The Right to Food in Brunei Darussalam in Relation to Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

Brunei Darussalam continues to work towards the eradication of poverty in all its manifestations and places a high value on ensuring the welfare and well-being of its citizens. By enhancing the nation’s food security, Brunei Darussalam hopes to guarantee that its people will always have access to a sufficient supply of safe and nutritious food or healthy food at an affordable price. The aim of this paper is to examine the right to food in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 and SDG 2, in the context of Brunei Darussalam. The paper argues that though there is no express constitutional provision advocating for the right to food as a fundamental right, Brunei Darussalam still pays a lot of attention to dealing with the issue of food security in the country. In examining the right to food in relation to SDG 1 and SDG 2 in Brunei Darussalam, the paper adopts a legal library-based research methodology by referring to primary and secondary legal sources. The paper concludes that the government’s policies and actions have always included safeguarding the welfare of the people of Brunei Darussalam. This involves tackling poverty in all its manifestations. The paper concludes that there are several challenges associated with poverty and its eradication. Being aware of these challenges, the paper recommends that sustainable agriculture be adopted to assist the nation in achieving the SDGs of no poverty and zero hunger. Regional cooperation is yet another powerful instrument for reducing poverty in the country.

Keywords: Brunei Darussalam, fundamental right, food security, poverty, right to food, sustainable development goals, zero hunger.


Introduction

The right to food is a human right. It is a crucial element in ensuring that all individuals can live in dignity, without suffering from hunger, food insecurity, or malnutrition. The right to food is essential for the overall well-being and sustenance of every person. The human right to food is recognised in Article 25, paragraph (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control” (UN General Assembly 1948). In addition, the right to food is also recognised in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which
came into force in 1976. It is, therefore, pertinent to note that it is our collective responsibility to uphold and safeguard this right for the betterment of society, especially in Brunei Darussalam.

Regardless of the recognition of the right to food under the international instruments highlighted above, it is crucial to note that the Constitution of Brunei Darussalam does not contain explicit or implicit provisions related to the right to food. Additionally, Brunei Darussalam is not yet a State party to the ICESCR. Despite Brunei Darussalam not yet being a State party to the ICESCR, it is vital to note that, being part of the international community, the country has formulated policies that are in line with the spirit of Article 25 of the UDHR mentioned above. For example, Brunei Darussalam has placed great importance in caring for the well-being and welfare of its people and has continued to exert efforts towards eradicating poverty in all its forms. To achieve this, the National Council on Social Issues (MKIS), established in 2008, is mandated to address challenges arising from these efforts. The MKIS focuses on 12 social issues, and one of these issues is the eradication of poverty in the country. In addition, Brunei Darussalam is also committed to strengthening the country’s food security, which will ensure its citizens’ access to an adequate supply of safe and nutritious food at affordable prices.

Considering this background, the paper aims to address the right to food in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically focusing on SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger). To address the right to food based on the paper’s main aim or objective, the paper adopts a legal library-based research methodology by referring to primary and secondary legal sources. The paper is divided into six parts, including the introduction. The second part addresses the definition of the right to food. In the context of this paper, it is crucial to understand the meaning of the right to food so that we can have a holistic approach to the discussion from the perspective of Brunei Darussalam. The third part of the paper addresses the right to food under international law. This part of the paper is very important in terms of addressing Brunei Darussalam’s obligations under international law. The fourth part of the paper addresses the right to food in Brunei Darussalam. Again, this part of the discussion is vital in terms of addressing fundamental rights as per the country’s constitution. For example, we need to know the constitutional position on the right to food. Is there an explicit or implicit constitutional provision addressing the right to food in Brunei Darussalam? The fifth part of the paper deals with the implementations of the SDGs, especially SDG 1 and SDG 2, in relation to the right to food discussion from the perspective of Brunei Darussalam. The sixth part of the paper addresses the conclusion and recommendations. This part of the discussion is equally important in terms of providing viable recommendations for the government to achieve the goals of SDG 1 and SDG 2 as Brunei Darussalam moves forward to eradicate poverty and zero hunger in the country as an aspect of citizens right to food.

Definition of the Right to Food

Every person has the right to a dignified life free from hunger. The right to food is a human right. Both international humanitarian law and international human rights treaties safeguard this right. It is crucial to define the term right to food bearing in mind that this right is recognised under the international human rights instruments. The right to food is defined as follows:

“The right to food is the right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensures a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear” (Ziegler et al., 2011, p.15).

