



Tropentag, September 10-12, 2025, hybrid conference

“Reconcile land system changes
with planetary health”

The realisation of ‘right to food’ among orang rimba in bukit suban village, sarolangun regency, jambi, Indonesia

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Abstract

The right to food is a legally binding and recognised international human right that also underpins the sustainable food system framework. However, the realisation of the right to food is more challenging and overlooked among Indigenous Peoples.

This qualitative exploratory study investigates the factors affecting the fulfilment of the right to food among the Orang Rimba, a marginalised Indigenous community residing in the tropical forests of Jambi, Sumatra. This study employed participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions to explore six key themes: natural resource management, social security, self-determination, food accessibility, procurement, and utilisation. Building trust with the Orang Rimba required a culturally sensitive approach and prolonged engagement, which was achieved through interpersonal interactions, participation in community activities, agrobiodiversity walks, and market surveys. The study also included government officials and representatives from a civic organisation to ensure diverse perspectives. Data from observations, interviews, and discussions were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed using MaxQDA.

The analysis identified three key factors influencing the realisation of the right to food among the Orang Rimba: policy and governance, the food environment, and key actors. These factors have contributed to critical changes in their livelihood, including conflicts over the management of Bukit Dua Belas National Park and the loss of ancestral land due to transmigration and industrial plantations. Such events have shifted their views of sufficiency, dietary preferences, and economic systems, while trying to preserve their cultural identity.

Despite formal recognition of the right to food in Indonesia, Indigenous Peoples lack a specific legal basis to guarantee their realisation. Among the Orang Rimba, this is compounded by a gap between policy and implementation and limited governmental commitment. As the government bears the obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil this right, more systematic and participatory approaches are required to ensure the full realisation and enjoyment of this right. Further research into such efforts would be valuable for both policymakers and Indigenous Peoples.

Keywords: Food security, Indigenous Peoples, Indonesia, Orang Rimba , right to food