



Keujruen Blang's Role in Strengthening Food Security and National Resilience

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Article Info:	Abstract
Keywords: Customary Institutions, Food Security, <i>Keujruen Blang</i> , Local Wisdom, Socio-Economic Policy.	Purpose: This research is about how the development of local wisdom (especially <i>Keujruen Blang</i>) has been articulated into ACEH rice farmers' socio-economic policy to build sustainable food security. The novelty of this study is that it relates the governance function of <i>Keujruen Blang</i> to <i>Astagatra</i> , endowed as national resilience, as a framing approach, which seems neglected in contemporary rural development literature.
Article History: Received : 19-12-2024 Revised : 28-04-2025 Accepted : 30-06-2025	Study Design/Methodology/Approach: The study adopted a qualitative research design, utilising in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis to gather data from key stakeholders involved in rice farming and traditional governance.
Article DOI : 10.55960/jlri.v13i2.1098	Findings: The results show that <i>Keujruen Blang</i> is not only a customary tool of conflict resolution and agricultural administration but also an important basis for social-cultural capital. The organisation maintains social order, controls group resources, and shows promise as an indigenous institution for locally sustainable policy development. By institutionalising its role within the policy of formal agriculture, the <i>Astagatra</i> in three dimensions (<i>Trigatra</i>) as well as another four pillars (<i>Pancagatra</i>), namely natural resources for <i>Trigatra</i> and law, social culture, economy, and political defence for <i>Pancagatra</i> .
	Originality/Value: The study confirms practical examples of the way in which local government can mainstream customary institutions into formal policy processes. It presents a participative, situationally sensitive, adaptive mode of governance that is applicable in other jurisdictions that strive for sustainable food security. In this respect, the research in this paper contributed to both academic discourses and policy interventions: it reveals how local cultural-based institutions can be effectively used to strengthen national resilience by integrating <i>Astagatra</i> .
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INTRODUCTION

The concept of national resilience encompasses *Trigatra* (geography, demography, and natural resources), and *Pancagatra* (ideology, politics, economics, socio-culture, defense, and security). According to Mareta et al., (2025), Melzatia et al., (2025), and Zahri et al. (2024), implementing the *Astagatra* principles requires a balance between resource management, transparent economic governance, and innovation based on spiritual values to strengthen the nation's social, economic, ideological, and defence-security dimensions. All three highlight that the synergy between cultural values, an inclusive economic system, and equitable governance is the foundation for sustainable national resilience. Furthermore, strengthening customary institutions (*lembaga adat*) is an effective tool contributing to maintaining social and economic stability and increasing food security, a fundamental component of national resilience. Theoretically, *lembaga adat* are orientated towards the local values and norms that become part of community life to reach collective well-being (Huntington & Marple-Cantrell, 2021; Mardhiah et al., 2023). These local institutional scripts are an integral part of normative social structures, namely structures that underlie moral values, regulate social relations, and serve as intermediaries in resolving societal conflicts (Olofsson, 2021). Talhelm & English (2020) suggest that these scripts maintain social order by sharing a code, while Ibor (2022) discusses their flexibility to transform without breaking from traditional legitimacy. Institutionally, this regional regulation can be rationalised through the schools of thought on Institutional Resilience (North, 1990) and Social Capital theory (Häuberer, 2010). The hope is that both will be more adaptive and foster higher levels of community involvement, which will ultimately shape the sustainability of elements not yet integrated into alternative governance emerging from the grassroots.

However, there is still a gap between the ideal values outlined theoretically and their implementation in the field, particularly when *lembaga adat* face the pressures of modernisation and globalisation that shift society's orientation from collectivism to individualism. Empirically, various countries demonstrate varying levels of success for *lembaga adat* in agrarian management. In Laos, customary agricultural institutions adapt their roles to community livelihood systems to maintain food security (Suhardiman and Scurrah, 2021). Séogo and Zahonogo (2023) emphasise that landownership, as social capital, contributes significantly to increasing agricultural productivity. In China, social organisations and farmer institutions have long integrated customary structures into land governance through collective farming systems (Li, 2018).

