



## Comparison of Challenges Facing Indonesian Peasants with Uganda Coffee Peasants

Badru Mulisike<sup>1</sup>, Mujahid Widian Saragih\*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Shandong Normal University, China

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [mujahid.widian@gmail.com](mailto:mujahid.widian@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

This research explains the comparison of challenges between Indonesian peasants (Mandoge) and Ugandan coffee peasants (Plot 88, Masaka) using a critical, systematic, and comparative qualitative research approach. Several sources were used, such as the direct experience of researchers, books, journals, and other scientific works. The results showed that the challenges of Mandoge peasants and coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka, have many similarities and also differences that are not so significant. Both Mandoge peasants and coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka, have the same challenges, which is experiencing land grabbing and eviction carried out by the company and also the state. There is also a similarity in the strategy to overcome the agrarian conflict, by establishing a cooperative, although it later experienced bankruptcy. Meanwhile, in terms of differences, Mandoge farmers are more organized and responsive in finding solutions to the agrarian conflicts they experience, while coffee farmers in Plot 88, Masaka, experience stagnation in carrying out agrarian struggles.

**Keyword:** Agrarian Conflict, Peasants, Uganda, and Indonesia.



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## 1. Introduction

The challenges faced by farmers around the world are actually just a repetition of past challenges. Even if there is something new, the motive has changed little, the ultimate goal is to win over the powerful, whether economic or political, and the easy target is the small community of farmers with limited land to provide for themselves and their families.

Globalization has increased competition, leading to lower incomes and increased vulnerability for smallholders, with many farmers unable to sustain their livelihoods (Hazell et al., 2007). Mandoge farmers and plot 88 coffee farmers, Masaka are two entities that experience agrarian challenges in

terms of land tenure. Although different in terms of administration (country) and geography, these two transcontinental farming entities have much in common on the issue of land ownership, although of course there are differences in the two farming professions in question.

Land ownership remains an important issue, as many farmers are forced to sell their land due to economic pressures, leading to a decline in the farmer population (Anandita & Patria, 2017). Both countries have similarities in terms of the existence of the Plantation sector as a source of community income, namely palm oil in Indonesia and Coffee in Uganda. In the context of Indonesia, the plantation subsector is a considerable potential for state revenue. The contribution of the plantation sub-sector in 2023 amounted to 3.88 percent of total GDP and 30.97 percent of the Indonesian Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Sector (Central Bureau of Statistics - BPS, 2024). Palm oil is one of the plantation products that has an important role in economic activities in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Uganda is the second largest coffee producing country in Africa after Ethiopia (Mwesigye & Nguyen, 2020).

The phenomenon of land grabbing exacerbates these challenges, as large-scale acquisitions threaten the livelihoods of smallholders and their ability to produce food (Scheidel, 2013). This is reflected in the locations studied. In Mandoge, the majority of people use oil palm as their source of income. Mandoge Sub-district is known as the sub-district with the second largest oil palm land area in Asahan Regency, at 9,470 hectares, after Bandar Pulau Sub-district (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Asahan, 2018). The same is true for Plot 88, located in Masaka Sub-district, which is known as the largest Robusta production zone in the region (E. Cheyns, 2006).

Farming communities face social exclusion and a lack of supportive public policies, which are often designed to benefit large agricultural companies over smallholders (Gonçalves, 2014). Both Mandoge farmers and Plot 88, Masaka coffee farmers have experienced violence from the powerful, namely the state and companies. It is an open secret that companies in the Mandoge region are grabbing farmers' land haphazardly for the sake of company expansion. At the same time, farmers in Plot 88 are also vulnerable to land grabbing especially during coffee planting. One of the main reasons they seize land belonging to the small people (farmers) is because they do not have certificates or official papers for the land they cultivate.

## **2. Research Method**

The research method is a scientific procedure, step, or procedure in obtaining datum (collection) for research purposes that have certain goals and purposes. Scientific means that research activities are based on characteristics, namely rational, empirical, and systematic in accordance with scientific rules or rules. The research uses a qualitative approach in the form of critical analysis as well as comparative analysis using sources, such as the direct experience of researchers, books, journals, and other scientific

works relevant to the themes and topics of the research. All sources used have been critically and systematically tested to produce authentic data and free from all subjective elements.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

Peasants around the world face a variety of challenges that often hamper their productivity and income. In this study, we present research on the difficulties faced by peasants in Mandoge, Indonesia, and compare them to the situation faced by coffee peasants in Uganda. Although different in geographical and economic context, the two regions share significant similarities in the agricultural challenges faced by their peasants. These challenges include land disputes, failures in cooperative structures, and additional barriers related to market access and sustainability (Kartodihardjo, 2021).

Bandar Pasir Mandoge region geographically happens to be neighbors with large companies, such as oil palm companies (PTPN IV). This strategic geographical area does not always benefit peasants in Mandoge, instead what happens is that peasants face several challenges that often threaten their livelihoods. A common and intractable challenge in Indonesia's agrarian formulation is land disputes between peasants and large companies (Abdina, 2019).

Many peasants do not have land titles or legal documents, which makes them vulnerable to land grabbing by companies looking to expand their operations. This problem is exacerbated by weak enforcement of land rights and legal protection. In addition, peasants in Mandoge often struggle with failed cooperative associations. These cooperatives, which are meant to support peasants by providing resources and market access, often collapse due to poor management, corruption, or lack of transparency. The collapse of these cooperatives deprives peasants of critical support and resources, further weakening their position in the market.

