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# An Analysis of Rice Supply in Malaysia Post Covid-19 - From an Agriculture-Related Fiqh Perspective

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## Abstract

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries Malaysia (MAFI) has launched the National Agrofood Policy (NAP) which is a government transformation initiative that aims to increase productivity and quality of the national food supply with the role of ensuring adequate and safe food supply. However, there are some drawbacks in realising the aim to achieve at least a 74.1% level of self-sustenance in the national food supply by only contributing 2.3% to the Gross National Product (GNP). The importance of this study is to show the increase in paddy and rice agricultural products will drive the country's economy to continue to grow rapidly where the effect can be seen when the transition from heavy industry to agro-based industry that saves national expenditure and at the same time gives good returns to low-income groups. This study intended to analyse the need for a national rice supply plan from an Islamic perspective. The research methodology adopted is the content analysis research design and data were collected and analysed using a combination of descriptive and qualitative approaches. Textual analysis included an analysis of various documents, such as official reports, yearly reports, administrative circulars, departmental reports, financial plans, agency reports, and transcripts. Findings show that agriculture-related fiqh in Islam is intended to increase the quantity and quality of the national rice supply, increase national income, as well as emphasise on *Halalan Tayyiba* and clean food products holistically and sufficiently. This study suggests that rice production should be increased and prioritised in Malaysia compared to other commodities. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries should pay serious attention and play its role in expanding the agriculture sector in accordance with Shari'a.

**Keywords:** Analysis, National Rice Supply, Post Covid-19, Agriculture-related Fiqh.

## Introduction

The National Agrofood Policy (NAP), is a combination of the Government Transformation Program, New Economic Policy Model (DEB) and an Economic Transformation Program that acts as the main platform for national development, which leads to the achievement of Wawasan 2020 and a high income developed country. The achievement of this objective

requires more significant contributions from all sectors including the Agrofood Industry in order for the country to achieve its targeted economic growth (National Commodity Policy, 2011-2020). Hence, efforts to ensure that food supplies are sufficient, safe and affordable will continue via programs that increase production. Initiatives to guarantee the supply of food will focus on production, especially rice.

The Ministry of Agriculture had targeted a 75% rice production rate for 2020 compared to 70% for 2019 in order to decrease dependency on imported rice from 40% to 30% (Berita Harian, 2019). Total rice production was 1,699,766, 1,516,341, and 1,512,709 metric tons for 2018, 2019 and 2020, respectively (Department of Statistics, Malaysia).

### **Increase in Rice Production 2011-2021**

The consumption of rice is expected to increase from 2.30 million metric tons in 2010 to 2.69 million metric tons in 2020, which is an increase of 1.6% a year attributed to an increase in the general population. On the other hand, rice production had decreased from 2.35 million metric tons in 2019 to 2.34 million metric tons in 2020, which is a decrease of 1.2% per year (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries, Malaysia, 2011). Optimum production could have been achieved by increasing production from 4 metric tons per hectare in 2010 to 5 metric tons per hectare in 2020. In addition, intensive planting could be increased from 142% in 2010 to 157% in 2020 or an average frequency of planting of 1.42 times per year in 2010 to 1.57 times per year in 2020 (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries, 2011). Any decrease in local production can be compensated by imports, including signing long-term contracts with exporting countries through agreements to export palm oil or petroleum or reciprocal investments (National Commodity Policy, 2011-2020).

The signing of long-term contracts was due to the Malaysian population reaching 32.52 million in 2019 and 32.58 million in 2020 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia). Moreover, the Self-Subsistence Level (SSL), especially for basic foodstuffs, in 2019 was 79% but in 2020 it dropped to 70%. Per capita consumption of rice in 2019 was 81.6%. In 2018, 30% of rice was imported costing approximately RM1.18 billion (740,000 metric tons), while in 2019 it was RM1.5 billion (890,101 metric tons) and in 2020 it was RM2.5 billion (30% to 40%) (Zainuddin, 2021).

Based on statistics for average rice production for states in Peninsula Malaysia from 2018 to 2020, Kedah produced 955,662 million metric tons in 2018, 859,019 million metric tons in 2019 and 914,470 million metric tons in 2020. Kelantan is the second largest producer of rice with 207,853 million metric tons in 2018, 305,676 million metric tons in 2019 and 342,914 million metric tons in 2020. This means that average rice production according to states in Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak was 3770 million metric tons in 2018, whereas for 2019 to 2020 the average production was 7136 million metric tons (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries, Malaysia, 2011). See Table 1 for average rice production according to states in Peninsula Malaysia from 2018 to 2021.