The government has even incorporated local traditions and beliefs into agricultural production policies (Liu et al., 2022; Siyuan et al., 2021); thus, policies involving customary institutions have proven strategic in optimising sustainable agricultural management (Siyuan et al., 2021). This collective agricultural institutional governance model represents historical and social values that warrant further study to strengthen farmer institutional capacity (Li, 2018). In Europe, local wisdom also forms the basis for decision-making in community resource management. In the United Kingdom, respect for cultural and customary values is a key indicator of strengthening social welfare and agricultural productivity (Ben and Gounder, 2019). In South Africa, Olofsson (2021). demonstrates that land ownership requires appropriate regulation so that customary institutions can support social mobility and reduce poverty. A similar principle applies in Zambia, where customary values are an integral part of public policy (Ng'ombe et al., 2014). Ibrahim et al. (2020) showed that collaboration between customary institutions

and local governments in Ghana improved land management effectiveness. In Morocco, Rignall and Kusunose (2018) emphasised the role of customary institutions in maintaining norms and sustainable land use, whereas Deininger et al. (2021) viewed land as a key resource that needs to be managed fairly and legally.

Several other countries exhibit similar social dynamics, as seen in Malawi, where customary land tenure systems continue to create gender disparities, as women have limited access to agricultural land (Jaza Folefack and Darr, 2021). Vani (2002) stressed a need for formal policy based on customary legal systems so that social conflict would occur and local legitimacy would be augmented. By reforming customary institutions *Keujruen Blang*, Asiama et al. (2019) found that community participation and transformative value-based governance are fundamental for sustainable rural development. In Indonesia, Aceh is one of the regions with a strong agricultural customary institutional system. The *Keujruen Blang* institution serves as a mechanism to control the cultivation of rice fields, settle conflicts and cultivate unity among farmers based on deliberation (Nurdin and Kasim, 2016). In the absence of formal processes, they do not go through traditional mechanisms; they situate themselves beside the state in the interface between customary and state law (Nurdin, M., Muazzin, M., & Abidin, 2023).

However, the institutional effectiveness is at a weak level, as it has not been fully integrated with local governmental policy, community participation was low, and its institutional capacity was limited (Mursyidin et al., 2023). According to Ikromatoun (2017), in the future perspective, the continuation of Aceh traditional cultural value is associated with the continuity of the adat institution and also its flexibility in adapting to social transformation. Naylis and Abdi, (2024) also highlighted that the capacity building of *Keujruen Blang* has been at aids in local governmentin overcoming socio-economic problems in agriculture. Aceh, as the national rice granary, experienced a significant decline in land area from 297,060 hectares in 2021 to 276,620 hectares in 2022 (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Aceh, 2021). Land conversion, a reduction in agricultural labour, and low interest in agriculture among the younger generation caused this decline Baruna and Zalmita (2022). According to Arida (2022), this change occurred due to development policies that did not address the needs of farming communities, while Mortlock (2020) found that modernising the agricultural system requires more adaptive institutional reforms.

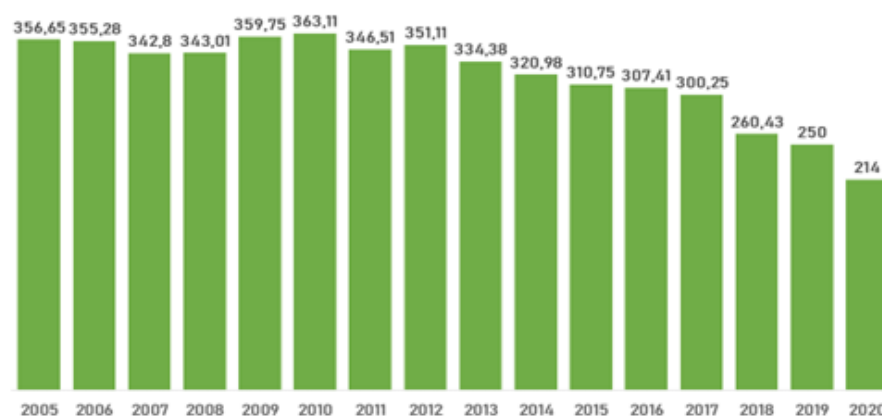


Figure 1. Agricultural Land Area in Aceh from 2005 to 2020

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Aceh (2021)

