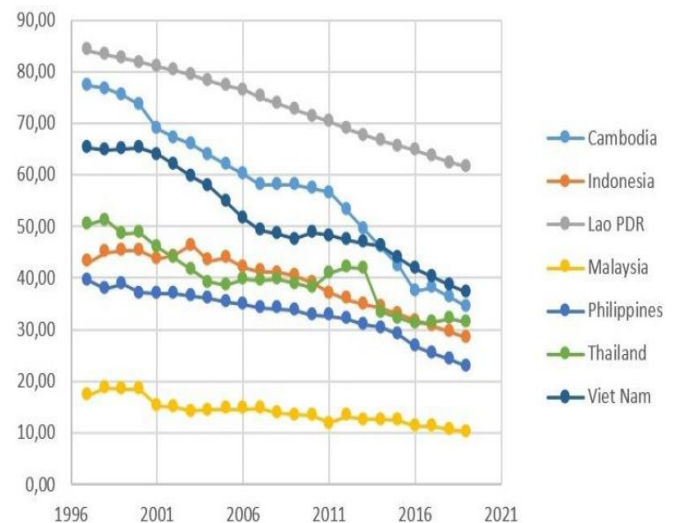
RESULT

Agriculture in ASEAN: The agricultural sector has a strategic position in encouraging economic development in developing countries, including ASEAN. Countries in the ASEAN region are the main producers and suppliers of grains, especially rice, and are the largest producers of palm oil and natural rubber in the world which have grown rapidly in recent years (Rahman *et al.*, 2024).

The development of the agricultural sector in ASEAN has the potential to create jobs and reduce poverty (Huq *et al.*, 2009). This sector plays a role in absorbing labor and is the main source of livelihood for most countries in ASEAN, thus making a significant contribution to economic growth. This is shown by more than 25% of ASEAN GDP being supported by the agricultural sector.

The availability of labor, both in terms of quantity and quality, can maintain continuous economic growth in the long term (Setiyanto 2015). The 2023 World Development Indicators (WDI) report found that the highest labor absorption in the agricultural sector between 1996-2021 was occupied by Laos or Lao PDR, and second place was occupied by Cambodia. Indonesia ranks fifth out of 7 countries. Malaysia ranks

seventh. However, labor absorption in the agricultural sector has shown a relative decline in interest in line with the decline in the agricultural sector's contribution to national GDP, although the numbers are still relatively high (Sinuraya *et al.*, 2020). This information is presented in Figure 1.



Source: Processed from World Development Indicators (2000-2022); Rahman *et al.* (2024)

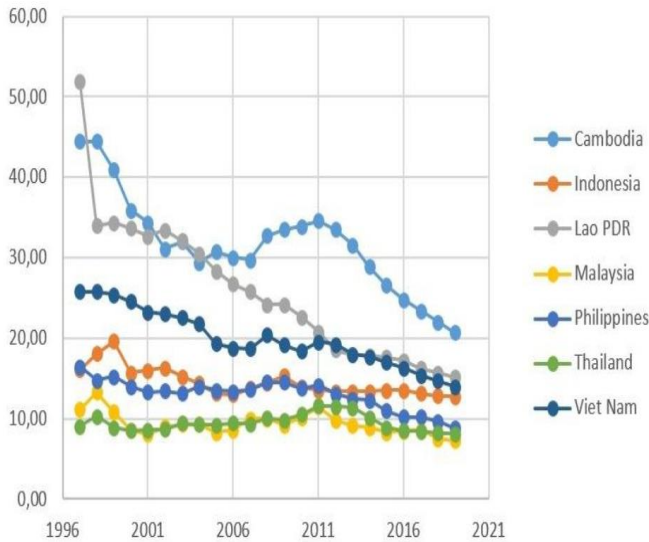
Figure 1. Employment in Agriculture in ASEAN, 1996-2021.

