

Making Regional Action Plans on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAD-KSB) an effective tool for palm oil development in Indonesia

Key points

- The overarching legal umbrella for sustainable oil palm in Indonesia is the Presidential Instruction Number 6 of 2019 on the National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAN-KSB) for 2019-2024.
- The RAN-KSB regulation will expire at the end of 2024. It is to be extended under a new Presidential Regulation, but it is not clear when this will happen. Regional Action Plans on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAD-KSB) function to implement RAN-KSB related activities at the sub-national level and depend on the valid national framing regulation.
- RAD-KSBs are mandatory for districts and provinces if they wish to secure funding for sustainable palm oil production in the form of DBH-Sawit (palm oil profit sharing fund), as regulated by the Ministry of Finance Regulation No 91/2023.
- Where formulated, RAD-KSB regulations tend to be poorly defined and RAD-KSB Secretariats have limited capacity for cross sector coordination because they are often perceived as an external initiative not rooted in local regulations.
- In addition to concerns over the extension of the RAN-KSB and design, quality, and efficiency issues, sub-national implementation faces additional constraints, including:
 - The prescription by the Ministry of Finance Regulation No 91/2023 on DBH-Sawit to allocate at least 80% of RAD-KSB budget for infrastructure development (roads) that may or may not be related to palm oil.
 - The 20% allocation that can be used for sustainable oil palm is too small to be effective.
 - The budgetary base for DBH-Sawit fiscal transfers from the central government to provinces and districts is low in value because export levies on palm oil are not included in the calculation of DBH-Sawit.

- RAN-KSB and RAD-KSB are currently not integrated into national and sub-national development plans. This prevents RAD-KSB from tapping into annual regional state budget allocations (APBD) for operational needs.
- To strengthen the effectiveness of RAD-KSB as a tool to promote sustainable palm oil production in Indonesia, the following adjustments may be considered:
 - Renew the National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAN-KSB) for 2019-2024 to provide a continued basis for sub-national action through Regional Action Plans on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAD-KSB).
 - Revise Ministry of Finance Regulation No 91/2023 to reduce/remove the 80% minimum allocation for infrastructure and allow greater budgetary support for sustainable palm oil development according to district and province needs.
 - Revise the national DBH regulation to include revenues from palm oil export levies in the calculation of DBH-Sawit.
 - Integrate RAN-KSB and RAD-KSB into national and sub-national medium-term development plans respectively to permit annual state budget allocations.
 - District and province governments to make greater use of local fees (*retribusi daerah*) to generate revenue to support RAD-KSB.
 - Include clear guidance in the renewed RAN-KSB to improve the design and implementation of RAD-KSB.
 - District and province governments to endorse the mandates of RAD-KSB Secretariats and issue assignment letters to appointed staff to strengthen the authority of the secretariats in cross-sectoral coordination.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is the world's largest producer of palm oil (USDA 2023). In 2023, Indonesia palm oil exports reached 27.5 million tonnes with the value of USD 24 billion, earning it the top spot for palm oil exports globally (Ministry of Agriculture 2024). In 2023, Indonesia's total oil palm plantations covered around 16.8 million hectares, with the production and export of palm oil contributing 3.5% to GDP and generating employment for 16 million people in both on-farm and off-farm activities¹.

Despite being the world's top palm oil-producing country, Indonesia's palm oil sector faces several challenges such as low productivity among smallholder farmers, environmental degradation, land legality issues, and the limited adoption of the Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) certification (Madani 2019). Consequently, the key priority for Indonesia is to improve the environmental, social, and economic credentials of palm oil in Indonesia and respond to the growing demands from global consumer markets for legal and sustainable products (Kemenko 2022).

