

PROBLEM IN PROVIDING SAFE FOOD FOR INDONESIAN PEOPLE

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Abstrak

Penerapan peraturan-peraturan tentang pangan di Indonesia menjadi hal yang sangat penting untuk melindungi kepentingan produsen maupun konsumen. Artikel ini akan meninjau sejauh mana penerapan peraturan tersebut di Indonesia. Penerapan Undang-undang no 7 tahun 1996 tentang pangan menjadi satu fase yang sangat penting bagi Pemerintah Indonesia untuk menyediakan perlindungan dan pangan yang sehat, aman dan halal bagi rakyat Indonesia. Dengan Undang-undang ini, seluruh pihak yang terlibat dalam sistem pangan di Indonesia ditujukan untuk mencapai ketahanan pangan, dalam hal ini cukup jumlah dan mutu serta terjangkau. Permasalahan pangan di Indonesia sudah sedemikian kompleks. Makanan beracun dan berbahaya, kesalahan penggunaan bahan tambahan pangan, pelabelan dan makanan kedaluwarsa adalah problem terpenting yang sering kita hadapi. Sayangnya, penegakan hukum yang sangat lemah membuat upaya mencapai ketahanan pangan menjadi sangat berat.

Kata Kunci :Permasalahan pangan, ketahanan pangan, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a developing country, has been struggling to improve its people health quality by making and imposing food regulations that are able to protect both producers and consumers. Food safety, problems and impact of low quality food, and strength, weakness, opportunity and threaten in developing food quality system are responsibility of government, producers and consumers. They all must anticipate those problems by implementing a good food quality system which is very important to provide high quality of food and ensure that all

food sold and consumed comply with quality and safety standard.

Implementing those regulations and standards would also bring benefit to the producers. By following those regulations, it is easier for the producers to compete in the market. Not only to compete with other local producers, but also to compete with multinational producers which sell their products in Indonesia. Because most of Indonesian standards follow international regulation such as Codex, if Indonesian producers are able to comply with such standards, hopefully they can export their food products to international market as well. However, since some

developed countries have standard higher than Codex, it is harder to enter those countries. Producers must follow local standard before marketing their products in such countries.

This paper will overview the regulatory system and will assess the effectiveness of regulation enforcement in Indonesia. Some cases will be used to understand the complexity of food problems in Indonesia.

Indonesia has been implementing several regulations about food. That was a significant improvement to protect both consumers and producers. According to Cahyono (1999), one aim of these regulations about food safety program is to assure the quality of food consumed by Indonesians which is characterized by people's freedom of dangerous food. This demonstrates how serious the government tries to protect its people from food that do not comply with the health and safety standard. The aims of this regulation, besides stated above are:

1. increasing food processors' knowledge and awareness about quality and safety of food
2. building better food system by making better and more detail regulation
3. increase the number of food industries which can comply with Indonesian food standard

Implementation of Law no 7/1996 about Food has been a very important phase for Indonesian government to provide protection and

afford healthy, safe and halal food for its people. This Law also gives general guide to processors to produce such food. In this law, all food system in Indonesia is aimed to provide food security which means the adequate availability of food, adequate in terms of quality and quantity, safe and attainable and affordable (Rahman 2007). There are several indicators that should be reached, i.e. food availability, food accessibility, consumer acceptability, food quality, and food safety.

To support that Law, Indonesian government also has made several Governmental Regulation related to food, such as: regulation about food safety, labeling, food promotion, food quality, food nutrition, food distribution, food registration and food additive.

To standardize food quality in Indonesia, Indonesian government has made a standard named Standard Nasional Indonesia (SNI, Indonesian National Standard). This standard does not only involve the quality standard but also includes sampling and analyzing methods of a particular product.

Standard Nasional Indonesia for most food products follows the Codex standard to assure quality (Lembaga Kodeks Pangan Indonesia 2001). Indonesian government have made an institution called Indonesian Food Codex Institution whose tasks are to build Indonesian National Standard for food based on international standard

especially for:

1. Standard for food which Indonesia has large market share in international market
2. Standard for food which most Indonesian consume in a large amount
3. Guidance for quality assurance systems for food products especially agricultural product
4. Guidance related to certification system and inspection for food product for both local trade and international trade

In fact, Indonesian National Standard can only be complied by large food processors or export-oriented producers and only several small producers. A lot of regulations have been made but lack of socialization make most small producers do not understand and weak law enforcement obstruct the effort to apply Indonesian National Standard for all food products.

Government control is very inadequate and ineffective, although regulations about food and consumers protection are sufficient. Therefore, coordination between linked institutions needs to be improved. This lack of coordination makes ineffective control (Anonym 2006a).