Figure 1 presents a stable stage of agricultural land use that has decreased in the past five years, and the agrarian support ability for regional food security is decreasing. This issue of land degradation necessitates an enhancement of customary institutions as governance systems, which are more able to react to economic, social, and ecologic needs. The revitalisation of *Keujruen Blang* (village-based customary land) is important to mediating the process of modernising agriculture and reinforcing social, cultural and economic dimensions of *Astagra* (rice farming). Therefore, this study aims to analyse the role and effectiveness of the *Keujruen Blang* institution in rice farming governance in Aceh and formulate a model for institutional reform based on local wisdom that supports sustainable food security. It is hoped that this research will contribute to strengthening the concept of national resilience in Indonesia, particularly in the economic and socio-cultural fields, to foster inclusive, equitable, and sustainable national resilience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Studies

In the theory of institutional resilience, North (1990) explains that institutions function by establishing formal and informal rules that shape social behaviour and influence economic performance. Institutional effectiveness is mostly measured by the extent to which institutions can be adaptive as well (be supportive of environmental change) so that they can sustain the stability of social systems. Häuberer (2010), under the umbrella of social capital, explains that confidence, norms, and networks are the essential capital for bolstering community capability and fostering sustainable governance. Meanwhile, Jones and Baumgartner (2005), through the Incremental Policy model, emphasise that the public policy process occurs gradually and adaptively because the political system often does not process information proportionally. In the concept of National Resilience, as developed by the Indonesian National Resilience Institute (Lembaga Ketahanan Nasional Indonesia), these theories complement each other to explain the importance of institutional resilience based on socio-cultural values and continuous policy adaptation. Therefore, these three approaches serve as a conceptual basis in strengthening the social, economic, and political dimensions within the *Astagra* framework so that customary institutional governance can serve as the foundation for a strong and sustainable national resilience.

Empirical Studies

Socio-Economic Conditions of Farmers and Food Security

In the modern socio-economic system, rice farming is viewed as part of the global food industry, supporting the development of economic growth (Talhelm & English, 2020). Through Guttal (2021), the UN emphasises the importance of equitable food governance by involving all stakeholders to strengthen the relationship between communities, commodities, and governments. This model is also reflected in traditional agricultural systems in Asia, where community-based practices have been shown to support long-term food security (Ahlers and Schubert, 2015; Das et al., 2015). Liu et al. (2022) state that China has successfully maintained the sustainability of traditional farming communities through biodiversity protection, while Krishnankutty et al. (2021) show that reliance on conventional methods in India remains a challenge to food security. In Indonesia, a similar situation is evident in the declining welfare of farmers due to weak

agricultural governance. Thomson (2024) noted that most farmers still live in poverty due to a lack of empowerment. Novira et al. (2022) concluded that local governments have failed to stem land conversion, and this research aligns with the findings of Listiana et al. (2021) regarding the need for synergy between central and regional policies to strengthen agricultural institutions and maintain food security.

The Role of *Lembaga adat* in Agricultural Governance

Lembaga adat acts as a catalyst for maintaining social stability, strengthening community solidarity, and encouraging more participatory agricultural governance. Mursyidin, Saputra, et al. (2023) found that the existence of customary institutions can foster peace in farming communities through deliberation mechanisms and strengthening social norms. According to Pandjaitan (2019) assessment, *Keujruen Blang* role in organising farmer groups and effectively coordinating agricultural activities in Aceh remains limited. Budi et al. (2019) stressed the importance of public policies that may reinforce the role of *lembaga adat* and bring them in line with regional development orientations. These findings show that the execution of *qanun* 10 on Aceh's customary institution needs clear technical guidance and manuals so that *Keujruen Blang* could be properly operated in line with its institutional order.

Challenges in Qanun Implementation and Strengthening Public Policy

Despite *Qanun* regulation, Aceh still encounters several obstacles in the implementation of *lembaga adat*. Weak institutional capacity, low community participation, and limited coordination between local governments and customary leaders are key factors limiting effective implementation (Mursyidin et al., 2023). These conditions have the potential to create social inequality and increase the risk of agrarian conflicts, which can hinder sustainable development. Brahma and Subrahmanyam (2023) show that the decline in the role of *lembaga adat* has a direct impact on weakening the social and economic resilience of rural communities. A study by Omitola et al. (2021) in Nigeria also found that formal recognition of *lembaga adat* by public policy could enhance social stability and promote community economic self-sufficiency. This empirical evidence is showing us the value of social norms and trust networks, discussed by Häuberer (2010), that underpin successful community-based governance.