As shown in Figure 1, labor absorption in the agricultural sector reached 85 thousand (1996 data) in Laos, with the lowest being under 20 thousand workers in Malaysia. In 2021, the highest labor absorption will remain at 63 thousand in Laos, and in Malaysia, the lowest will be 10 thousand labor absorption. In the case of Indonesia, labor absorption in the agricultural sector in 1996 was 43 thousand, then in 2021 it fell to 28 thousand. This means that during 1996-2021, the agricultural sector experienced a decline in labor absorption



of more than 50%. Countries that consistently show a decline are Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Meanwhile, the countries that fluctuated until they finally declined were Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

The rate of decline in labor absorption seems to be in line with the added value of agriculture which also shows a decline. As can be seen in Figure 2, the highest added value contribution from the agricultural sector to the GDP of ASEAN countries in 1996 was Laos which reached more than 50%, followed by Cambodia at 44%. Indonesia ranks fourth with the Philippines at around 17%, and the lowest is Thailand at 9%.



Source: Processed from World Development Indicators (2000-2022); Rahman *et al.* (2024)

Figure 2. Value Added Agriculture (Along with Forestry and Fisheries) in ASEAN, 1996-2021.

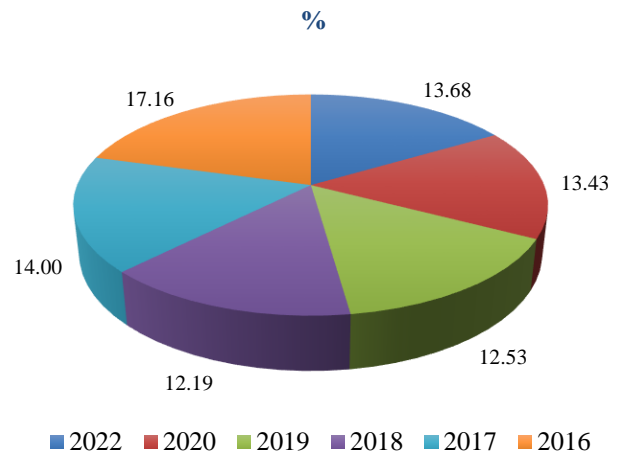
Entering 2021, all countries experienced a decline in the added value of the agricultural sector, the highest of which was Laos which was still at 14% or down almost 30%. Cambodia and Vietnam also experienced the same thing as Laos, although it was not significant. Meanwhile, other countries experienced a decline of below 10% and there was a fluctuating pattern.

When using the "Fisher-Clark" approach, the above phenomenon can be explained that changes that affect agriculture can have an overall impact on macroeconomic activities. Increasing output per worker will transform into economic growth and transfer labor from sectors with low output per worker to sectors with higher output per worker so that economic growth is achieved. Meanwhile, the decline in worker output also hampers economic growth and this is one of the things that could threaten the contribution of the ASEAN agricultural sector.

In theory, supported by Hassoun and Abdelmadjid (2019); Arota *et al.* (2016); Awokuse and Xie (2014) that an increase

in labor absorption shows that agriculture is experiencing growth and has a positive impact on the added value of this sector in economic growth. On the other hand, if the added value of the agricultural sector decreases, while reflecting this, labor absorption also shows the same pattern.

Poverty in ASEAN: The poverty rate in Asian countries is still quite high with an average of between 13-17%, although there is a downward trend. This can be seen from the average ASEAN poverty rate in 2016 which was around 17.16%, which fell in 2018 to 12.19% and rose again in 2020 to 13.43% (coinciding with the Covid-19 pandemic). In 2022, the poverty rate in ASEAN will not improve after the pandemic, because the poverty rate is still higher, namely 13.68% (See Figure 3).



Note: Brunei Darussalam and Singapore are not included because the poverty rate is below 1%.

