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# Localizing Global Sustainability Policies: Insights from an Indonesian Case Study

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ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4195-734X>**Doi Serial**<https://doi.org/10.56334/sci/8.9.12>**Keywords**

International Cooperation; Sustainable Rural Development; Sustainability Sciences; Environmental Policy; International Advocacy; Local Governance

**Abstract**

This paper explores the intersection between global sustainability advocacy and local policymaking through a case study of Indonesia's agricultural sector. It investigates how international coalitions—comprising farmers' organizations, research institutes, and cooperatives—can influence national political agendas and foster locally embedded sustainable development strategies. Specifically, the study focuses on the establishment of a national committee on family farming in Indonesia, catalyzed by international collaboration, which contributed to shaping policies in favor of smallholder farmers.

In 2008, a broad coalition of civil society actors, including farmers' associations, academic institutions, and rural development NGOs, initiated a campaign to promote sustainable rural development and elevate small-scale farmers to the center of national decision-making processes. This coalition launched a global advocacy initiative aimed at enhancing the visibility of family farming within international political discourse. The campaign culminated in the declaration by the United Nations of 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming.

The Indonesian case illustrates how transnational collaboration enabled synergies between civil society, academics, government agencies, and both domestic and international organizations. These efforts collectively influenced policy design and participatory governance at the local level, demonstrating how global sustainability objectives can be effectively localized through inclusive, multi-stakeholder engagement.

**Citation:** Ruiz de Garibay, D. (2025). Localizing global sustainability policies: Insights from an Indonesian case study. *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems*, 8(9), 140–145.

<https://doi.org/10.56334/sci/8.9.12>

**Issue:** <https://imcra-az.org/archive/383-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-9-vol-8-2025.html>

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Received: 06.04.2025

Accepted: 04.06.2025

Published: 16.07.2025 (available online)

## 1. Introduction

This paper presents a case study illustrating how international coalitions composed of civil society organizations can influence national political agendas and promote sustainable development pathways. Drawing on sustainability theory, the study emphasizes the importance of connecting global and local governance frameworks to achieve effective and context-specific policy solutions.

In 2008, a broad alliance of civil society actors—including farmers' organizations, research institutions, and rural development NGOs—formed an international advocacy coalition to promote sustainable rural development and place smallholder farmers at the center of policy decision-making processes. That same year, this coalition launched a global

advocacy strategy to elevate the salience of family farming within international policy forums. The campaign successfully led to the declaration of **2014 as the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF-2014)** by the **United Nations General Assembly**, following a proposal from the Government of Indonesia and endorsement by the **37th Session of the FAO Conference**.

The IYFF-2014 mobilized over 350 organizations across 60 countries and five regions, including major regional networks of family farmers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Between 2014 and 2018, the coalition continued its strategic advocacy, culminating in the **United Nations Declaration of the Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028) (IYFF+10)**.

As part of its agenda, the coalition promoted the active participation of farmers in national and international policy formulation processes. According to the coalition, agricultural policies are often developed by government officials in urban centers, detached from rural realities and the actual challenges faced by farming communities. This disconnects results in policy decisions that do not adequately reflect or serve rural populations. To address this, the coalition prioritized the inclusion of farmers in decision-making platforms.

Consequently, between 2011 and 2014, **approximately 45 National Committees for Family Farming (NCFFs)** were established globally. An NCFF typically serves as a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together rural organizations, NGOs, academic institutions, producers' groups, and other actors engaged in the promotion and protection of family farming. These committees often also include representatives from government and international institutions.

The primary function of NCFFs is to facilitate dialogue, build partnerships, and influence national policymaking in favor of sustainable agricultural development. This paper argues that National Committees for Family Farming have been instrumental in ensuring farmer participation in the national policy process. By examining the case of **Indonesia**, the paper demonstrates how global advocacy networks can successfully engage local stakeholders and contribute to the transformation of national policy landscapes toward sustainability.