Direction of Reform and Policy Model for *Lembaga Adat*

The results of various studies indicate that the development of adaptive and realistic policies is an urgent need to strengthen *lembaga adat* in Aceh. This study follows the incremental policy approach of Jones and Baumgartner (2005) that highlights the centrality of episodic, slow-moving change. This would enable institutions to be strengthened incrementally rather than waiting for significant overall system changes and be adjusted to the social and economic changes in the community. The incremental model is also related to National Resilience, which was conceptualised by *Lembaga Ketahanan Republik Indonesia*, considering that it encourages the reinforcement of local cultural values as an approach for developing resilient and adaptive behaviour. Within this pattern, *lembaga adat* including *Keujruen Blang* are demanded to maximise or promote all social, economic and political aspects of the integrated national resilience (Astagatra) and give significant contribution as sustenance institutions of sustainable national resilience.

METHODS

Research Design

This research is designed qualitatively to explore how the *Keujruen Blang* customary institution can develop a policy model that strengthens its role in achieving food security and promoting sustainable socio-economic development in Aceh. As in Table 1, the key informants are 10 decision-maker officials in agricultural development who are the Head of the Food Crops and Horticulture Department, Head of the Board of Agricultural Extension, Chairman of the Aceh Region Agent, etc. Furthermore, informal discussions were held with seven farmer groups in Samatiga and Woyla Districts, where rice fields are widespread and community involvement is well-established.

Table 1. Data sources of Participants

Data Sources	Participants
Top Management	3
Intermediate-level Farmer Group	8
Total	11

Source: West Aceh District Agricultural Office (2025)

Population and Sample

The research was conducted in Aceh Barat, i.e., the SamaTiga and Woyla Districts. Five farmer groups in Sama Tiga, i.e., *Gampong Cot*, *Keureseng*, *Paya Lumpat*, *Suak Timah* and *Deuah*, and three groups in *Wolya*, i.e., *Padang Jawa*, *Pasie Pandan* and *Gempa Raya*, were targeted. Medium farmers, who have been practicing rice cultivation under institutional supervision, form the groups. A purposeful sampling method was used to enrol participants who had been involved in agricultural management and traditional leadership.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and fieldwork. The sessions were of one hour's duration, covering themes on institutional performance, policy interface and farmer feedback. The data was triangulated to check the credibility and validity of information crosswise with various sources. The guidelines of Creswell and Creswell (2018); Syahrani (2020) and Donkoh (2023) were used to gain trustworthiness in interpretation, and they made sure that the findings truly represented the social pictures noticed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The interview results indicate that the intermediate farmer groups in West Aceh can provide valuable insights into the development of cultural elements in implementing traditional rice farming policies in West Aceh. These research results were obtained using a structured qualitative methodological approach consisting of primary and secondary data collection techniques and were validated and verified using interview instruments. The sample size of eight medium-sized farmer groups is highly representative, covering

areas with experience in local potential-based rice farming management for sustainable food security. The local government determined the selection of the farmer groups, namely the Agriculture and Horticulture Office in West Aceh Regency. The interviews revealed that the traditional farmer institutions in rice farming management in West Aceh have actualised a system of values and norms of local wisdom that is oriented towards national development goals integrated with modern agricultural science traditions. The cultural system of the *Keujruen Blang* customary institution shows a very close connection with local wisdom that has existed since ancient times.

These findings also highlight the need to integrate government policy values to collaborate with customary institutions in decision-making on sustainable agriculture, so that local food security can be prioritised in national food security development. The management of the rice farming system in West Aceh not only affects technical factors for the realisation of farmers' economic development but also has a powerful socio-cultural aspect that significantly impacts the realisation of rice farming development goals. Therefore, the findings of this study can contribute to formulating public policies that align with the inclusive socio-economic conditions in West Aceh. Social and cultural practices in the development of local wisdom are one of the institutional elements that must provide a tangible foundation that can be used as a reference for the government in providing legal legitimacy to customary institutions as an element of bottom-up policies that are responsive in enhancing local development towards participatory national development goals in food security. In addition, the *Keujruen Blang* customary institution management system is crucial for improving food security.

