

IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY: EXPERIENCE FROM SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how household food security is affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, using examples from Sarawak, Malaysia. Food security in Sarawak was affected by the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) that was introduced to curb the spread of the Covid-19 disease. The MCO, and the subsequent phases that followed, imposed a varying degree of restrictions on movements in the country. This measure had serious repercussions on food security as it affects the distribution of food as well as how people access food. This raises questions of how secure households are in terms of food security, how do they ensure food security for their households and what are their greatest challenge in ensuring food security. This paper seeks to address those questions by examining the experiences and perceptions on food security during the pandemic based on the responses of 235 respondents. Findings indicated that most households are food secure i.e. having similar access to food as prior to MCO and have not skipped any meals. In order to achieve this, households had to resort to various measures including switching their food sources, shopping online, and going without their preferred food. Significantly, the finding shows that food security means more than just having enough food but should also incorporate elements of variety, types and quantity of food. It also shows that the greatest challenge in achieving and maintaining household food security lies in the way household cope with the changes brought, both directly and indirectly, by the pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, Food Security, Food Accessibility, Food Availability, Sarawak.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) as a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020). Many countries then declared generalised lockdowns and quarantines as a measure to combat the spread of the disease. A week after the WHO's

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