## 2. Making Global Political Agendas Matter Locally

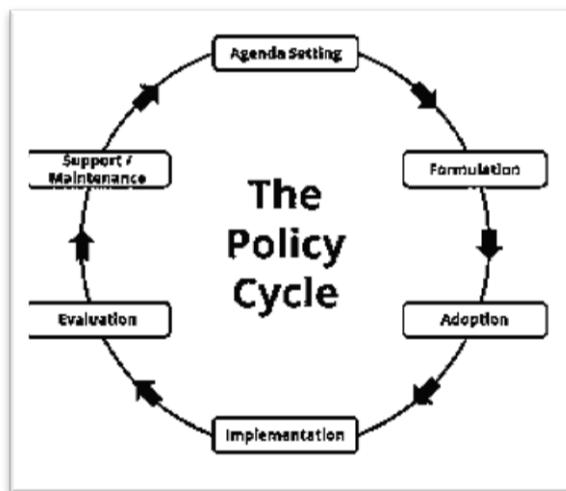
A significant portion of smallholder farmers in Asia continue to face persistent poverty and struggle to secure sustainable livelihoods from agriculture. This condition is often the result of intersecting structural barriers, including inadequate rural infrastructure, weak access to land, credit, and markets, and insufficient public policies and programs that support agricultural development. Furthermore, existing producer organizations frequently fail to adequately represent the interests and voices of small-scale farmers in decision-making arenas. As a result, farmers have minimal influence on the formulation of agricultural policies that directly affect their lives and livelihoods.

From a pragmatic standpoint, involving local farmers' organizations in the policy process substantially increases the likelihood that newly proposed policies will be both relevant and effective. First, their inclusion enables policymakers to better understand the actual challenges experienced on the ground. Second, it fosters greater ownership and support for policy initiatives, facilitating their long-term institutionalization and sustainability. However, beyond these instrumental benefits, the case for farmer participation rests fundamentally on democratic principles.

The right of citizens to participate in decisions that shape their lives is central to the concept of democracy. Public participation is not merely a procedural element of governance but a core democratic value. As political scientist Larry Diamond emphasizes, democracy comprises several essential features: (a) a political system for choosing and replacing governments through free and fair elections; (b) active participation of citizens in political and civic life; (c) protection of the human rights of all individuals; and (d) the rule of law, under which laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

In this context, **National Committees for Family Farming (NCFFs)** have played an essential role in localizing global agendas by engaging directly in the **agenda-setting stage** of policymaking. These committees have identified key issues requiring government attention and advocated for their inclusion in national development strategies. Moreover, NCFFs have actively contributed to policy formulation by proposing objectives, evaluating policy alternatives, and selecting the most appropriate instruments for implementation. In the case of Indonesia, these dynamics are particularly evident and provide rich insights into how global advocacy coalitions can facilitate participatory governance and enhance the alignment between international sustainability goals and local policy outcomes.

Figure 1: The Policy Cycle



### The Indonesian National Committee on Family Farming (NCFE)

The Indonesian National Committee on Family Farming (NCFE) was established on July 4, 2014, as a national initiative aimed at influencing rural transformation policy processes. Its primary objectives included advocating for broader access to regional resources, resolving rural conflicts, and pursuing legal and social recognition for family farmers. Initially composed of sixteen member organizations, the formation of the NCFE was a direct result of momentum generated by the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) 2014 global campaign. The Committee represents a significant, albeit localized, outcome of the global initiative's influence on national policy discourse. This paper contends that the NCFE played a pivotal role in placing the family farming agenda onto Indonesia's national policy platform.

### Localizing a Global Framework

One of the NCFE's earliest tasks was adapting the FAO's definition of family farming to the Indonesian context, where terms such as "smallholder" and "family farmer" lacked legal and policy recognition. By the end of 2015, the NCFE had expanded its coalition to 16 organizations and embarked on a strategic policy advocacy process. Among its key aims was influencing regional legislation relevant to the implementation of Indonesia's "National Law on the Protection and Empowerment of Farmers."

The NCFE identified specific provinces for focused advocacy and established regional branches (RCFEs) to facilitate local engagement. By mid-2016, the committee prioritized developing policy instruments that member organizations could use in their advocacy work. In partnership with universities and the Ministry of Agriculture, the NCFE commissioned two studies to diagnose the core challenges facing Indonesian family farmers and to map potential policy response areas. These findings informed the development of a national policy document titled *National Guidelines on Family Farming*, which functioned as a blueprint for regional legislative action.

### Policy Formulation at the Regional Level

In 2017, the RCFF of Central Java began engaging directly with policymakers. They initiated dialogue with Commission B of the Regional Parliament and with relevant stakeholders from the Regional Office for Agriculture and Plantation under the Ministry of Agriculture. A policy workshop was convened in Central Java, gathering local leaders, farmer organizations, NGOs, and—importantly—officials from the Food Security Agency and the Office of the Governor of Central Java.

Following the workshop, a series of consultations were held between March and June 2017. The RCFF collaborated with the Regional Office for Agriculture and Plantation to draft a *Governor's Regulation on the Protection and Empowerment of Farmers*. The RCFF then presented this draft to Commission B of the Regional Parliament and submitted formal recommendations to the Governor's Office. In July 2017, a focus group discussion was held to assess the draft regulation and share implementation experiences from other regions.