The sub-national government agencies in Indonesia (province, district) have an important role and responsibility in advancing the sustainable palm oil agenda. According to the Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning the Regional Government, governments in districts and provinces have the responsibility to plan, allocate budgets, implement policies, supervise implementation, and evaluate the results of palm oil governance efforts to improve

¹ <https://trase.earth/explore/supply-chain/indonesia/palm-oil>

sustainability (Umayah et al 2021; Puri et al 2022). In 2019, this policy direction was strengthened further by the Presidential Instruction (*Inpres*) No 6 2019 on the “Plan for National Action Toward Sustainable Oil Palm”. This instruction gave rise to the National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAN-KSB) and Regional Action Plans on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAD-KSB) (CIFOR-ICRAF 2024).

This brief offers insights into the status of the implementation of RAD-KSB regulations. It examines the linkages between national and sub-national palm oil regulatory frameworks, and reviews design, implementation, coordination, and funding issues. It utilises information from key palm oil producing areas of Indonesia, including Central Kalimantan – the second-largest palm oil producing province (BPS 2024) – to illustrate factors that influence the implementation of RAD-KSB. The brief concludes with recommendations on how to increase the effectiveness of RAD-KSB as a tool for sustainable palm oil development at the subnational level in Indonesia.

2. The national framework for sustainable palm oil (2019-2024)

Indonesia’s national framework for sustainable palm oil is anchored in the Presidential Instruction (*Inpres*) No 6/2019 on the “Plan for National Action toward Sustainable Oil Palm”. This regulation provides the basis for the National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAN-KSB) for the period of 2019-2024. The RAN-KSB contains five key components (Box 1), which form the basis for 28 programmes, 92 activities, and 118 outputs. These components make up a roadmap to improve palm oil governance in Indonesia. The development and implementation of RAN-KSB has been supported by the Sustainable Palm Oil Initiative (SPOI) project funded by UNDP².

Box 1: Key Components of the National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAN-KSB):

1. Strengthening data, coordination, and infrastructure
2. Enhancing the capacity and capability of farmers
3. Environmental management and monitoring
4. Improving palm oil plantation governance and dispute resolution
5. Supporting the acceleration of ISPO certification implementation and improving market access

Among its many provisions, *Inpres* No 6/2019 instructs 14 central government agencies, 26 provincial governments and 217 district governments in palm oil-producing areas to implement RAN-KSB programmes in accordance with relevant district/province level development programming. The steps that must be followed in developing RAD-KSB are outlined in Box 2.

² https://www.sekretariat-ranksb.id/storage/app/public/front_ran/SPOI%20Highlight%202016--2022.pdf

Box 2: Steps towards Regional Action Plans on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAD-KSB)

1. The District Head assigns the Regional Secretary to form a Drafting Team.
2. The Drafting Team identifies potential programmes and activities and collects baseline technical data and information.
3. The Drafting Team selects and determines priority programmes and incorporates the action plan into the structure and matrix of RAD-KSB.
4. The Drafting Team conducts consultations on the compiled RAD-KSB document to gather input from relevant stakeholders. Improvements are made based on the feedback received.
5. The District Head and the Drafting Team debates the draft District Regulation (*Perkada*) for RAD-KSB.
6. The District Head drafts the *Perkada* RAD-KSB.
7. The District Secretary promulgates the *Perkada* RAD-KSB and provides a signature on the *Perkada* RAD-KSB document.

Owing to the recent introduction of the RAD-KSB policy, only 19 districts (out of 217) and 9 provinces (out of 26) where oil palm is grown have formulated and launched RAD-KSB policies (Kemendagri 2024). Therefore, continued government effort and donor support are needed to enable a greater uptake of this framework for sustainable palm oil.

The wider rollout of RAD-KSB currently awaits the extension of the National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAN-KSB). The regulation will expire at the end of 2024 and currently a new phase of this regulation is in preparation³. Prompt extension of RAN-KSB would provide much needed legal clarity for subnational planning and implementation of RAD-KSB.

3. Funding for RAD-KSB implementation

Assuming that RAN-KSB is soon extended beyond 2024, this would provide the required legal certainty and would enable efforts to focus on improving the design and implementation of RAD-KSB to support sustainable palm oil production in Indonesia.