Table 1. Rice Production According to States from 2018 to 2020

State	2018	2019	2020
	Average Production (kg/ha)	Average Production (kg/ha)	Average Production (kg/ha)
Johor	3288	3015	2945
Kedah	4453	4009	4265
Kelantan	4313	3774	4147
Melaka	2983	2775	2545
N. Sembilan	3958	3962	4496
Pahang	2823	2512	3360
Perak	3575	3165	3050
Perlis	4662	4065	3697
Pulau Pinang	5228	5012	5022
Selangor	4731	4756	4431
Terengganu	4226	3892	3879
<b>Pen. Malaysia</b>	<b>4311</b>	<b>3899</b>	<b>4008</b>
Sabah	2884	2585	2914
Sarawak	1959	1972	1844
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>3770</b>	<b>3501</b>	<b>3635</b>

**Note: Statistics for the Food crop Sub-sector in Malaysia 2019, Geospatial Agriculture and Statistics Unit, Strategic Planning Unit, Agriculture Department Malaysia (Reference)**

### III. An Analysis of National Rice and Food Supplies

In 2018, the agriculture sector contributed 7.3 percent (RM99.5 billion) to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to the Head of the Department of Statistics Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin, the country's GDP in 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic struck witnessed a growth of 4.4 percent (RM1.42 trillion) and the agriculture sector succeeded in recording a growth of 2 percent (7.1 percent valued at RM101.6 billion). Hence, post Covid-19 (2020) saw the GDP deteriorating by 5.6 percent to RM1.34 trillion, which is a decrease of RM80.4 billion from 2019, while the Agriculture Sector deteriorated by 2.2 percent. Nevertheless, the Agriculture Sector's contributions to the GDP increased from 7.1 percent in 2019 to 7.4 percent in 2020. This indicates that its resilience was maintained throughout the post Covid-19 period compared to other sectors (Berita Harian Online, 2021). Thus, according to the *Trade Statistics Review*, Volume 1 2021, the Agriculture Sector emerged the second most important trade sector for Malaysia in 2020 by contributing 6.8 percent and also outperformed the mining sector.

In 2018, the National Agrofood Policy (NAP) had managed to rake in RM54,342 billion and this contributed to 3.8 percent of the GDP (Agrofood Statistics, 2018). Whereas in 2019 (NAP) it had contributed RM50,142 billion or 3.53 percent of the GDP, while in 2020, it

succeeded in generating RM29,809 billion or 5.6 percent of the GDP (National Agrofood Policy, 2011-2020).

In 2020, it was estimated that the Agrofood Industry had grown by 4.7 percent a year from 2011 to 2020. Contributions by the agrofood industry's contributions of value-added elements towards the agriculture sector increased from RM18.9 billion (46.4 percent) in 2010 to RM29.8 billion (51.1%) in 2020 (National Agrofood Policy, 2011-2020). Next, (NAP) had contributed through the agrofood sector to the GDP and increased the average yearly growth to 6.8 percent in 2020 (Berita Harian Online, 2021), which indicates a holistic economic growth amounting to RM12,985 billion (62.3 percent) (National Agrofood Policy, 2011-2020).

The year 2021 also saw a value-added rate of 9.3% for the Food and Beverage Industry including the Tobacco industry, as of September 2021 (Department of Statistics' Facebook Page). Meanwhile, the manufacturing sector increased by 15.1 percent to RM1.27 trillion during the period from January to October 2021 compared to the same period in 2020. The increase was also due to the food and beverage product sub-sector as well as the tobacco sector that contributed 11.8%. Meanwhile, in 2020, fats, vegetable and animal oils had a value-added rate of 37.7 percent or RM7857 billion. 2020 also witnessed the agrofood industry and agro-based food industry's total export contribution of RM76540 billion or 4.7 percent (National Agro Food Policy, 2011-2020). Thus, the contribution of the agrofood industry to the country's exports was 6.4 percent, an increase from RM18.1 billion to RM33.7 billion for 2020 (Excerpt from the Text of the Speech by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, extracted from the Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia's Official Website). According to the statistics, the agricultural sector's exports in 2018 amounted to RM114,451 million compared to RM126,492 million in 2017, which is a decrease of 9.5 percent. In 2019, exports by the agriculture sector amounted to RM115.5 billion compared to RM114.5 billion in 2018, an increase of 0.9 percent. The country's total agriculture exports increased from RM115.5 billion in 2019 to RM118.86 billion in 2020 (Selected Agriculture Indicators, Malaysia for 2019, 2020, and 2021 extracted from the Official Portal of the Department of Statistics Malaysia).