Source: Processed from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), 2023, 2021, 2020, 2018

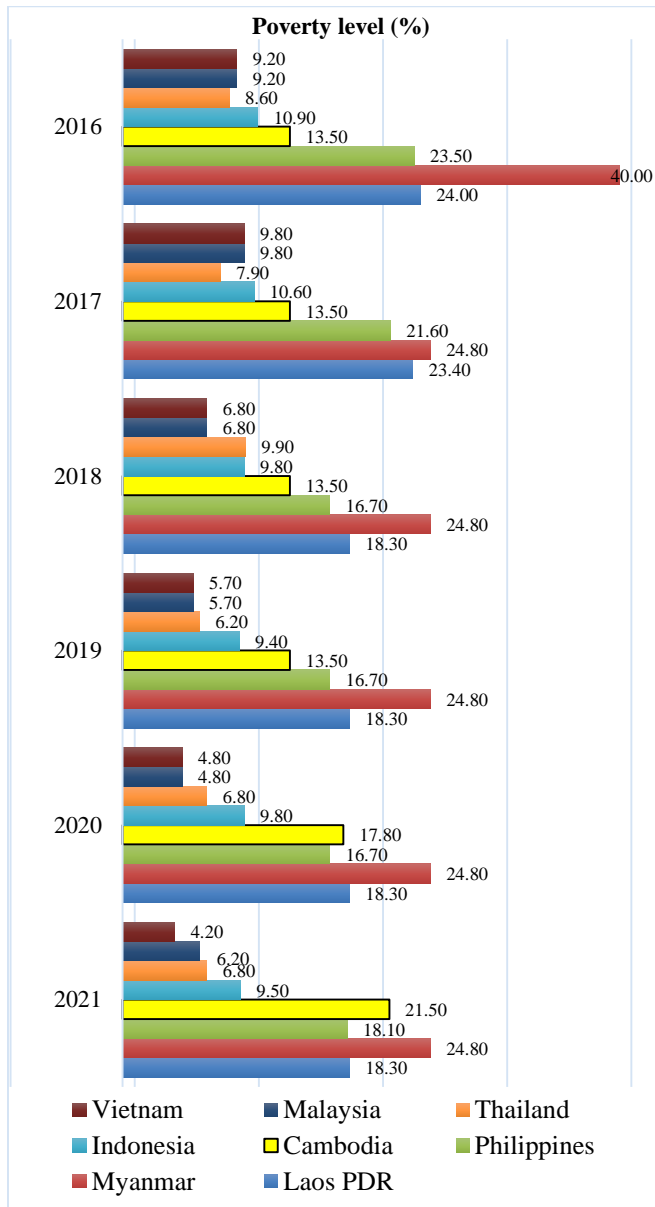
Figure 3. Poverty Figures for ASEAN, 2016-2022.

Figure 4 shows that the highest poverty rate during 2016-2022 was in Myanmar, in 2016 it was around 40% or contributed to around 29.13% of total ASEAN poverty. Poverty in Myanmar then started to improve, in 2022 it will remain at 24.80% or down 15.20% from 2016. The country with the second highest contribution to ASEAN poverty is Laos PDR, where in 2016 it was 24% and in 2022 it will remain at 18.30% or down around 5.70%.

Between 2016-2022, the most significant poverty reduction was in the Philippines, namely 5.40%, followed by Vietnam at 5%. Specifically, for Indonesia, between 2016-2022 there was a decline in poverty of around 1.40%, the same decline rate as Malaysia. This is a unique thing that happened in Cambodia because the poverty rate increased by around 8%, or an increase of 1.3% per year. A significant increase in poverty began to occur in 2020 until it peaked in 2022. However, the poverty rate in Cambodia in 2022 was around 21.50%, still lower than Myanmar's 24.80%. These two



countries are on the agenda of ASEAN leaders to discuss the issue of poverty in the two countries. The strategic agenda needs to be as immediate as possible so that it does not have a widespread impact in the ASEAN region.



Note: Brunei Darussalam and Singapore are not included because the poverty rate is below 1%.

Source: Processed from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), 2023, 2021, 2020, 2018

Figure 4. Poverty Figures for ASEAN Countries, 2016-2022.