Based on the definition of the right to food above, it is vital to note that the right to food includes both the right to solid food and to liquid food (safe water) (Ziegler et al., 2011). In general, the right to food embodies the practical idea that all people should have a decent standard of living, especially enough to eat and drink, both in peacetime and in war (Ziegler et al., 2011). Like all the other economic and social rights, the right to food is about the concern for human dignity that underlies the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.
The paper argues that the right to food requires governments not to behave in a way that makes hunger, food insecurity, or malnutrition worse. It also implies that governments have a duty to shield citizens from acts of third parties that could infringe upon their right to food. Additionally, governments must devote all their resources to the fight against hunger. Ensuring that everyone can feed themselves with dignity is the goal of the right to food, not charity. Furthermore, the paper also submits that the right to food is a binding obligation well established under international law, recognised in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as other instruments. The right to food has also been recognised in numerous national constitutions. Nonetheless, a more thorough discussion of the right to food under international law is provided in the following section of the paper.

The Right to Food under International Law

As highlighted in the introduction, the right to food is well recognised under various international human rights instruments. For example, Article 25, paragraph (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises the right to food by stating that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control” (UN General Assembly 1948).

The right to food is also recognised in Article 11 of the ICESCR, which came into force in 1976. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations actively participated in the drafting of Article 11, and FAO’s Director-General proposed the substance of what became paragraph 2 of that Article, which addresses the negative right to freedom from hunger. Article 11 reads:

“1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realisation of this right, recognising to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.

2. The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognising the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programs, which are needed:

(a) To improve methods of production, conservation, and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilisation of natural resources.

(b) Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need” (UN General Assembly 1966).

In addition, the human right to adequate food is recognised in specific international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Arts. 24(2)(c) and 27(3)), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Art. 12(2)), or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Arts. 25(f) and 28(1)). The right to food is also recognised in regional instruments, such as the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, known as the Protocol of San Salvador (1988), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), and in numerous national constitutions.

Following international recognition of the right to food, the World Food Summit convened in Rome reaffirmed in 1996 “the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the
right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger” (World Food Summit 1996). Responding to pressure from civil society organisations (CSOs), governments requested that the right to food be given more concrete and operational content (World Food Summit 1996, objective 7.4). Two documents were released in the following years to provide a better understanding of the right to food: General Comment No. 12 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; and the FAO Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realisation of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. For example, the General Comment No. 12 helped define the core content of the right to food, and how states could implement the right to food domestically (Sollner, 2007). The core content of the right to food is described by three A’s— accessibility, availability, and adequacy (Christine & Claeys, 2014). While adequacy refers to the quality, nutritional and cultural value of food consumed, accessibility and availability address the means of acquiring food (Christine & Claeys, 2014). Accessibility requires economic and physical access to food to be guaranteed. Economic accessibility means that food must be affordable (Christine & Claeys, 2014). On the other hand, the objective of the Voluntary Guidelines is to provide practical guidance to States in their implementation of the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security to achieve the goals of the World Food Summit Plan of Action. They provide an additional instrument to combat hunger and poverty and to accelerate the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (Christine & Claeys, 2014).

As outlined in General Comment No. 12, it is crucial to understand that the right to food is to be achieved progressively, considering the potentially costly implications of various state obligations, particularly for Southern countries. States have the obligation to fully protect and fulfill this right possible with the available resources. It is imperative for them to take proactive steps towards the full realisation of the right to food and seek international assistance when faced with resource constraints. In addition, states must ensure immediate prohibition of discrimination in access to food and related resources on various grounds such as race, color, sex, age, religion, and others. Measures should be adopted to eliminate discrimination based on these factors.

In addition to the substantial requirements described above, the right to food places several procedural requirements on states. States are required to ensure that people can adequately participate in government decision-making, from policy formulation to lawmaking down to administrative acts. For example, when negotiating trade and investment agreements, states should conduct human rights impact assessments to ensure that the agreements they conclude are consistent with their obligations under international human rights instruments (De Schutter, 2011). The procedural principles at the heart of the right to food— participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment, and rule of law—have been summarised by the FAO with the acronym PANTHER (FAO Right to Food Team 2013).