According to the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry, Datuk Seri Ahmad Hamzah, contribution of food exports decreased by 0.9% to RM33.7 billion in 2020 compared to RM34.0 billion in 2019 (Berita Harian Online, 2021).

Table 2: Contributions by the agriculture sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) 2018 - 2020

Items	2018		2019		2020		Average Yearly Growth Rate (%) 2018 - 2020
	RM million	%	RM milli on	%	RM million	%	
<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>99,637</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>101,580</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>99,367</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>2.9</b>
Crops	55,077	4.1	56,700	4	55,310	4.1	1.5
Industry							
Agrofoods	44,560	3.2	44,880	3.1	44,057	3.3	4.7
<b>Mining</b>	<b>103,557</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>102,897</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>91,993</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Manufacturing	304,843	22.4	316,283	22.2	307,924	22.9	3.5
<b>Construction</b>	<b>66,194</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>66,453</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>53,556</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>
Services	17,649	56.7	820,857	57.6	775,717	57.7	2.9
<b>Deduct:</b> Non distributed FISIM	<b>17,308</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>17,742</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>23,099</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>2.9</b>
<b>Add:</b> Import Duties	<b>16,546</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>16,240</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>15,324</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.9</b>
<b>TOTAL VALUE-ADDED (RM MILLION)</b>	<b>625,734</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,442,052</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,366,698</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4.6</b>

(Source: National Bank of Malaysia (t.th).

### Use of Agriculture Land

The area of agriculture land used for food production activities had decreased by 0.8 percent per year for the period from 2018 - 2020 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia). This decrease was due to the conversion of food crops to oil palm as well as the development of residential areas on agriculture land. Thus, the average annual growth rate of paddy crops from 2018 to 2020 was 1.4 percent.

Meanwhile, the growth rate of paddy cultivation consumption in 2021 was only 0.2 % (Selected Agricultural Indicators 2021). See Table 3: Agrofood industry land use, 2018 to 2020: (Ministry of Agriculture & Agro-based Industries Malaysia, 2011).

Table 3: Use of Agrofood Industry Land 2018 – 2020

Items	2018	2019	2020	Average Yearly Growth Rate (%) <u>2018-2020</u>
<b>Crops</b>	<b>1,025.70</b>	<b>990.30</b>	<b>970.30</b>	(0.8)
Paddy	700.0	672.0	644.8	1.4
Fruits	184.4	171.2	180.5	0.1
Vegetables	45.6	49.8	49.4	2.6
Floriculture	2.7	2.7	2.6	4.1
Herbs & Ratus	9.6	8.1	8.1	7.8
Spices				
Coconut	83.4	86.5	84.9	2.9
<b>Fisheries</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>30.0</b>	5.0
Aquaculture	25.6	25.9	33.8	5.3
Seaweed	6.0	3.5	12.8	3.4
Ornamental fish	4.0	0.8	3.0	8.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1061.3</b>	<b>1020.5</b>	<b>1000.0</b>	(0.5)

Source: Ministry of Agriculture & Agro-based Industries Malaysia. (t.th)

In 2019, Malaysia recorded 672,084 hectares of planted or cultivated land. Out of that total Floriculture, Peninsular Malaysia recorded a planted area of 519,277 hectares. This contribution increased to 644,854 hectares in 2020. Kedah had the largest planted area in 2019 measuring 214,252 hectares. In 2020, the total planted area in the country decreased to 644,854 hectares because the planted areas in some states had reduced compared to the previous year (Planting Statistics: Food crop Sub-sector, 2019-2020). Findings on agricultural productivity for food needs shows an increase of 3.7 percent per annum, whereas the agrofood industry contributed 4.7 percent per annum. Contributions of the agrofood industry as a value-added feature to the agriculture sector increased from RM18.9 billion or 46.4 percent in 2010 to RM29.8 billion or 51.1 percent in 2020. Areas of paddy cultivation and the intensive increase in large-scale cultivation and agriculture as well as the use of the latest technology have contributed to the increase in food productivity, including paddy and rice.