Allocation of DBH Sawit funding is regulated by the Ministry of Finance Regulation 91/2023 on the Management of Revenue-Sharing Fund for Palm Oil Plantations. The allocation of DBH Sawit is determined by several criteria and indicators (EFI, 2024). Key amongst these is the existence of a RAD-KSB regulation which alone determines 50% of DBH-Sawit allocation from the central government to districts and provinces. The allocation can be increased 10% if provinces/districts perform well in terms of poverty reduction and promulgating sustainability regulations.

The use of DBH Sawit funds is specified by the same Ministry of Finance Regulation 91/2023, particularly articles 16 and 17. These articles state that at least 80% of the

³ <https://www.bidiktangsel.com/nasional/97012349847/perbaikan-tata-kelola-industri-sawit-komitmen-bersama-pemerintah-pusat-dan-daerah>

allocation for DBH Sawit shall be used for infrastructure development (roads) that are district/province-wide in scope and may or may not be related to palm oil. Up to 20% of DBH Sawit funding is designated for activities that are palm oil specific such as smallholder (STD-B) registration, ISPO certification, technical support to farmers, etc.

Until recently, the “Local governments [in Indonesia have been] concerned about the relatively small amount of revenues received by palm oil-producing regions. They feel the oil palm sector has not contributed enough to regional development. Current revenues received by the regions remain small due to the absence of a shared revenue mechanism that considers palm oil a key element for determining the proportion of shared funds.” (Nurfatriani 2022). The introduction in 2023 of DBH-Sawit based on the Ministry of Finance Regulation No 91/2023 was meant to address these concerns and return substantial funding to oil palm cultivation areas. The critical issue with DBH-Sawit is that it directs most funding for broadly defined infrastructure development that may or may not be related to palm oil and 20% of the budget is insufficient. In many districts, even this limited portion is not used because local governments spend entire DBH-Sawit budgets on infrastructure projects unrelated to palm oil to meet mandated benchmarks and metrics⁴.

In addition to the issue with DBH-Sawit budget allocation being dominated by infrastructure development, the scale of DBH-Sawit transfers to districts and provinces remains low. This is because the current revenue base for DBH-Sawit is mainly from taxation of upstream concession operations, while revenue from export levies on palm oil is not included. The export levies are by far the largest source of government revenue from palm oil and tapping into this pool of funding could make a huge difference for DBH-Sawit and RAD-KSB (Arhian et al 2024).

4. Lessons from implementing RAD-KSBs

In 2020, with support from civil society organisations including Javlec, Central Kalimantan Province and East Kotawaringin District drafted RAD-KSB regulations. Building on developments in East Kotawaringin, in 2022 Javlec facilitated the development of a RAD-KSB regulation in Katingan District⁵. Javlec also supported the establishment of the RAD-KSB Implementation Team⁶ and the establishment of the district Secretariat. In 2024 in anticipation of the extension of the National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAN-KSB), both Katingan and East Kotawaringin Districts decided extended their RAD-KSB regulations until 2026.

The RAD-KSBs in East Kotawaringin and Katingan Districts encompass objectives including the following:

- Resolving legal issues regarding plantation land
- Implementing regulations related to sustainable palm oil plantation development

⁴ This tendency has been reported by 14 districts participating in the e-STDB meeting organised by EFI/KAMI in North Sumatra, 1-4 October 2024, and 14 districts participating in a similar meeting in Central Kalimantan, 15-19 October 2024.

⁵ Katingan District Decree Number 500.8.6.31/DKPP/III/2023.

⁶ Katingan Regent Decree Number 525/253 of 2023.

- Restoring and improving natural landscapes
- Utilising technology and sustainability principles to increase productivity
- Building and empowering community oil palm plantation institutions
- Supporting partnerships between independent palm oil plantation institutions and plantation companies
- Improving transparency and access to funding and markets
- Improving inter-sectoral communication
- Creating harmonious and equitable industrial relations in the palm oil sector

The progress with the design of RAD-KSB in both districts and the province of Central Kalimantan, while notable, ran into several implementation hurdles. These include both problems with coherent policy formulation, coordinated implementation, and logistical and financial constraints. The following key issues affecting RAD-KSB implementation have been identified.