Ineffective government control causes numerous problems related to food safety. According to Badan Perlindungan Konsumen Nasional (National Consumers Protection Body) 2007, four main problems related to food safety are:

1. Poisonous food due to deterioration, being contaminated or mixed with dangerous substances or additive
2. The use of illegal or excessive additives:
 - a. preservatives
 - b. colouring agent
 - c. sweetener
 - d. other additives
3. Food or drink labels which are not comply with labeling and promotion regulations (Indonesian Government regulation no. 69/1999)
4. Expired food and drink

All those problems will be explained as follows:

A. Poisonous food cases

According to National Consumers Protection Body (2007), most food poisoning cases were due to food provided by catering services. National data gathered by Indonesian Food and Drug Control also stated that in the last four years, catering services and small food industries gave the biggest contribution (31%) in national poisonous food cases compared to big industry products (20%)

Data from Indonesian Food and Drug Control shows significant increase of poisonous food cases from 2001-2006 in both the number of cases and number of sick and dead victims. During 2006 (from 1 January - 23 August 2006), there were 62 cases, with 11.745 people consumed the foods,

4.235 people were sick and 10 died. In 2005, there were 184 cases, 23.864 people consumed the foods, 8.949 were sick and 49 died.

In terms of causes, in 2006, 37 cases' causes were unknown, 11 were caused by microbes, and 8 cases are undetectable due to lack of sample. Whereas in 2005, unknown causes were 95 cases, 45 cases are undetectable due to lack of sample and because of microbes 30 cases. These numbers keep increasing. In Central Java province only, there were 40 cases from January to November 2010, with 11 people died (Food Security Council Central Java Province 2010).

Those data describes that consumers' awareness of the risk of poisonous foods is far from sufficient, including their obligation to read and understand information provided on label and condition of food and package before choosing the food they will consume.

Socialisation to community is very important therefore to push people to be wiser in choosing food. This means consumers have to have awareness and knowledge about things they use and consume, especially about the quality standard, use and safety. The cause of a lot of cases cannot be detected because people refused to report the case or they reported it late, therefore it was hard to get enough sample or evidence.

B. The use of illegal or excessive additives:

National Consumers Protection Body (2007) survey still found the incorrect use of additive in food in 2006. There are two abuses which are usually occur in Indonesia: first, the use of illegal additives in food, and second, the use of excessive legal food additives. The uses of illegal food additives, such as preservatives, colouring agent, sweeteners, etc which are not suitable for food (for example rhodamin B and methanyl yellow) are still found.

1. Several very dangerous chemical (not additive) are also still used, for example and especially the use of borax and formalin as preservatives. The abuse of formalin can be found in low acid food such as wet noodle, soya tofu, dried fish and uncooked fish.
2. The excessive use or more than advised dose of legal food additive can be found in the use of artificial sweeteners such as saccharin.

Unfortunately, Indonesian government does not have data of the misuse and abuse of food additive in Indonesia. According to National Consumers Protection Body 2007, data from Indonesian Food and Drug Control in five provinces show that in from 1999 to 2001, from the sample of wet noodle, soya tofu, dried fish and uncooked fish, 35.6% contained borax, 41.2% contained formalin and from the sample of snack food 10.4% contained Rhodamin b.

In Law no. 8/1999 about Consumers Protection, anyone who endanger the health of people can be punished maximal 5 years in jail and 2 billion rupiahs (US\$ 220,000) fine.

C. Improper labeling

The problems with food labeling are:

1. Information in label is not provided in Indonesian language and does not use understandable letter, especially in imported products
2. Label is not attached to package
3. Does not contain information about expire date
4. Does not contain ingredients, nutrition and weight information
5. Does not contain registration code from the government
6. Does not inform the address of producer or importer

Survey by National Consumers Protection Body (2007) revealed that only 6.7% of consumers read the whole information on the label carefully before purchase the products.

In terms of halal statement and certification as a part of labeling in Indonesia, Indonesian Moslem Clerics Association (LP POM MUI) stated that only 15% of all registered foods in Indonesia have halal certificate. Indonesian Moslem Clerics Association has given 3,742 halal certificates for 12,000 products.

D. Expired food

In market, expired foods, both fresh and processed foods, are also

found, not only in traditional market but also in supermarkets. The cases usually occur before feast days, such as Eid al Fitr, Christmas and New Year celebrations.

The most frequent cases in Indonesia, related to food safety are the misuse and abuse of additives in food. Food additive in Indonesia has been regulated since 1988 by Minister of Health regulation no 722/1988 about food additive. This regulation was renewed by Indonesian National Standard of Food additive in 2004.