Influence, Effectiveness, and Disparity in Reducing Poverty Through Food Assistance, Education, and Village Funds:

It starts by presenting the results of an analysis of the

differences in influence between types of poverty management programs on reducing poverty rates. The results of the analysis in question are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Paired Samples Correlations.

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	PR1-PR2	15	0.957	0.000
Pair 2	NPP1-NPP2	15	0.961	0.000

Table 4 shows the correlation values for the two variables in paired samples. This is obtained from the bivariate Pearson correlation coefficient (with a two-sided significance test) for each pair of variables entered. The first pair links poverty levels before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. The first relationship produces a correlation coefficient of 0.957%. The second pair links the number of poor people before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which produces a correlation coefficient of 0.961. Both are significant at an error rate of 0.05%. This means that the two variables between the poverty assistance program and poverty have a significant relationship. In-depth (partial direct relationship) will be presented in the next results (Table 6).

Table 5. Paired Samples Test.

		Mean	Std. Dev.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	PR1-PR2	0.5153	0.46855	4.260	14	0.001
Pair 2	NPP1-NPP2	-88.67	2674.70	-0.128	14	0.900

Table 5 is the main table of output which shows the results of the tests carried out. This result can be seen from the two-sided significance column. The significance value in the first pair is 0.001 < 0.05, so it can be said that the poverty level before and after COVID-19 experienced a significant change. As previously stated, the poverty rate after COVID-19 decreased quite significantly from 13.88% to 13.37% (down 0.51%). However, this situation is not followed by the number of poor people (second pair) which produces a significance of 0.90 > 0.05. The average number of poor people has indeed increased, but the increase is only 88 people. From these results, it can be said that the number of poor people in Southeast Sulawesi Province before and after the Covid-19 pandemic has not changed significantly.

Panel Data Regression Test Results: The results of the panel data regression test are presented in Table 6. It is known that the first model (common effect model) has the highest R-square and customized R-square values among the other models, namely 0.5553 and 0.5361. This figure shows that the poverty alleviation program has been able to explain the poverty level in Southeast Sulawesi Province of 55.53%. The remaining 44.47% is explained by other variables not involved in the model.



Table 6. Analysis Result.

Test Name	Desc/Variable	First Model	Second Model	Third Model
Determination (R ²)	R ²	0.5553	0.1540	0.1979
F-test	Adjusted R ²	0.5361	0.0982	0.1641
t-test	F-Value	29.55***	3.459***	17.527***
	Constant	81.38***	NA	51.397***
	LnBPNT	-0.0411	0.1593**	0.0778
	LnPIP	-1.789***	0.0504	-1.133**
	LnDD	-1.034**	0.0396	-0.546

Note: Significances : *** p-value ≤ 0.001; ** p-value ≤ 0.01; * p-value ≤ 0.05.

First model : Common Effect Model (CEM)

Second model : Fixed Effect Model (FEM)

Third Model : Random Effect Model (REM)

All models have a significant F-value of less than 0.001. These results mean that all independent variables (three poverty reduction programs) jointly influence the dependent variable (poverty level). Meanwhile, judging from the t-test value, there are several differences. The Common Effect Model produces all independent variables with negative influence coefficient values. This result is in line with what was expected. However, of the three independent variables, only two variables have a significant effect. Meanwhile, the Fixed Effect Model produces positive influence coefficients from all independent variables. This result is not expected because the independent variable consisting of poverty reduction programs increases poverty itself. The Random Effect Model produces two independent variables that have a negative influence coefficient and one other variable has a positive influence coefficient. However, of all the existing variables, only one variable has a significant effect on poverty, namely the Smart Indonesia Program. Of the three models above, the Common Effect Model was chosen by considering the significance of the model. Thus, this model can be written as follows:

$$POV_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 BPNT_{it} + \beta_2 PIP_{it} + \beta_3 DD_{it} + e$$

$$POV_{it} = 81.3806 - 0.0411 BPNT_{it} - 1.7889 PIP_{it} - 1.0337 DD_{it} + e$$

The constant value in the model above means that if there were no poverty alleviation program, the poverty level would increase by 81.38%. BPNT does not affect the poverty level so the coefficient -0.0411 does not cause a change in the poverty level.