In a nutshell, following the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the human right to adequate food at the country level. Advances are patent in five areas: the integration of the right to food in constitutions; the adoption of legal and constitutional frameworks; the development of national strategies based on the right to food; the use of the right to food in courts; and the design of institutions charged with ensuring progress towards the realisation of the right to food (De Schutter 2010; De Schutter 2012a; De Schutter 2012b). In addition, country assessments conducted either by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food (called official missions) or by non-governmental organisations have done a lot to demonstrate that the right to food requires attention to be paid to multiple policy areas to be fulfilled. The right to food approach to hunger and food insecurity is increasingly associated with inter-ministerial and cross-sectorial coordination, as well as the setting of clear targets and adequate budget allocations.

Based on the discussion above, it is inevitable to reiterate that the human right to adequate food is of crucial importance for the enjoyment of all other rights. The right to adequate food is indivisibly linked to the inherent dignity of the human person and is indispensable for the fulfillment of other human rights enshrined in the international human rights instruments (Sinha, 2014). Despite advancements in legal
frameworks and institutions, the prevalence of poverty and food insecurity persists globally, with socio-economic and gender disparities remaining prevalent. Individuals and communities continue to face obstacles in accessing essential resources due to actions by both State and non-State entities. To achieve the full realisation of the right to food, structural changes are imperative at both national and international levels. Implementing participatory right to food strategies at the national level, along with ensuring policy coherence across different sectors, can help cater to the specific needs of vulnerable populations in urban and rural settings. Simultaneously, the development of an alternative global governance framework for food and agriculture at the international level is essential to replace existing systems and promote human rights for all. The recent modifications to the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) offer promise in facilitating the engagement of non-state actors in decision-making processes and establishing new international norms.

The Right to Food in Brunei Darussalam

It is crucial to point out that there is no explicit or implicit constitutional provision addressing the right to food in Brunei Darussalam. In other words, from a constitutional law perspective, the right to food is nowhere mentioned, whether explicit or implicit, in Brunei Darussalam’s Constitution. To simply put it, the right to adequate food is not covered by any provisions in Brunei Darussalam’s Constitution. Due to the absence of constitutional provisions, whether express or implied, addressing the right to food, one is left wondering whether such a right is part and parcel of the national laws of Brunei Darussalam. In addition, Brunei Darussalam is not yet a State party to the ICESCR, despite Article 11 of the ICESCR recognizing the right to food. The paper submits that regardless of the absence of constitutional provisions whether explicit or implicit, Brunei Darussalam, through its policies put in place by the Government of His Majesty, has implemented the right to food. For example, through Brunei Darussalam’s National Plan of Action on Poverty Eradication (2020-2024), several strategies are being undertaken to strengthen the social protection eco-system through a Whole-of-Nation Approach, as overseen by the National Council of Social Issues (MKIS). Furthermore, various progress has been made in Brunei Darussalam to achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture (Brunei Darussalam Sustainable Development Goals Annual Report 2021).

The paper contends that as the welfare of the people is at the core of His Majesty’s administration, the lack of explicit or implicit constitutional provisions could not be seen as a danger to the right to food, taking a close look at all the policies implemented by the Government of His Majesty. As the nation works towards eradicating poverty and achieving a zero-hunger policy, the policies that have been put in place to support the right to food regarding the sustainable development goals, particularly SDG 1 and SDG 2, are the subject of this paper’s next section. However, it is equally important to point out that, as part of the right to food discourse in Brunei Darussalam, the topic cannot be given a comprehensive discussion without referring to sustainable agriculture as a way forward to food security. This is because sustainable agriculture is one of the major goals, mainly because rice is one of the Bruneian staple foods and domestic agriculture products in the country are lacking (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Thus, the government decided to take initiatives by implementing policies to improve food security that are in line with the SDGs, mainly SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger).

The Implementation of SDG 1 and SDG 2 in Relation to the Right to Food in Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam remains committed to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, in line with its Wawasan Brunei 2035, to ensure that no one is left behind. During the 70th Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015, Brunei Darussalam joined other Member States in endorsing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As an early achiever of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Brunei Darussalam
thereafter continues to leverage upon this success to achieve the SDGs, notably the goals that are directly aligned with Wawasan Brunei 2035. In this part of the paper, the focus is on SDG 1 and SDG 2 in relation to the right to food discourse from the perspective of Brunei Darussalam.

