

Forest and food security in West Papua, Indonesia

Recommendations for future research

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Forest Cover of West Papua Province in 2017



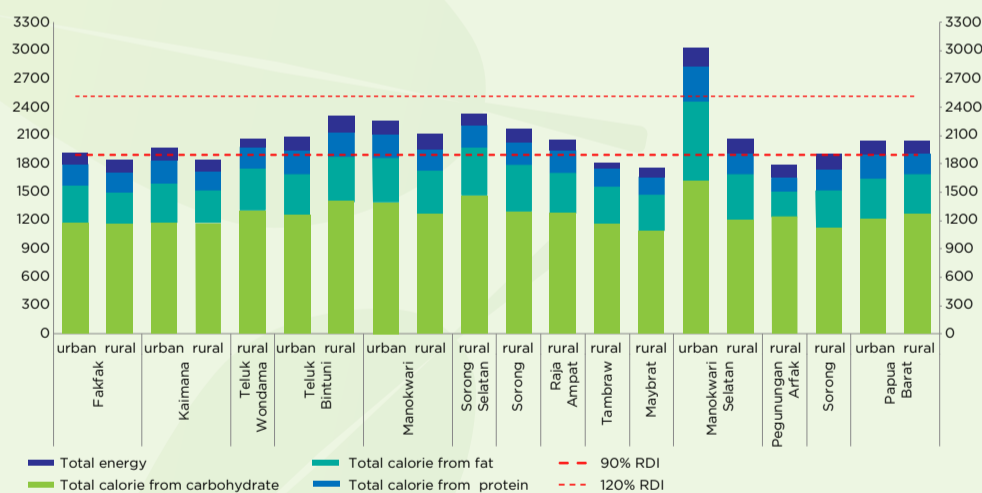
Data Source: Hansen Global Forest Change v1.7



Photos by Folu & Ailumulia

West Papua Province, Indonesia, is located in the largest tropical island in the world, with large areas of forests and the greatest habitat diversity in Southeast Asia. For West Papuans, forests are inseparable from food security and from their identity. The study analyzes food consumption data (Indonesia National Socio-economic survey 2008 and 2017) and results from Focus Group Discussions to further understand these links.

Per Capita Energy Intake for Regencies in West Papua in 2017



“ The availability of rice makes the indigenous people consume rice. They are not gardening, hunting, and gathering anymore”

Quantitative analysis shows that energy and protein consumption at provincial level is adequate. However, analysis at the regency level shows gaps; areas with the most indigenous population are also the most undernourished.

The study also shows that West Papuan diets are transitioning towards more rice, chicken and caloric foods and beverages which are mostly imported, and less sago (a wild palm stem found in forests) and tubers which are their traditional staple foods, and also less wild meats and green leafy vegetables.

Qualitative analysis showed stakeholders were confident that their land can feed local Papuans, but that the increased availability of rice, has changed local food habits and resulted in less reliance on local foods.



“ We have everything. The production of tubers, production of local foods is (enough) to fulfill the populations’ needs”

“ The indigenous people still depend on their forest. Therefore, the thing that should be regulated now is the land-use, how large-scale use of forest can be stopped!”

Stakeholders expressed strong willingness to increase consumption of traditional foods for more resilience of the food systems. But they worry about the process, since diet change has been systemic and widespread.

They believe that their land can provide enough local foods, if people are willing to consume local diets, and the indigenous Papuans who are still relying on forest, should have protected access to forest food.

Recommendations

There is a lot of work to be done to support the West Papuan Provincial government with evidence based policy.

The study recommends the following research in the near future;

- **First**, a participatory study that explores West Papuan aspirations as the base for dietary guidelines, that incorporate culture, nature and local preferences.
- **Second**, a behavioral change study that could support local communities to change their diets towards increased consumption of healthy local foods.
- **Third**, to understand the possible impact of conserving 70% of our forest cover (as planned in the Manokwari declaration) on food security.