Unclear policy targets

Despite assistance from civil society organisations and central government agencies, RAD-KSB targets are often not clearly defined, particularly in terms of deliverables (Anugrah 2023). While CSOs or development agencies can assist, the final formulation of regulatory frameworks is ultimately in the hands of government decision-makers. The wording of many existing RAD-KSB regulations (as exemplified by Katingan and East Kotawaringin Districts) tends to be general, process oriented, and normative⁷. This results in sub-optimal implementation and reporting at the district and province level, which in turn makes it difficult to monitor effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

Limited cross-sector coordination

Cross sector coordination is a crucial component of RAD-KSB implementation. However, in most districts, the RAD-KSB Secretariat (usually hosted by the District Agency for Agriculture/ Plantations) lacks the authority to require other departments in other sectors to report in a timely manner on activity implementation or budget utilisation. This is because in many districts and provinces, RAD-KSB Secretariats are seen as an external imposition with limited local participation (Madani 2019). Furthermore, once the secretariats are established, the assigned staff are not provided with official district appointment letters (SK, Surat Keterangan)⁸. These limitations curtail the effectiveness of the secretariats, and lead to unpredictable implementation of activities and unclear reporting.

⁷ Feedback from JAVLEC staff involved in supporting for RAD-KSB in the districts of East Kotawaringin and Katingan as well as at the provincial level in Central Kalimantan.

⁸ This situation has been reported by 14 districts participating in the e-STDB meeting organised by EFI/KAMI in North Sumatra, 1-4 October 2024, and 14 districts participating in a similar meeting in Central Kalimantan, 15-19 October 2024.

Budget constraints

The implementation of RAD-KSB is constrained by limited funds available to the secretariats for the implementation of activities. In 2023, the Ministry of Finance announced that it would allocate USD 214.3 million for DBH-Sawit from the overall DBH natural resource revenue sharing fund totalling USD 8.5 billion (Ministry of Finance 2023). Thus DBH-Sawit received approximately 2.4% of the overall DBH that year. The remaining resources were used to subsidise biofuels and support other development priorities (USDA 2024). Once divided between eligible 217 districts and 26 provinces, this comes down to about USD 800,000 per district/province per year. While certainly a considerable sum, currently only a small part of it is available to support sustainable palm oil. The current Ministry of Finance regulations stipulate that 80% of the USD 800,000 that is potentially available per district/province per year (or USD 640,000) under DBH Sawit be used for infrastructure development (roads) that may or may not be related to palm oil. This leaves approximately USD 160,000 per district/province per year that is explicitly dedicated to oil palm and forms the core of RAD-KSB budget allocation. This level of funding mainly covers planning, meetings, consultations, etc and is insufficient to support field implementation.

Lack of integration into regional development planning

As RAD-KSB mirrors the national RAN-KSB, it also shares the latter's status of not being integrated into the national development planning (National Medium-Term Development Plan RPJMN). As RAN-KSB policy is funded by the Sustainable Oil Palm Initiative (SPOI) implemented by UNDP, RAD-KSB in districts and provinces is also a stand-alone initiative that is mostly donor funded and so far has not been integrated into Regional Medium Term Development Plans (RPJMD)⁹. Because of this disconnect, many districts and provinces cannot allocate annual government budget to support RAD-KSB activities. This limits a potentially significant and sustained source of funding for sustainable oil palm.

Capacity constraints

The limited availability of technical staff with appropriate training, experience, and skills at the local level is also a roadblock towards a more effective implementation of RAD-KSB (Anugrah 2023). For example, in Katingan District, the District Agriculture Agency's plantation division has only three technical staff who cover not only palm oil but all other plantation commodities as well¹⁰. This situation is common in many district government agencies. It is compounded by local regulations that prevent secretariats from outsourcing operations to qualified vendors as the emphasis is on local hires¹¹.

⁹ During the STD-B acceleration workshops organised in October 2024 by EFI and the Ministry of Agriculture in North Sumatra and Central Kalimantan provinces, in which 28 palm oil producing districts were involved, it was emphasised that RAD-KSB should be integrated into RPJMD (regional medium-term development plan). This would strengthen RAD-KSB's capacity to support transition to sustainable oil palm.