According to Budijanto (2007), there are two types of law infringements related to the use of food additive in Indonesia. They are:

1. Excessive use of legal food additives

This type of infringement can be found mostly in small processors' products, especially the use of preservatives and artificial sweeteners. This is because, first, small producers do not understand the standard or second, they do not possess sufficient equipment. Most likely those small producers do not know how much additives can be applied therefore application is done without the knowledge of the risks associated. This condition is worsened by the fact that most producers do not possess accurate scale to weigh small amount of additive. The application of additive is usually in a very small amount. Therefore, accurate weighing is very important.

2. The use of illegal additive

This type of infringement is also usually done by small processors. This infringement is very dangerous to consumers. Examples of abuse of illegal additives are addition of borax into meatballs and noodle, the use of formalin as fish, tofu and noodle preserver, and use of textile colouring agents (rhodamin b and methanyl yellow) in food or drink. Producers use these illegal additives sometimes because consumers believe that brighter colour, elastic noodle and tofu are better and the use of illegal additives is believed can increase the colour and elasticity of food (Harmita 2006).

Formalin is the most frequent illegal additive used for food in Indonesia. This chemical substance has been used in food since 1977. In 1977, an NGO found the use of formalin in soya tofu and noodle (Anonym 2005c).

In 2005, Food and Drug Control Jakarta found that from 98 samples, there were 56 food products that were usually consumed by Indonesian capital people contained formalin i.e. 65% of noodle, 46.3% of tofu and 64.7% of dried food samples contain formalin (Anonym 2005a).

In January 2006, Indonesian FDA found that in six cities (Makassar, Jambi, Manado, Yogyakarta, Jakarta and Semarang), 10.23% of noodle samples, 1.53% of tofu and 23.68% of fish contained formalin and the worst

was in Lampung province where they found that 91% of fish, noodle and tofu contain this dangerous substance (Anonym 2006b). This unsafe substance was found in Medan as well (Anonym 2005b) where 45% of noodle and 30% of meatball also contained formalin.

Due to its negative effects formalin use in food has been banned by all health organisations and countries, including Indonesia. Indonesian Minister of Health regulation no. 1168/Menkes/PER/X/1999 has banned the use of formalin to preserve food. Whoever uses formalin in food can be punished five years in jail or 500 million rupiahs fine. However, this deadly chemical is still used for dried salty fish, wet noodle and tofu. By adding a small amount of formalin, all microbes died so deterioration does not occur.

E. Alternative preservatives

Some food experts in Indonesia have been trying to find preservatives that can substitute formalin. They try to use materials that are easy to get in Indonesia.

Budiyanto (2005) in Budijanto (2007) found that 600 ppm benzoic acid can lengthen tofu's life to three days and by using Ca-propionate 0.075% + Na-acetate 2.5% + Paraben 0.025% and better sanitation and hygiene can preserve wet noodle up to one week in refrigerator.

Bogor Agricultural University found that chitosan from exoskeleton of

prawn, lobster and crab can also become formalin substitution because chitosan has polycation (positively charged ion) that are able to obstruct bacterial growth. Application of chitosan onto dried salty fish lengthens shelf life up to three months compared to two months without preservatives. (Anonym 2006c). In concentration 1.5%, use of chitosan can equal to the use of formalin. (Anonym 2006b).

Application of curcuma in tofu, besides giving the colour of yellow can also preserve. Boiling soy before process, better sanitation and hygiene can also lengthen shelf life of tofu. (Anonym 2006d)

F. Ineffective law enforcement in Indonesia

The problems related to food safety in Indonesia are severe. Unfortunately law enforcement in Indonesia, including in food safety, is very unconvincing. Sanctions given to bad food producers are not sufficient. During 2005, in Jakarta, for example, no food processors that use formalin was sentenced (Anonym 2005a).

To reduce the risk of consuming the food containing formalin,

Indonesian government asks the people not to buy and consuming such food. Government have informed the differences between food containing formalin and not and their characteristics. Processors who still use formalin are being asked to stop and recall the products. Socialisation from government about the negative effect of formalin and the sanction continues, but lack of law enforcement makes some producers continue using formalin.

Lots of problems occurs in Indonesian food system. Poisonous food, misuse of additives, labeling and expired food problems are the most important problems we face in Indonesia. Although Indonesian government has made a lot of regulations to protect both producers and consumers, lack of control makes those problems continue.

One biggest problem is misuse of illegal additive, for example formalin by producers. This will endanger the life and health of consumers. Socialisation done by government is not enough without tight control and law enforcement.

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