Agricultural governance based on the *Keujruen Blang* customary institution is implemented by farming communities as the primary driver of rice production in Aceh. The role of this institution often creates social dynamics due to differing views between customary values and modern agricultural policies. Research shows that *Keujruen Blang* needs to combine with agricultural extension services for more effective land management. Tensions in the distribution of social assistance arise because government policies are perceived as administrative and not addressing farmers' needs. According to expert respondents, *Keujruen Blang* contributes significantly to formulating public policy issues at the local level to strengthen food security based on local wisdom. The following statements illustrate this role:

The Lembaga Adat in West Aceh has gradually faded away, leading to an increase in social conflicts among farmer groups." Each group's ego is growing stronger." (Head of a Farmer Group, Samatiga Subdistrict, West Aceh, 2025)

"The structure of lembaga adat must be strengthened by the local government so that the management of Acehnese cultural traditions can be preserved. It is not always appropriate to leave farmer group issues solely to the field group leaders. (Legal Division, Aceh Customary Council, West Aceh, 2025)

Interviews also revealed a decline in interest among younger generations in farming, potentially reducing the number of young farmers in West Aceh and threatening the sustainability of local rice farming practices. As illustrated in the following statement:

“From various observations in West Aceh recently, it appears that local communities have become pessimistic about rice farming. As a result, the younger generation has lost interest in becoming farmers due to a shift in the village’s socio-cultural values.” (West Aceh Department of Agriculture, 2024)

“As young farmers today tend to follow global lifestyle patterns, characterised by free social interaction that contradicts Islamic law, this has significantly eroded local wisdom, both in agriculture and in other social aspects.” (West Aceh Customary Council, 2024)

The provisions in the Qanun also clearly state that the lembaga adat *Keujruen Blang* can assist the government in the rice farming sector. This argument is supported by findings from interviews conducted in Samatiga Subdistrict, which consists of five middle-level farmer groups located in the villages of *Cot*, *Keureseng*, *Paya Lumpat*, *Suak Timah*, and *Deuah*, as well as three villages in *Woyla*: *Padang Jawa*, *Pasie Pandan*, and *Gempa Raya*. These communities presented the following joint conclusions:

“The Lembaga Adat Keujruen Blang is weak because the local government has not yet formalised it under binding regulations. As a result, even though they are farmers, they continue working out of necessity, since the government still relies on their presence in managing rice farming.” (Head of Intermediate Farmer Group, West Aceh, 2024).

“From various observations in West Aceh recently, it appears that rice farming has suffered from poor communication with the community because the position of Keujruen Blang is unclear or symbolic.” (Interview with Head of Agricultural Extension Agency, West Aceh, 2025).

The Aceh Customary Council and the West Aceh District Agriculture Office also communicated the obstacles they faced in organising rice farming management for farmer groups. This was evident in the following interview:

“We, as the Aceh traditional council, are often not included in decision-making, which makes it very difficult to coordinate the organisation of customs in Aceh that should be in line with traditional values.” (West Aceh Customary Council, 2024)

“The local government faces significant difficulties in organising rice farming in villages, as there are community beliefs regarding planting plans, crop care, fertilisation, and post-harvest activities. These must be integrated to be in harmony and balance with modern agriculture to achieve sustainable productivity improvements.” (Interview with Head of Agricultural Extension Agency, West Aceh, 2025)

Discussion

A policy formulation system that integrates local wisdom into agricultural regulations is instrumental in increasing the effectiveness of participatory policies. Interviews indicate that the *Keujruen Blang* customary institution has supported, albeit not fully, rice farming governance. This customary institution's involvement is strategic in irrigation management, seed production, community-based pest control, and land protection from land conversion. Therefore, this research theoretically strengthens the theoretical aspects of decision-making and provides a practical reference for local governments to develop adaptive policies toward local resilience that support sustainable national development. Conceptually, within the *Astagatra* framework, this research finds

it important to balance *Trigatra* (geography, demography, and natural resources) with *Pancagatra* (ideology, politics, economics, socioculture, defence, and security) to maintain stable food security.

However, field findings in Aceh indicate that the *Keujruen Blang's* policy formulation process is still limited to the problem identification and definition stages. This scenario illustrates the analytical constraints in policy agenda-setting, as articulated in Charles E. Lindblom's Incremental Theory and reinforced by Olson (1971), which emphasises that public policy modification occurs incrementally through compromise among policy stakeholders. This scenario also aligns with the provisions of Aceh Qanun Number 10 of 2008 concerning Customary Institutions, specifically Article 25, which emphasises that the *Keujruen Blang* are responsible for overseeing, managing, and directing irrigation governance, agricultural cycles, and rice field maintenance, in addition to adjudicating disputes between farmers in accordance with local customs. However, these established regulations are not yet fully aligned with strategies and technical incentives aimed at improving institutional functions at the village level. As a result, important issues, as exemplified by limited production facilities, weak farmer institutional capacity, and lack of coordination between actors have not been systematically structured. Consequently, these issues can reduce the effectiveness of government intervention in strengthening customary institutions and empowering farmers to achieve sustainable food security.