Patterns of problems such as those experienced by Mandoge peasants are common and are sometimes taken for granted. But if this is allowed to continue, people in Mandoge will no longer want to farm, which in the end in fulfilling their desires join the company and there are already events in the field. The most important thing is that Mandoge peasants simultaneously get an ideal position in the realm of local and national discourse which ultimately obtains welfare and justice.

Furthermore, Uganda, as we already know that Uganda is one of the countries located on the African continent, precisely in East Africa. In historical records, coffee first emerged from Africa which then spread throughout the world including in Indonesia. Again, Uganda also has a nickname as the Pearl of Africa because it has amazing biodiversity and geographical landscape. This nickname was confirmed by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill during his visit to the country in 1907 (Bernstein, 2012).

However, this moniker does not match the plight of Uganda coffee farmers who continue to face a number of challenges that hinder their ability to thrive. One of the main problems is land tenure

insecurity (Ahikire, 2013). Like their counterparts in Mandoge, farmers in Plot 88, Masaka, often lack official land ownership documents, leaving them vulnerable to land grabbing, especially in coffee-growing areas. This is also influenced by policies in the agrarian sector where a large role of the state expropriates land for economic development and environmental conservation purposes. Other agrarian conflicts involving land legality and rights also occur in various parts of Uganda, such as in Karamoja and Teso, Northern Uganda. (Susan Murphy, Pdraig Carmody, & Julius Okawakol, 2017).

In addition, coffee farmers face difficulties with cooperative structures. Many coffee cooperatives in Plot 88, Masaka, have failed due to mismanagement, lack of accountability, and lack of government support. Without functioning cooperatives, coffee peasants have difficulty accessing markets, negotiating better prices, or receiving technical assistance.

The challenges faced by peasants in Mandoge, Indonesia, and coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka, Uganda, have some similarities. Both groups are severely affected by land disputes and cooperative failures, problems stemming from inadequate legal frameworks, poor governance, and corruption. In both cases, the lack of land security puts peasants at risk of losing their main source of livelihood, while the collapse of cooperatives robs them of the collective power they need to negotiate better deals in the market. In addition, both groups of peasants suffered from a lack of government intervention or support, which could have helped stabilize their operations and promote sustainable agricultural practices (Ellis, 2006).

The challenges faced by peasants in Mandoge, Indonesia, and coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka, Uganda are rooted in similar structural and governance issues. To address these challenges, stronger legal protection for land ownership, better cooperative governance, and greater government involvement in supporting peasants are needed. By strengthening these areas, both Indonesia and Uganda can help their peasants achieve more sustainable and prosperous agricultural livelihoods. To address the challenges faced by peasants in Mandoge, Indonesia, and Plot 88, Masaka, Uganda, the government must take decisive action to strengthen social and economic protections for peasants. Here are some potential solutions that could help alleviate this issue.

One of the most pressing problems in both regions is the lack of formal land ownership among peasants. It is known that the Ugandan government has so far paid little attention to administrative matters, such as the methods to be pursued so that the community of coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka, Uganda has clear land status, as this is related to the welfare of Ugandan coffee peasants. In essence, the government has begun to formulate and socialize agrarian-related laws, including the administrative requirements that Ugandan peasants must fulfill to ensure a clearer and more transparent land registration and ownership status.

As a comparative study, here is an overview of the similarities and differences in the challenges faced by peasants in Bandar Pasir Mandoge and coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka, Ugandan.

Similarities:

1. Both Mandoge peasants and coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka, face the same problem regarding unclear land ownership status because they both lack documentation, making them vulnerable to being seized by large companies;
2. They have agricultural cooperatives, but both fail to run the system due to a lack of capital resources and competent human resources, as well as an inability to build the intended cooperatives honestly and consistently;
3. The lack of knowledge about the history and development of agrarian law makes them easily deceived by those in power, such as the government or companies.

Differences:

1. Vaguely, the peasants of Mandoge actually understand the history and development of agrarian law much better than the coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka, Uganda even if only superficially. Not without reason, many peasants in Mandoge often consult and discuss with educated people about the problems they face. Meanwhile, it is not yet known whether such phenomena are often observed in Uganda, but it is certain that these two regions have different cultures in facing the same problems;
2. Regarding the distribution of agricultural products, not all Mandoge peasants experience the same difficulties as coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka, Uganda. The Mandoge peasants have networks to middlemen or directly to companies to sell their produce, even at unreasonable prices. Meanwhile, coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka in Uganda are dictated by the global market because Uganda tends to have limited natural resources and poor land quality, or in other words, not as good as Mandoge, so both middlemen and companies would think twice before accepting Ugandan peasants' produce.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The agrarian challenges faced by peasants in Mandoge as well as coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka, essentially stem from human greed, who consider themselves to be in control of everything. Therefore, the people who reside in companies or in the government must be cleansed first if agrarian disputes are to be resolved in Mandoge and Plot 88, Masaka. This comparative study also serves as a reminder (alarm) to the global community that agrarian issues worldwide are not in a good state. Global agrarianism, without exception to any country or region, must be free from elements of greed, corruption, and profit bias. As institutions, the government and companies are not enemies; they are catalysts for development in Mandoge as well as in coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka. Furthermore, if the issue of land ownership in Mandoge and coffee peasants in Plot 88, Masaka is to be resolved promptly. The community must also improve and strengthen their knowledge about agrarian issues,

including history, law, social aspects, and culture, so as not to get trapped in the same problems again. There are times when the community directly manages vast lands to meet their livelihoods. However, the vast lands managed by the community are not necessarily more successful compared to those managed by companies or the government in national and societal life. Once again, the community must continue to enhance their individual, community, organizational, and network capacities when the time comes.

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