

Change in Farming Orientation from Holticulture to Monculture (A Review of Social Change)

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ABSTRACT

The agricultural sector plays a crucial role in meeting societal needs but is undergoing significant transitions. Farmers are increasingly shifting from cultivating food crops, such as rice and vegetables, to industrial crops like oil palm. This shift is driven by economic factors, with farmers perceiving industrial crops as more lucrative due to their higher market value. The transition also reflects broader social changes, as described by Gillin and Gillin's concept of social change, where variations in material culture and ideology influence community lifestyles. Using a qualitative approach, this study explores the socio-economic drivers of this phenomenon and its implications. Findings suggest that dissatisfaction with the economic value of traditional crops and increased awareness of new agricultural opportunities, facilitated by innovation and information access, are key factors. This trend aligns with Etzioni Halevy's linear societal development patterns, highlighting the interplay between economic incentives and social evolution. Understanding these dynamics is essential for managing agricultural transitions to ensure sustainable practices, food security, and socio-economic stability.

INTRODUCTION

The 2020 census conducted by Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) revealed that Indonesia's population reached 270.20 million people, with a gender ratio of 102 males for every 100 females. This equates to 50.59% or approximately 136.66 million males in the total population (BPS, 2021). Urbanization trends show a growing proportion of the population living in urban areas—56.7% compared to 43.3% in rural areas. This trend is projected to increase, with urban residents anticipated to constitute 66.6% of the population by 2035, driven by urban expansion and escalating urbanization (BPS, 2021).

Urban expansion, often necessitated by housing demands, has resulted in the conversion of rural agricultural lands into urban residential areas. This shift reduces the availability of farmland and poses challenges to food security. According to the 2020 census, 38.33 million Indonesians, or 29.76% of the workforce, were employed in the agricultural sector, reflecting a decline in interest among younger generations, who are gravitating toward service and informal sectors (BPS, 2021).

In Riau, agricultural employment has also fluctuated over the last three decades. Data from 2019 to 2021 indicates that the proportion of Riau's population working in agriculture increased to 73.54% during the COVID-19 pandemic due to stay-at-home directives. However, by 2021, this figure declined to 71.28% as workplaces reopened (BPS, 2021). Despite these fluctuations, Riau remains a significant contributor to Indonesia's agricultural sector, particularly in plantation crops like rubber and oil palm.

In recent years, a notable shift has occurred from food crop farming to plantation crops, especially oil palm. Farmers perceive oil palm as more economically viable, with lower maintenance costs and higher returns compared to crops like rice or vegetables. This transition is gradual, as farmers allocate portions of their land for oil palm cultivation while retaining some for traditional crops until sufficient income is generated to support further conversion. Similarly, a shift from rubber to oil palm plantations is prevalent, as oil palm yields higher profits and has been bolstered by favorable commodity prices in recent years.

This phenomenon underscores broader socio-economic changes, driven by cost-benefit considerations and market forces. The process of commodity conversion entails significant costs for land preparation, replanting, and acquiring oil palm seedlings, but these expenses are offset by long-term economic gains. Using a sociological approach, this study explores the patterns and implications of these agricultural shifts in Riau, focusing on the dynamics of social change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are two prominent figures in the theory of social change: Robert H. Lauer and Piotr Sztompka. Below is a summary of their theories:

Robert H. Lauer

In his work, Lauer views social change as a continuous, multidimensional process. Key points include:

1. Inevitable: Change occurs in all societies, either gradually (evolution) or rapidly (revolution).
2. Multidimensional: It involves various aspects, such as economics, culture, politics, and technology, which interact with one another.
3. Cumulative: Significant changes result from the accumulation of smaller changes.
4. Interaction of Internal and External Factors: Internal factors (values, traditions) and external factors (technology, globalization) play interconnected roles.
5. Continuity and Discontinuity: Change may preserve old traditions, replace them, or combine the two.

Lauer describes social change as a complex process involving interactions among individuals, groups, and societal structures.

Piotr Sztompka

Sztompka, in his work, regards social change as a multifaceted phenomenon with several aspects:

1. Definition: Social change involves transformations in societal structures, interaction patterns, values, and culture.
2. Causes: Divided into internal (technological innovation, social conflict) and external (globalization, natural disasters) factors.
3. Actors: Individuals or groups of innovators who lead social change.
4. Dimensions: Includes material aspects (technology, economy) and non-material aspects (values, norms).
5. Nature of Change: It can be planned (through policies) or unplanned (disasters, spontaneous innovations).
6. Paradox: Change brings progress but also introduces new challenges, such as technological disruptions.
7. Action Theory: Change requires active societal engagement to be directed and managed effectively.

Through this approach, Sztompka provides insights into the dynamics of social change, the actors involved, and its impacts on society.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach to analyze the factors driving changes in agricultural commodities and their socio-cultural impacts. Data were collected through field observations, interviews with farmers, and literature reviews. The theoretical framework draws on concepts from Gillin and Gillin regarding social change and Etzioni Halevy's explanation of linear development patterns in society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

On this earth, no society remains static; societies are always dynamic, adapting to each development. Numerous scholars have studied the changes that occur within societies, whether they involve structural changes or transformations in social institutions. The changes that take place in each society vary depending on the conditions of the communities experiencing

them. These changes can be either natural or deliberate, with different patterns and directions.

Before delving further, it is important to understand the concept of social change. According to scholars, social change and cultural change differ significantly. Paul B. Horton and Chester L. Hunt explain that social change refers to shifts in the structure and relationships within a society, whereas cultural change pertains to transformations in societal culture. Social change may include shifts in population distribution, age demographics, average education levels, birth rates, declining familial bonds, reduced neighborly informal interactions due to urban migration, and the transformation of the husband's role from authority figure to partner in democratic families. Cultural change encompasses discoveries such as the automobile, the addition of new words to a language, changes in moral and ethical norms, new forms of art, and societal tendencies toward gender equality (Horton, 1989).