Figure 1. Steps in Policy Problem Formulation

Policy Development of the *Keujruen Blang* Institution: A Local Approach to Sustainable Agricultural Governance

Identification of Policy Issues in the *Keujruen Blang* Customary Institution.

The identification of policy issues is a process of gathering information to interpret a public problem so that it can be understood, recognised, and acknowledged as a primary policy issue that requires serious attention from the government. From the perspective of incremental theory, the identification of policy issues in this study indicates that existing legal aspects within the provisions of public issues can shape the problem identification process and serve as part of the political actions taken by decision-makers.

Table 2: Outlines the existing laws

Legislation	Action / Provision
Law Number 44 of 1999 on the Implementation of the Special Status of the Province of the Special Region of Aceh	Customary law is defined as rules or actions based on Islamic Sharia.
Law Number 11 of 2006 on the Governance of Aceh	Social and community issues are resolved through customary mechanisms via traditional institutions.
Qanun 4/ 2003 on Mukim Government	Customary law includes all traditional rules, customs, and practices that are alive within Acehnese society, are binding, and have legal consequences.
Qanun 5/2003 on Gampong (Village) Governance	The Gampong government may establish traditional institutions to enhance the implementation of customs in the village.
Qanun 3/2004 on the Aceh Customary Assembly (MAA)	The MAA, as the highest traditional institution, has a structure from the provincial to the village level and coordinates various local customary institutions.

Source: Document Data and Field Study, 2024–2025

Table 2 demonstrates that the implementation of policy issues pertaining to customary rice farmer institutions in Aceh has not been effective. Based on legal studies and interviews, the term "customary institution" emerged after the strengthening of special autonomy through Law No. 44 of 1999 concerning the Implementation of Aceh's Special Status, which affirmed the community's obligation to regulate social life based on Islamic law. This strengthening of the concept was then clarified in Qanun 11/2006 concerning the Governance of Aceh, which explicitly introduced the term "customary institution" as a formal instrument in community social governance. This provision serves as the legal basis for the existence of customary institutions as social organisations that function to resolve community issues through mechanisms of deliberation, mediation, and enforcement of customary norms based on Islamic values and local culture.

Within the *Astagatra* framework, the *Keujruen Blang* customary institution occupies a strategic position within the *Pancagatra* elements, particularly in the socio-cultural and political dimensions that support national resilience. Its role at the village level, as stipulated in Qanun 5/2003 concerning Village Governance, emphasises its function as a government partner in community-based development. Furthermore, Qanun 4/2003 concerning the Establishment, organisational Structure, and Work Procedures of the Aceh Traditional Council reinforces the need for a clear and coordinated customary institutional structure. Despite the legal basis being in place, research shows that policy implementation remains weak due to limited local government support in strengthening the capacity of customary institutions. Based on Charles E. Lindblom's Incremental Theory, this condition reflects that customary policy changes in Aceh are gradual and depend on the balance between Islamic law, social structure, and local wisdom, which serve as the foundation for community social resilience within the national resilience system.

Inventory of Agricultural Issues and Community Observation and Dialogue.

The definition of rice farming policies demonstrates the complexity of the challenges faced by farmers and serves as the basis for government action in the policy agenda-setting stage. Based on the Incremental Theory, this study found that the process is influenced by legal and social factors, particularly through Qanun 5/2003 on Gampong (Village) Governance, which strengthens the position of customary institutions as the main instrument in public policy formulation. Customary institutions, specifically *Keujruen Blang* in West Aceh

h, actively participate in identifying agricultural issues, shaping government decisions, and enhancing sustainable food security. Their role is not only administrative but also ideological and cultural because it is directly related to the values and identity of the farming community. Within the *Astagatra* framework, these institutions contribute to strengthening the *Pancagatra* elements, particularly in the socio-cultural and political aspects, which serve as the foundation for improving farmer welfare and sustainable national development as stipulated in Article 25 of Qanun 10/2008 concerning Customary Institutions in Aceh.