**Sustainable Development Goal 1**

(SDG 1-End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere)

SDG 1 aims at ending poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030. In other words, eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030 is a pivotal goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG 1 goal targets are: (a) By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $2.15 a day. (b) By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. (c) Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. (d) By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance. (e) By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social, and environmental shocks and disasters. (f) Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions. (g) Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional, and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions.

Looking at the goal targets for SGD 1 above, it is crucial to address the position of Brunei Darussalam in terms of policies which have been put in place to achieve these targets. As mentioned earlier, Brunei Darussalam places great importance in caring for the well-being and welfare of its people and continues to exert efforts towards eradicating poverty in all its forms. To achieve the targets of SDG 1, the National Council on Social Issues (MKIS) was established in 2008 and mandated to address challenges arising from these efforts (2020 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Voluntary National Review of Brunei Darussalam). This Council is chaired by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports (MCYS), and its members include the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MOFE), the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), the Ministry of Education (MOE), and the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Foundation (YSHHB), a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

In addition, the MKIS focuses on 12 social issues, which have been put in place to achieve these targets. As mentioned earlier, Brunei Darussalam places great importance in caring for the well-being and welfare of its people and continues to exert efforts towards eradicating poverty in all its forms. To achieve the targets of SDG 1, the National Council on Social Issues (MKIS) was established in 2008 and mandated to address challenges arising from these efforts (2020 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Voluntary National Review of Brunei Darussalam). This Council is chaired by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports (MCYS), and its members include the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MOFE), the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), the Ministry of Education (MOE), and the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Foundation (YSHHB), a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

In addition, the MKIS focuses on 12 social issues, which are poverty; social security; unemployment; housing for the poor; mentality; immoral behaviour; crime prevention; family institution; persons with different abilities (PWDs); elderly; women; and children. Under the MKIS, there are five Special Committees which review and monitor the implementation of their respective Plans of Action and policies or directives, as set by the Council. It is crucial to note that in addressing the 12 social issues, special attention must be given to the issue of eradicating poverty as it forms part and parcel of the theme of this paper, specifically the right to food. In eradicating or combating poverty, Brunei Darussalam has adopted the vision of the Integrated Plan of Action on Poverty Eradication produced by the Special Committee on Poverty Issues, which is to reduce dependency on welfare assistance towards a self-reliant and resilient community. Such a vision is achieved by empowering greater self-reliance and breaking the cycle of poverty through capacity building for employment and entrepreneurship. In other words, there are various policies in place to eradicate poverty in the country and promoting the right to food as advocated for by the international human rights instruments.
It is without doubt that the Special Committee on Poverty Issues, under the National Council on Social Issues, has continued to increase its efforts in implementing the Poverty Eradication Action Plan to support low-income and vulnerable families and individuals, especially dependent children, and break the cycle of poverty (Brunei Darussalam Voluntary National Review Report 2023). This has been instrumental in alleviating poverty in the nation while empowering the people to avoid falling into the poverty trap, which is guided by the Plan of Action on Poverty Eradication 2020–2024. Steps are also undertaken to further strengthen the overall social protection in Brunei Darussalam through the introduction of the Social Blueprint.

**Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2- End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition and Promote Sustainable Agriculture)**

SDG 2 aims at creating a world free of hunger by 2030. The global issue of hunger and food insecurity has shown an alarming increase because of various factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, climate change, and deepening inequalities. One of the goal targets for SDG 2 is to end hunger by 2030 and ensure access for all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round. It is sufficient to say that, by examining this goal target and the paper's theme—the right to food in relation to sustainable development goals—the paper makes the argument that, by eradicating hunger, a nation fosters an environment in which its citizens have access to the right to sufficient food. Furthermore, nations establish an atmosphere in which the right to sufficient food can be accessed by supporting sustainable agriculture and achieving food security. This would be consistent with the idea that everyone has the right to food, and that if that right is taken away, that person is unable to exercise any of the other rights guaranteed by international human rights instruments.