PIP has a regression coefficient of -1.7889, meaning that the more budget and beneficiaries from that budget, the poverty level can be reduced by 1.7889%. This means that the PIP program influences reducing poverty.

Likewise, the Village Fund variable has a regression coefficient of -1.0337. The more village funds are transferred by the central government to the regions, the poverty rate will decrease by 1.0337%. This means that the Village Fund program influences reducing poverty (Table 7).

The classical assumption tests used in this research are only the autocorrelation test and heteroscedasticity test. This refers to the opinion of Ekananda (2016); Widarjono (2009) who stated that if research uses panel data then not all classical assumption tests are carried out. Researchers can choose by only carrying out autocorrelation tests and heteroscedasticity tests.

Based on Table 7, it can be seen that there is no serial correlation in the error component because the p-value resulting from the autocorrelation test is smaller than 0.05%. Meanwhile, in the heteroscedasticity test, the model experienced homogeneity because the resulting p-value was greater than 0.05%.

DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis reinforce the ironic fact that poverty for farmers and villages cannot yet be addressed, at least the disparity is slowly decreasing. We found that poverty is not only in remote parts of Indonesia but almost occurs in all ASEAN countries. Some ASEAN countries show an increase in poverty rates. This happens because of the lack of infrastructure to support village agricultural business activities. Another fact is that labor absorption in the agricultural sector is decreasing, which in turn means that the contribution or added value of agriculture to the economy is also decreasing.

Theoretically, a poverty alleviation program must be able to eradicate poverty both in percentage and quantity. It's called a poverty alleviation program. It would be ambiguous if the poverty alleviation program increased the poverty rate itself. Even though it does not increase poverty rates, BPNT is a program that does not have an impact on poverty. This is in line with research by Sabarisman and Suradi (2020); Gultom et al. (2021); Anwar et al. (2023). It can be said that BPNT

Table 7. Classical Test.

Test	Indicator	First Model	Second Model	Third Model	Result
Autocorelacy	chisq	42.783	37.218	28.882	Correlation in indiosyncratic errors
	df	5	5	5	
	p-value	4.09e-08	5.417e-07	2.446e-05	
Heteroscedasticity	BP	0.12028	0.12028	0.12028	Data homogen
	df	3	3	3	
	p-value	0.9893	0.9893	0.9893	



distribution is not optimal because the high budget disbursed does not reduce poverty. Initially, BPNT was given to poor people in the form of providing basic food assistance containing large quantities of vegetables, fruit, eggs, and meat. Poor families known as Beneficiary Families (KPM) usually take this assistance from shops designated as government distributors. The BPNT program has good intentions where the budget provided is used to purchase basic needs. This situation will encourage an increase in people's purchasing power. On the other hand, domestic products, especially agricultural products, will increasingly sell. By providing the BPNT program, a multiplier effect will arise for both aid recipients and producers.

Currently, the distribution of BPNT is not by the initial regulations. BPNT is currently given in cash to the public. The budget size is IDR 200,000 per month. The BPNT distribution mechanism is carried out every two months so that beneficiary families will receive IDR 400,000 for each disbursement. According to researchers, this is what ultimately did not create a multiplier effect as expected. The cash received by beneficiary families is also not always spent on basic needs. In many cases, the money is used to pay the debts of poor families. When it was mandatory to spend it at a shop appointed by the government, it was discovered that the shop owner did not have a balance on the card provided by the government. Thus, it is natural that BPNT does not affect poverty.