Role of Aceh's Customary Institutions in Supporting Food Security Based on Local Wisdom

Enhancing the normative framework of Aceh's customary institutions, particularly in Qanun 10/2008 regarding Customary Institutions, is key to encouraging adaptive and sustainable agricultural governance. *Keujruen Blang*, functionally, serves not only as a cultural representation but also as a policy mechanism that allows for gradual adjustments in accordance with the principles of Incremental Theory. Through customary leadership, which oversees the regulation of planting times, managing irrigation systems, and resolving disputes between farmers, *Keujruen Blang* demonstrates its institutional capacity to integrate social, cultural, and religious values into public policy practices. The deliberative decision-making process reflects the formation of a social consensus that strengthens the legitimacy and effectiveness of agricultural policies at the local level. Within the *Astagatra* framework, the role of this customary institution strengthens the *Pancagatra* elements, particularly in the socio-cultural and political dimensions, while maintaining the balance of *Trigatra*, which encompasses geography, demography, and natural resources as the foundation of national resilience. The interview results indicate that this customary institution-based policy model is able to strengthen food security because it successfully connects traditional values, institutional structures, and local government policies in a complementary system, as stated in Article 1 of Qanun 10/2008, that "*Keujruen Blang*, or by another name, is a person who leads and manages activities in the field of rice farming."

Definition of Issues Related to the *Keujruen Blang* Customary Institution

The problems of the *Keujruen Blang* customary institution reflect the challenges in implementing customary policies that are not fully aligned with the needs of farmers at the village level. Government policies have not fully identified the real needs of farmers, so their implementation is often not in accordance with local conditions. Based on the Incremental Theory, this study shows that although there is a legal basis through Aceh Qanun 10/2008, specifically Article 25, which regulates the duties and functions of *Keujruen Blang*, the role of this institution has not been optimised in agricultural

development policies, especially rice farming, to support sustainable food security. However, *Keujruen Blang* has great potential to support the government in designing and implementing more participatory policies based on local wisdom. Therefore, this study emphasises the importance of synchronising the legal framework with policy implementation in the field so that customary institutions have a meaningful impact on sustainable agricultural development.

Table 3. Duties and Functions of *Keujruen Blang* and Definition of Problems

Legal Basis / Article	Duties and Functions of the <i>Keujruen Blang</i> Customary Institution	Policy Problem Definition for the Aceh Rice Farmers' Customary Institution
Qanun of the Aceh <i>Lembaga adat</i> Article 25	Determines and coordinates the procedures for going down to the rice fields.	Traditional institutions have not optimally conducted consultations on determining and coordinating the schedule for going to the rice fields.
Qanun 10/2008 on Customary Institutions	Regulates the distribution of water to farmers' rice fields.	The <i>lembaga adat Keujruen Blang</i> has not yet established specific working procedures.
	Assists the government in the agricultural sector.	There are no technical guidelines for coordinating rice field management based on local wisdom.
	Coordinates Khanduri (Rituals) or other traditional ceremonies related to rice farming.	Values of togetherness, obedience, deliberation, justice, and care among farmers are still very low.
	Issue warnings or sanctions to farmers who violate customary farming rules or fail to fulfil other obligations in traditional rice farming systems.	Lack of harmonisation between the government and customary institutions in determining social norms as the basis for local rice farming governance.
	Resolves disputes among farmers related to rice farming activities.	It cannot be fully optimised by the government due to the absence of technical guidelines aligned with current policies.

Source: Data processed by the author (2025)

The Strength of the *Keujruen Blang* Customary Institution in Aceh

Charles Lindblom 1957 in Lindblom, (1986) explained that decision-making involves value-based forces influenced by social traditions, agricultural culture, and customary knowledge in Aceh. To avoid social conflict and to integrate agricultural policies in the framework of the SDGs, policymakers must respect the societal value of consensus-based decision-making. Qanun on Customary Institutions Number 10/2008 should be developed into a regional regulation that aligns with social and cultural changes in Aceh so traditional values can be harmonised with modern society dynamics. The social norms in Kite Phukuo and Babe Qanun intensify the governance of rice cultivation through *Keujruen Blang*, a local actor who connects social and political aspects when implementing public policy. In the *Astagatra* system, *Keujruen Blang* is to reinforce *Pancagatra's* elements, socio-cultural and political, based on the principle of *Trigatra* (territory, geography, population distribution, demography, and natural resources). The incorporation of customary values into public policies can be used as a character to create congruence between local institutional arrangements and formal policy frameworks,

where it contributes to enhancing food security and sustainable national resilience in Aceh.