Selected agriculture commodities are divided into three categories, namely fruit and vegetable crops, livestock and fisheries. In 2018, a total of 36 agriculture commodities were examined and 22 of them recorded a subsistence ratio (SSR) in excess of 100 per cent. Production of staple food commodities was projected to grow by 4.0 percent per annum from

7.6 million tonnes in 2010 to 11.2 million tonnes in 2020 but the production recorded an encouraging growth of 3.7 percent per annum despite several global crises. including the oil and financial crisis which caused increases in the cost of food production. Among the commodities that showed high growth rates were mutton, beef, milk and aquaculture. Increase in the production of agrofoods is in line with initiatives to improve the country's food security. A conducive environment also encourages the private sector together with farmers, ranchers and fishermen to contribute to the versatile growth of this industry (Statistics on Agrofood, 2014; National Agrofood Policy, 2011-2020).

As for the productivity of the rice industry, the average annual rice consumption of Malaysians is 2.5 million metric tons, while the country's rice production is around 70 percent of that consumption rate. Minister of Agriculture and Food Industries, Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Kiandee said that the country imports 700,000 to 900,000 metric tons of rice annually or about 30 per cent. The Cabinet Committee on the National Food Security Policy on 8 September 2020, among others, agreed that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries (Mafi) should review the sustainability of the country's paddy and rice industry, including optimizing the productivity of existing paddy fields. The SBB Smart Program is one of the initiatives to consolidate paddy land through contract or rental agriculture under one management. It can optimize the use of resources and increase the efficiency of cultivation-related activities and post-harvest products. This initiative will open up opportunities for industry players to play a role in the entire or any level of the country's rice and rice industry value chain, post Covid-19.

The program also aims to increase the national average yield per hectare from the current average yield of 3.5 metric tons in 2019 to 7.0 metric tons during the term of the 12<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan (12MP). However, the granary area and the entire area outside the granary only recorded an average yield per hectare of 4.4 metric tons and 2.5 metric tons, respectively, in 2019. This new approach will help the country achieve the rice Self-Subsistence Level (SSL) target set during the 12<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan (12MP) period of 75 percent and the record shows that in 2019, the total rice import was 890,101 metric tons worth RM1.5 billion, meaning that the quantity of rice imported in 2019 decreased compared to 2015 by 7.4 percent.

Paddy production by state from 2018 to 2020 witnessed a declining trend and relatively slow growth due to various crises at the global level, especially the Covid-19 pandemic. Among the states with the highest paddy production from 2018 to 2020 was Kedah, with 955,662 (2018), 859,018 (2019) and 914,470 (2020) metric tons, followed by Kelantan and Sarawak. In 2018, paddy production increased to 2,639,202 metric tons. In 2019, paddy production decreased to 2,352,870 metric tons compared to the previous year. In 2020, paddy production further decreased to 2,343,760 metric tons due to a decrease in planted areas compared to the previous year (Department of Agriculture, 2020). This strongly suggests that every state has experienced a decline in producing and increasing a commendable paddy production rate throughout the Covid-19 pandemic that had ravaged this country for the last two years.

According to statistics on average rice production by state from 2019 to 2020, Kedah produced 558,362 metric tons in 2019 and continued to increase in 2020 to 594,406 tons. Kelantan had the second highest rice production of 174,740 metric tons in 2019 and the



production continued to increase in 2020 to 198,689 metric tons. This means that the average production of rice by state in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, was 1,512,709 metric tons in 2020 (Paddy Industry Section, Department of Agriculture, 2020).