Other poverty reduction programs such as PIP and DD can reduce poverty significantly. Several previous studies that are in line with this research include [Fan et al. \(2002\)](#); [Fan and Zhang \(2008\)](#); [Diao et al. \(2010\)](#); [Karini \(2018\)](#); [Sunu and Utama \(2019\)](#); [Wahyuddin et al. \(2019\)](#); [Saifuloh and Anwar \(2022\)](#). PIP is needed by the poor because catching up with science and technology can only be done by getting an education. The problem is, the cost of education is also increasing over time. Therefore, by providing PIP from the government to poor people who need it, education costs will become more affordable. In the future, people who receive education will be able to compete with workers with the same level of qualifications. Education is also able to create resources that have innovation, ideas, and creativity which can ultimately create jobs for themselves and others. Indeed, the impact on poverty cannot be seen immediately, it takes time to see the results. Therefore, this problem was criticized by [Astuti \(2018\)](#) where PIP only reduces education costs and does not reduce poverty.

Poverty alleviation programs through village fund programs as reported by [Fan et al. \(2002\)](#); [Fan and Zhang \(2008\)](#); [Diao et al. \(2010\)](#); [Karini \(2018\)](#); [Sunu and Utama \(2019\)](#); [Wahyuddin et al. \(2019\)](#); [Saifuloh and Anwar \(2022\)](#) have a significant correlation with reducing poverty. This means that the DD implemented so far is considered capable of reducing poverty significantly.

The challenge is, so far most village budgets only prioritize infrastructure development, not community empowerment. This is because rural areas in Indonesia have diverse patterns with uneven infrastructure availability. The majority of village funds are used to build roads because many roads in rural areas are still made of earth or stone (not paved or cast/concrete). Good road infrastructure will provide benefits to economic actors who have long been involved in the village economy. It becomes easier for them to distribute the results of their business and distribution costs can ultimately be reduced because the channels become smoother and easier to access. Poor people who work for producers in rural areas will also receive abundant benefits if demand for their business results increases. Apart from that, poor people can also receive direct benefits from the distribution of village funds through village community empowerment programs. They can take part in training programs that hone the skills of poor people. This program hopes that in the future poor people will have special skills that can be used as a medium for them to obtain work or create their jobs.

The poverty alleviation program can be said to be effective in reducing the percentage of poverty levels in Southeast Sulawesi Province, then the test results show that poverty alleviation (aid program) does not reduce the number of poor people so there is still parity between programs and the rate of the number of poor people.

Conclusion: The current condition of agricultural development and poverty in ASEAN is said to be not good because the labor force and/or labor absorption in the agricultural sector between 1996 and 2021 has experienced a significant decline, as has the value of the sector which shows the same thing. object. It is natural that poverty still occurs (quite high) in the ASEAN region. It is ironic because the region as an agricultural country has not been able to contribute to poverty alleviation. It is still homework for scientists and the government to work together to overcome this problem. The ideal condition that must be achieved is that increasing labor absorption can be carried out in a targeted manner by providing additional sector value and regional economic growth. On the other hand, if the added value of the agricultural sector decreases, this also reflects labor absorption which also shows the same pattern which ultimately has an impact on increasing poverty ([Hassoun and Abdelmadjid, 2019](#); [Arota et al., 2016](#); [Awan and Alam, 2015](#); [Awokuse and Xie, 2014](#)).

It was found that the poverty reduction program implemented in Southeast Sulawesi Province could reduce poverty rates, except for the BPNT program which was not proven to be significant. The implication is that the PIP and DD programs in the future can be used as sustainable prevention programs. Meanwhile, the BPNT program must be improved starting from the concept to the practice of distribution to the community. The next finding, based on the results of different



tests, was that the poverty level before and after the COVID-19 pandemic experienced significant differences. However, this difference is not visible in terms of the number of poor people.

The final results of the research concluded that poverty alleviation programs, including BPNT, Education Program (PIP), and village funds, were effective in reducing poverty levels in Southeast Sulawesi Province. However, this effectiveness has not been able to reduce the number of poor people in the regions so there is still space or gaps that must be addressed in the future agenda.

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SDG's Addressed: No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Quality Education, Reduced Inequalities.

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