Looking at the aim of SDG 2 above, it is crucial that the discussion now shifts on how Brunei Darussalam has responded to achieve this aim by 2030. Food security remains an important agenda item and a major concern for Brunei Darussalam, and the COVID-19 pandemic has made it even more crucial. As the country’s food sources are largely dependent on imports, at a rate of around 70 percent in 2022, Brunei Darussalam continues to ensure stable food availability through sustainable agriculture production as well as an adequate supply of safe and nutritious food. It is important to note that the government has implemented various initiatives, strategies, and policies to support food security in the country and achieve self-sufficiency. However, before addressing the policies that the government has initiated in terms of achieving SDG 2, it is important to refer to some scholarly works showing that practicing sustainable agriculture could lead to achieving SDG 1 and SDG 2 goals. For instance, a study has shown that one can utilise smart farming by conducting SWOT analysis to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Southeast Asian countries to achieve SDG 2 of zero hunger (Musa & Basir, 2021). The study suggests stronger government initiatives are required to implement policies that encourage students to learn Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) to increase students’ interest in agriculture, but at the same time, they also stimulate students’s interest in advanced technologies, where healthcare and financial services are two industries that are prone to technological disruptions.

In addition, it is equally important to refer to some important research findings related to the impact of COVID-19 on food security around the globe. Recent studies conducted by Musa & Basir (2021), Elias & Jambor (2021), and Mutyasira (2021) have highlighted the significant challenges faced by people due to the pandemic. The studies emphasise the urgent need for governments to take proactive measures to address the disruptions in food supply chains and production systems. Recommendations include providing support to small farmers, increasing wages for low-income households, and implementing policies to strengthen food distribution networks and agricultural enterprises. These findings underscore the importance of collaborative efforts to ensure food security and achieve SDG 2. The paper submits that this information is crucial for informing policy decisions and initiatives aimed at mitigating the impact
of the pandemic on vulnerable communities and, in the end, promoting the right to adequate food if there is an outbreak of such a pandemic like COVID-19.

Turning now to the policies that Brunei Darussalam has put in place to achieve the aims of SDG 2, it is crucial to note that Brunei Darussalam is committed to further strengthening the food system by accelerating the production growth of the agriculture and fisheries sectors, promoting both domestic and foreign direct investments, and increasing productivity using technology to meet domestic demand and for exports. The Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism (MPRT) strives to increase food supply and strengthen value chain models to achieve self-sufficiency and food security (Brunei Darussalam Voluntary National Review Report 2023). Food availability has been stable, and undernourishment remains low. Key projects have helped to ensure increased production from agriculture, fisheries, and livestock, as well as achieving the country’s self-sufficiency targets for several commodities. Attaining self-sufficiency in rice production remains a national priority, as rice is the staple food for Brunei Darussalam. The development and growth in the agriculture and livestock industries have been further supported through funding to explore key activities such as the use of innovative technology and modern techniques to boost productivity and the opening of new industrial sites (Brunei Darussalam Voluntary National Review Report 2023).

Brunei Darussalam being fully aware of the importance of increasing the yield of rice production in the country, greater efforts continue to be invested in increasing the local production by employing hybrid and high-yielding varieties, adopting modern farming and dual-season cropping practices, encouraging domestic entrepreneurship, including among the youth, as well as introducing commercial-based rice production on a larger scale (Brunei Darussalam Voluntary National Review Report 2023). To further increase the quantity and quality of domestic rice production as well as regulate domestic rice prices for consumers, other initiatives include the Buy-Back Paddy Scheme, Milling Service fees, and the purchase of hybrid rice seeds to be distributed to the local rice farmers (Brunei Darussalam Voluntary National Review Report 2023).

With these initiatives, dependencies on imported goods for agricultural-based food products will be minimised, and local business opportunities in the agricultural sector will also be promoted.