### Policy Adoption and Legislative Impact

These advocacy efforts yielded significant results. In February 2018, *Governor's Regulation No. 16/2018 on the Protection and Empowerment of Farmers* was officially enacted in Central Java. Approximately 70% of the RCFF's recommendations were incorporated into the final regulation. Key provisions included:

- **Land Access and Utilization:** The regulation mandates the identification and allocation of underutilized public land for smallholder/family farmers.
- **Infrastructure and Input Support:** It emphasizes the need for regional governments to provide standardized agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers.
- **Crop Failure Insurance:** Funds were allocated by the provincial government to support farmers facing crop failure due to environmental or market shocks.

### Implementation and Evaluation

Prior to the enactment of this regulation, Indonesian law made no explicit mention of family farming. However, the NCFF adapted the FAO's *Guidelines for the Governance of Agricultural Systems* to the Indonesian context, producing a "national" version used in advocacy and monitoring. This process exemplifies how international frameworks—like IYFF-2014—can be translated into effective national policy instruments. The Indonesian case underscores the potential of global civil society coalitions to influence localized governance structures and policy formulation in support of sustainable rural development.

### Integrating Global Standards into the Indonesian Context of Family Farming

The proposal to adapt global standards for family farming to the Indonesian context originated from a multi-stakeholder civil society initiative. This initiative was developed following a meeting of agricultural leaders held in Brasília in November 2014. The global framework for standardization was largely influenced by the work of the **International Working Group on Family Farming (IWG-FF)**, established by the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** in the wake of the **International Year of Family Farming (IYFF-2014)**. The IWG-FF aimed to enrich knowledge on family farming by proposing international recommendations and criteria related to its vision, definition, and typology at the local, national, and global levels.

The Indonesian **National Committee on Family Farming (NCFF)** committed to participating in this global process by contextualizing these international best practices within Indonesia's socio-agricultural framework. To achieve this, the NCFF carried out the following key actions:

- **Desk Research:** Conducted a comprehensive review of family farming typologies in Indonesia to understand their structural and functional characteristics.
- **Field Study:** Implemented fieldwork to validate and expand upon the desk research findings. This included data collection, documentation, and dissemination of results to support evidence-based policy advocacy.
- **Drafting of National Guidelines:** Developed a preliminary version of the *National Guidelines on Family Farming*, intended to serve as a foundational reference for subsequent legislation and policy initiatives.

These activities culminated in the development of a monitoring tool for farmers' organizations to track the implementation of laws and policies affecting family farming. The dual purpose of this tool was:

1. **To enhance the social recognition of family farming** as a vital contributor to national development.

2. **To promote sustainable agricultural practices** that are more locally adapted and environmentally balanced—reducing dependence on external inputs, encouraging positive socio-ecological externalities, and preserving decision-making autonomy for rural communities.

### Concluding Remarks

The **International Year of Family Farming (IYFF-2014)** led to broad global recognition of the crucial role played by family farmers. In the Indonesian context, it served as a catalyst for cross-sectoral collaboration among civil society, academia, government agencies, and international organizations.

The establishment of the **Indonesian National Committee on Family Farming (NCF)** in 2014 was a landmark achievement in translating a global political agenda into a national policy platform. Notably, prior to 2014, the concept of family farming had not occupied a central place in Indonesian policy discourse. The NCF introduced this concept while also creating monitoring instruments aligned with international standards, significantly shaped by the IYFF-2014 campaign.

Farmers' organizations collaborated closely with researchers and academic institutions to adapt international recommendations to the Indonesian context. This collaborative process yielded valuable insights into national policy design, particularly in the areas of legislative drafting, adoption, and implementation.

A key example of this influence is the promulgation of **Governor's Regulation No. 16/2018 on the Protection and Empowerment of Farmers in Central Java Province**. It is likely that the content of this regulation would have been markedly different without the advocacy and technical input provided by the NCF's regional office. The Indonesian experience demonstrates that the IYFF-2014 not only inspired policy guidelines but also stimulated institutional innovation and leadership within farmers' organizations, enabling them to participate meaningfully in governance processes.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the Indonesian National Committee on Family Farming (NCF), the regional committees (RCFF), and all partner organizations involved in this initiative. Special thanks are extended to the FAO and the International Working Group on Family Farming (IWG-FF) for their foundational work and continued support. We also appreciate the input of local farmers, policymakers, and academic institutions who participated in the field research and policy workshops.

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