#### Agriculture-Related Fiqh from an Islamic Perspective

Islamic scholars have different views on agriculture, manufacturing or even business that should be given priority (Al-Qardhawi, 2015: 28). These differences in opinion stem from several hadiths of the Prophet S.A.W., which describes the priority of each of these three areas. In explaining the privileges or advantages of agriculture, the Prophet S.A.W. exhorted as follows:

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَوَانَةَ ح وَحَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ الْمُبَارَكِ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَوَانَةَ عَنْ قَتَادَةَ عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَغْرِسُ غَرْسًا أَوْ يَزْرَعُ زَرْعًا فَيَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ طَيْرٌ أَوْ إِنْسَانٌ أَوْ بَهِيمَةٌ إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ بِهِ صَدَقَةٌ وَقَالَ لَنَا مُسْلِمٌ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو أَنَسٍ حَدَّثَنَا قَتَادَةَ حَدَّثَنَا أَنَسُ بْنُ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

Meaning: “Whoever among the Muslims plants a tree or sows a seed, then (the tree) is eaten by birds, humans or animals, all that (will become) a charitable act by those who planted it” (Sahih Bukhari al-Jami’ al-Shahih al-Mukhtasar, Muhammad Ismail, Abu Abdullah al-Bukhari al-Ja’fi. Kitab al-Muzaraah, Chapter of Fadhl al-Zar’ wa al-Ngars Iza Ukila Minhu, Beirut Lubnan, Dar Ibn Khathir 1987-1407, Vol. 3, pg. 103).

In explaining the priorities of manufacturing and industry, Prophet Muhammad S.A.W exhorted:

حَدَّثَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ مُوسَى أَخْبَرَنَا عَيْسَى بْنُ يُونُسَ عَنْ نُوْرٍ عَنْ خَالِدِ بْنِ مَعْدَانَ عَنْ الْمِقْدَامِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَا أَكَلَ أَحَدٌ طَعَامًا قَطُّ خَيْرًا مِنْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ مِنْ عَمَلِ يَدِهِ وَإِنَّ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ كَانَ يَأْكُلُ مِنْ عَمَلِ يَدِهِ

Meaning: “There is no food that a person eats, that is better than that produced or made by his own hands, and indeed David A.S., the Prophet of Allah, ate food produced or made by his own hands” (Sahih Bukhari al-Jami’ al-Shahih al-Mukhtasar, Muhammad Ismail, Abu Abdullah al-Bukhari al-Ja’fi, Kitab al-Buyu’, Chapter of Kasb al-Rajulu Wa Amala Biyadihi, Beirut Lubnan, Dar Ibn Khathir 1987-1407, Vol. 3, pg. 57).

In explaining the priorities of business, the Prophet S.A.W exhorted:

حَدَّثَنَا هَنَّادٌ حَدَّثَنَا قَبِيصَةُ عَنْ سُفْيَانَ عَنْ أَبِي حَمْرَةَ عَنْ الْحَسَنِ عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ النَّاجِرُ الصَّدُوقُ الْأَمِينُ مَعَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءَ

Meaning: “Honest and trustworthy merchants will be resurrected along with the prophets, the siddiqin and the martyrs” (Sunan al-Tirmizi, Muhammad Ibn Isa Abu Isa al-Tirmizi, Beirut Dar al-Ahya’ al-Turath Islami, The al-Buyu’ Scripture).

Al-Qardhawi was of the view that when the need for rice and paddy decreases, leading to the country facing difficulties, hardships and adversities in life, then the ideas championed by the National Agrofood Policy (NAP) will become a reality and important in order to ensure sufficient supply for the country, which has been lacking by between 30% to 40% last year (al-Qardhawi, 1998: 40 Shalabi, 1992: 329; al-Sahi, 1984: 16 Muhammad Abdul Mun'im al-Jammal, 1992: 103-107).

Al-Zuhaily, however, said that the agriculture field should have mastery and expertise, especially in the field of modern technology because it is very difficult to compete with other world powers that already have expertise, especially in the field of agriculture (Al-Zuhaily, 1996: 617).

### Conclusion

Self-Sufficiency Levels (SSL) of all agrofood commodities is projected to increase except for rice. Local rice in SSL is maintained at 70% and the opening of new paddy planting areas will not be encouraged. The 70% SSL for rice will be reviewed from time to time taking into account the security of rice supply in the country, condition of the global rice market and the relative cost of importation. Paddy production in the existing granary areas will be intensified with the provision of adequate irrigation and drainage infrastructure, especially in granaries that have the potential to be developed and used optimally. Competition for land use for development purposes is expected to put pressure on the size of food production areas that are expected to shrink from 841,000 hectares (2019) to 784,069 hectares (2020). However, food production, especially rice, will increase from 11.2 million metric tons to 12.8 million metric tons to meet the demand, which is expected to increase to 14.8 million metric tons in 2020.

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