¹⁰ Feedback from JAVLEC staff involved in the support for RAD-KSB policies in the districts of East Kotawaringin and Katingan.

¹¹ This situation has been reported by 14 districts participating in the e-STD-B meeting organised by EFI/KAMI in North Sumatra, 1-4 October 2024, and 14 districts participating in a similar meeting in Central Kalimantan, 15-19 October 2024

5. Ways to strengthen the effectiveness of RAD-KSB for sustainable palm oil

RAD-KSB is an important tool with which Indonesia is seeking to advance sustainable palm oil production through an integrated approach. However, based on the state of play with RAN-KSB nationally and assessment of the current structure and functioning of DHB-Sawit, RAD-KSB implementation on the ground struggles to achieve results. This is because of poor formulation, weak cross-sector coordination, delays with national policy extension, and funding bottlenecks.

To make RAD-KSB more effective as a tool to drive sustainable palm oil and deliver results, the following adjustments are needed to create better enabling conditions:

Extend RAN-KSB

As the current National Action Plan on Sustainable Palm Oil (RAN-KSB) expires at the end of 2024, it is important that the Presidential Instruction (*Inpres*) No 6/2019 is extended promptly for another term in order to provide legal certainty for sub-national efforts through RAD-KSB implementation.

Improve KAD-KSB regulation focus

RAD-KSB regulations must be implementable and verifiable. They must have clear targets, detailed deliverables, and be formulated in such a way as to facilitate evaluation of progress. For this to occur, it is important that renewed RAN-KSB regulation provides clear guidance to regional government agencies on the formulation of RAD-KSB regulations. The national guidelines should emphasise the importance of clear targets, deliverables, and inclusion of key performance indicators (KPIs).

Adjust DBH policy to make more resources available for sustainable palm oil

The government regulation on the structure and allocation of DBH (UU No 1/2022) should be adjusted to include state revenues from export levies on palm oil, so these can become part of the allocation for DBH-Sawit. This would significantly increase resources available for DBH-Sawit and enable scaling up of the current efforts under RAD-KSB.

Strengthen DBH Sawit focus on the implementation of palm oil policy

The Ministry of Finance Regulation No 91/2023 on DBH Sawit should be revised to remove the 80% allocation for infrastructure. The entire RAD-KSB budget should be used for palm oil support and its allocation should be determined by districts and provinces.

Use regional revenues to support RAD-KSB

As both DBH and DBH-Sawit adjustments require fundamental regulatory realignment, as a stop-gap measure districts and provinces should make greater use of regional fees (*retribusi daerah*). The Government Regulation No 1/2022 on fiscal relations between the central and sub-national government agencies grants local governments the power to collect such fees.

Improve sub-national capacity for implementation

District and province government authorities should ensure that the establishment of RAD-KSB secretariats takes place based on a comprehensive process of consultation to ensure stakeholder buy-in. The local authorities should further ensure that staff assigned to RAD-KSB Secretariats receive official appointment letters (*Surat Keputusan*, or SK). Furthermore, RAD-KSB Secretariats should be allowed to freely outsource relevant activities to qualified service providers, as well as to hire consultants, interns etc., as needed. This would improve the capacity for both planning and implementation.

Integrate RAN-KSB into the National Development Planning (RPJMN)

The Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Home Affairs, and Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs (Kemenko) should jointly propose to the Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas) to make RAN-KSB part of the National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN). This would make RAN-KSB part of an integrated framework for national development and would make it possible for the central government to allocate national budget for its implementation (APBN).

Integrate RAD-KSB into Provincial/District Development Planning (RPJMD)

The RAD-KSB Secretariat and relevant sectoral agencies (Dinas) should jointly propose to include RAD-KSB into the Regional Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMD) in districts and provinces so that regular sub-national budget allocations (APBD) can be used to support RAD-KSB implementation.

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Cover photo: Oil palm plantation in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. **EFI**.

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