Considering the Socio-Cultural Values of Agriculture and Acehnese Local Wisdom

Recognition of the socio-cultural values of agriculture and local wisdom is a distinctive characteristic of Acehnese society, reflected in the policies of traditional institutions. These values need to be consistently implemented to strengthen the social and economic development of farming communities. Based on the explanation Law 44/1999 concerning the Implementation of Aceh's Special Status, religious life, respect for customs, and the role of religious scholars need to be maintained and developed in line with educational advancements so that regional governance has legal certainty (Source: Explanatory Document of Law 44/1999: Page 4). The results of interviews with traditional leaders (W-03, 2025) indicate that these provisions are still relevant in strengthening the role of *Keujruen Blang* as the main driver in rice farming governance. According to respondents, the success of agricultural development is largely influenced by the extent to which local governments can integrate the social, cultural, and religious values of the community to align with government policies. As part of the *Astagatra* model, *Keujruen Blang* is expected to enhance the five elements of *Pancagatra*, particularly in socio-cultural and political terms, while also balancing *Trigatra* (geography, demography, and natural resources). Therefore, there is a need to establish *Keujruen Blang* as an adaptive and structured institution to manage agriculture and national resilience sustainably in West Aceh.

The Importance of the *Keujruen Blang* Customary Institution

Farmers highly respect the *Keujruen Blang* Institution as the primary regulator in managing their rice fields. This institution acts as a regulator that serves as a guide for the farming community, including in maintaining taboos or *pamali* believed to affect harvest yields. In the socio-cultural life of the farming community, *Keujruen Blang* functions as a mediator in resolving disputes between farming groups related to customary violations, while also regulating rice field times and managing planting, irrigation, and land maintenance schedules. In addition, this institution distributes water, assists the government in farming activities, coordinates traditional farmer ceremonies, and establishes sanctions and warnings based on mutual agreements in rice field management. Therefore, *Keujruen Blang* holds a strong position in the structure of sustainable rice field management. Its primary focus lies in increasing rice productivity and strengthening collaborative relationships with the government for sustainable rice farming practices.

Weaknesses of the *Keujruen Blang* Customary Institution in Aceh

Lindblom, (1986) emphasised that decision-making within government systems often weakens when implemented within organisations that lack direction and structure. This situation is evident in customary farmer institutions, where policy effectiveness has not been achieved because the provisions of Qanun 10/2008 do not provide clear guidelines. The absence of clear technical regulations often results in overlapping roles between customary institutions and farmers as managers of agricultural resources and implementers of cultivation activities. Furthermore, the absence of incentive policies reduces the motivation of customary institutions to carry out their functions optimally.

This situation demonstrates the need to integrate customary institutions into formal policies so that rice field management systems can support the strengthening of food security at the local level in a sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that policy formulation for the *Keujruen Blang* customary institution in Aceh still faces conceptual and structural obstacles stemming from previous policies. The main problem lies in the suboptimal integration of local wisdom values into public policy and weak coordination between the local government and customary institutions. Acehnese cultural values have significant potential to strengthen sustainable food security but have not been fully utilised as a basis for public decision-making. Within the *Astagatra* framework, this weakness reflects the imbalance between the *Trigatra* elements, which encompass geography, demography, and natural resources, and the *Pancagatra* elements, which encompass ideology, politics, economics, socioculture, defence, and security. The *Keujruen Blang* customary institution constitutes a central mechanism for protecting of agricultural cultural values and a local actor that can channel community aspirations to support national development based on food security.

This study recommends that the local government strengthen technical policies that more clearly regulate the implementation of customary institutions' duties and provide incentive policies that can increase farmer participation. Customary institutions also need to strengthen their roles in sustainable agricultural management by revitalising their social and economic functions based on local cultural values. Theoretically, Charles Lindblom's incrementalism theory remains relevant for explaining the gradual process of policy change. However, future research is recommended to utilise the Collaborative Governance Theory approach to examine interinstitutional synergy in strengthening the effectiveness of customary-based agricultural policies. Future researchers should also develop empirical and comparative studies across regions to assess the extent to which customary institutional models can serve as instruments for sustainable national food security development.

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