In a nutshell, the paper submits that despite the absence of specific constitutional provisions, Brunei Darussalam is actively aligning its policies with the principles promoted by international human rights instruments such as the ICESCR. The analysis underscores the commendable efforts undertaken by the Government of His Majesty to address critical issues such as poverty eradication and ensuring food security, resonating with the objectives outlined in SDG 1 and SDG 2. By focusing on policy implementation, Brunei Darussalam has been instrumental in advancing the right to food as a fundamental human right for its citizens.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The right to food is an internationally recognised human right. It goes beyond only having a set amount of calories, proteins, and other essential elements. A person has the right to access all the dietary components they require for an active and healthy lifestyle, as well as the means to obtain them. The right calls for the availability, accessibility, and adequacy of food. For example, food must be available from natural resources in one of two ways: either by being produced there, through land cultivation or animal husbandry, or through other means like fishing, hunting, or gathering. Conversely, it implies that food need to be offered for sale at stores and markets. For food to be guaranteed, both physical and economic access must be provided. Food must be reasonably priced to be economically accessible. People should be able to pay for food that would support a healthy diet without sacrificing any other necessities, including rent, medications, or school supplies. Food affordability can be ensured, for instance, by making sure that the social security benefit or minimum wage covers the cost of wholesome food and other necessities. Physical accessibility refers to the idea that food should be available to everyone, even those who may find it difficult to go out and get food, such as the old, children, sick, or
people with impairments. In addition, individuals residing in rural areas, victims of armed conflicts or natural calamities, and prisoners must all be ensured access to food. For example, the infrastructure may be enhanced so that people living in rural places can assure physical access to food by using public transport to reach markets. A food must be adequate if it meets a person's nutritional needs while also considering their age, sex, occupation, living situation, and overall health. For instance, children's food is insufficient if it lacks the minerals required for their mental and physical development.

Although the right to food is an internationally recognised human right and has also been recognised in numerous national constitutions, it is crucial to note that the Brunei Darussalam Constitution has no explicit or implicit constitutional provisions advocating for the right to food. Despite this being the position in the country, the paper argues that the policies implemented by the Government of His Majesty to achieve the targets of SDG 1 and SDG 2 are in line with the spirit of advocating for the right to food in the country. The Government has implemented various policies to eradicate hunger and fight zero-poverty. However, there are still challenges in place to achieve the goals of eradicating or ending poverty as well as fighting hunger in the country. Therefore, being aware of these challenges, the paper recommends the following measures to be adopted in the fight for ending poverty and fighting zero hunger:

First and foremost, more focused policies are needed to guarantee that individuals in need of support—including vulnerable and marginalised groups within society—are taken care of. Additionally, concentrated effort is required in areas like reskilling and upskilling programmes that help healthy welfare beneficiaries into the workforce. Through self-empowerment, this aids in the resolution of mindset-related problems. Furthermore, it's critical to make coordinated efforts to guarantee that Brunei Darussalam’s citizens have fair access to fulfilling jobs and opportunities for skill development.

Second, the government currently offers welfare, healthcare, and educational services at no cost. But there needs to be a change in emphasis, especially regarding the budgetary and financial viability of these current programmes. The efficient provision of benefits and their financial viability, for instance, are still significant concerns in the cases of social assistance and pensions. Future developments, such as an increase in the ageing population, may also compromise the efficacy of government action.

Third, encouraging volunteerism and community service as a means of alleviating poverty is essential to fostering communal cohesiveness. It is imperative that young people in this community receive complete support to enhance their ability to perform community service. To accurately document this effort, a centralised data system or integrated mechanism for tracking and documenting it is required. This will facilitate the study and evaluation of the initiatives led by youngsters.

Fourth, it is acknowledged that regional cooperation is yet another powerful instrument for reducing poverty. The nation has benefited from best practices and lessons learned from neighbouring countries' policies and programmes, particularly those that share similar challenges and experiences in eradicating extreme poverty, through the ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (AMRDPE), the ASEAN Master Plan on Rural Development, and the implementation of the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication 2021–2025, which was adopted at the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits in November 2022.

Fifth, considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the difficulties associated with ensuring food security, more needs to be done to make sure that plans and backup plans are in place in case of unanticipated events like halted food supplies and production. This will help farmers meet the increasing demand if resources become scarce.

Sixth, to boost food production and raise food security, the government must strengthen its policies in the agricultural sector. This can be achieved, in part, by implementing technologies that further lessen the country’s dependency on imported food. While more advanced and sophisticated technologies are being used in Brunei Darussalam’s agricultural sector, traditional and small-scale farmers still require training and hands-on experience to effectively implement these technologies and increase their agricultural productivity. However, to increase local interest in working in the agricultural sector and so
advance food production, the government should also put more emphasis on this topic, i.e., sustainable agriculture. In summary, Brunei Darussalam’s agriculture sector needs to be strengthened to boost food security in the nation.

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