Furthermore, Gillin & Gillin, as cited in Jefta Leibo (1990), define social change as a new variation in accepted ways of life, influenced by changes in geographical conditions, material culture, population composition, ideology, or the diffusion or discovery of new elements within society. Yayuk Yuliati discusses social change from a sociological perspective, specifically using conflict theory. This theory assumes that social change arises from the struggle of lower social classes against higher social classes, commonly referred to as class struggle (Yuliati, 2003).

In his book *Pengantar Sosiologi* (Introduction to Sociology), Soerjono Soekanto summarizes various definitions of social change from sociological and anthropological figures. For instance, William F. Ogburn emphasizes that the scope of social change includes material and immaterial cultural elements, highlighting the significant influence of material culture on immaterial culture. Kingsley Davis defines social change as alterations in societal structure and functions. MacIver distinguishes between utilitarian and cultural elements based on primary and secondary human interests. Selo Soemardjan defines social change as any transformation within societal institutions that impacts the social system, including values, attitudes, and behavioral patterns among groups (Soekanto, 1999).

Referring to these definitions of social change, societal behavior in shifting agricultural commodities—from staple crops like rice, vegetables, and fruits to industrial crops such as palm oil—is influenced by changes in the economic value of commodities. When linked to institutional changes, these shifts reflect transformations in family economic institutions. As family economies face higher demands for fulfilling primary needs, communities adapt by seeking higher economic value, such as through commodity changes.

Numerous sociological figures have formulated theories of social change, each covering broad aspects and involving various contributors. These include evolutionary theories, cyclical theories, functional theories, and conflict theories.

Evolutionary Theory

Evolutionary theories suggest that social change follows a fixed trajectory through which all societies progress. Societies move from initial developmental stages to advanced stages, with evolutionary change ceasing upon reaching the final stage (Horton, 1989). Auguste Comte identifies three stages of societal development: (1) the theological stage, guided by supernatural values, (2) the metaphysical stage, where abstract principles replace supernatural beliefs, and (3) the positive/scientific stage, driven by reality supported by scientific principles (Horton, 1989). Herbert Spencer describes social evolution as the transition from homogenous, simple tribal societies to complex modern societies, with survival favoring energetic and capable individuals while marginalizing the weak and idle (Horton, 1989). Karl Marx outlines complex technological changes progressing from primitive hunting societies to modern industrial societies. Each stage has a production method suited to its era, and cultural elements align with that method. Each stage, however, contains seeds of its own destruction, paving the way for the next stage (Horton, 1989).

Cyclical Theory

Cyclical theories view societal transitions as stages that do not culminate in a perfect final stage but instead loop back to initial stages for further transitions. Oswald Spengler argues that great civilizations undergo birth, growth, and decline, typically spanning about a thousand years. Pitirim Sorokin sees civilizations cycling endlessly through three cultural systems: (1) ideational culture, grounded in supernatural values, (2) idealistic culture, blending supernatural and rational elements, and (3) sensate culture, where sensory perception becomes the measure of reality and life's purpose (Horton, 1989). Arnold Toynbee posits that civilizations cycle through birth, growth, decline, and death. Of the twenty-one major civilizations, only Western civilization remains, though it is transitioning toward decline (Horton, 1989).

Functional and Conflict Theories

Functionalists view change as constant but disruptive to societal balance. The disruption ceases once the change is integrated into the culture. Conflict theorists, following Marx's evolutionary pattern, argue that social conflict, rather than change itself, is the constant (Horton, 1989).

Patterns of Agricultural Commodity Change

Linear Pattern: Etzioni Halevy describes societal development as following a predictable path. Comte explains that humanity's progressive advancement occurs naturally and inevitably. He outlines three stages: the theological stage, where agricultural communities depend on nature's benevolence; the metaphysical stage, where farmers adopt methods to preserve soil fertility and productivity; and the scientific/industrial stage, where agricultural products are commercialized, producing industrial raw materials like rubber and palm oil, which farmers cannot process independently (Sunarto, 1993).

Cyclical Pattern: Spengler and Pareto's views on cycles reflect Indonesia's agricultural development. Farmers experienced hardships during colonization, prospered post-independence, and achieved agricultural self-sufficiency, only to face difficulties due to limited access to agricultural inputs like fertilizers. Currently, farmers growing industrial crops like palm oil are thriving due to favorable market prices (Sunarto, 1993).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that there has been a shift in agricultural commodities among farmers, especially in Riau, due to changes in the value of certain commodities. This shift in commodity value has prompted farmers to change the types of crops they cultivate. Additionally, there has been a change in the community's mindset. Farmers have transitioned from a focus on meeting basic needs to a profit-oriented approach to agriculture. This shift occurred because farmers' knowledge has evolved, driven by the growing accessibility of information technology, which has now reached even remote rural areas. With this increased access to information technology, farmers' awareness of commodity values has significantly improved.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research could explore the broader implications of the shift in agricultural commodities among farmers, particularly in Riau, as driven by changes in the perceived value of these commodities. It would be valuable to investigate how this shift influences long-term agricultural practices, local economies, and environmental sustainability. Additionally, future studies could examine the role of information technology in transforming farmers' mindsets and their orientation toward profit rather than subsistence. Such research could also analyze the extent to which improved access to information contributes to decision-making processes and how this shapes regional agricultural trends.

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