



Potential and Challenges of Developing Hydroponic Rice Cultivation as Vertical Farming in Major Indonesian Cities

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Received: 20th November 2024

Accepted: 20th December 2024

Published: 21th January 2025



Open Access

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Abstract : This paper aims to examine the potential and challenges of developing hydroponic rice cultivation as a vertical farming solution in major Indonesian cities. Through analysis of recent literature, this study identifies significant opportunities in terms of land and water use efficiency, as well as increased productivity. However, challenges such as high investment costs and the need for technology adaptation need to be addressed. Effective implementation requires policy support, further research, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Rapid population growth and urbanization in Indonesia's major cities pose serious challenges to food security. Hydroponic rice cultivation as a form of vertical farming emerges as a potential solution to increase rice production in urban areas with limited land. This research examines the potential and challenges of developing this technology in Indonesia. The methods used are literature review and secondary data analysis. Results show that hydroponic rice cultivation has the potential to improve the efficiency of land and water use, as well as reduce pesticide use. However, the main challenges include high initial investment costs, the need for specific technical knowledge, and adaptation of rice varieties for hydroponic systems. Policy support, infrastructure investment, and further research are needed to optimize this technology as an urban food security solution in Indonesia.

Keywords: Urban Food Security, Land Efficiency, Increased Land Productivity, Urban Areas

Introduction

Indonesia, as the fourth most populous country in the world, faces increasingly complex challenges in maintaining its food security, especially in urban areas. Rapid urbanization has significantly altered the country's demographic and economic landscape. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (2021), the urbanization rate in Indonesia reached 56.7% in 2020, and this figure is projected to continue increasing in the coming decade. This phenomenon not only results in increased food demand in major cities but also causes a reduction in productive agricultural land around urban areas due to land conversion for settlements and infrastructure.

Rice, as the main staple food for the majority of Indonesia's population, plays a crucial role in maintaining national food security. The Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS) (2023) reported that national rice production reached 54.46 million tons of dry unhusked rice (GKG), with a harvested area of about 10.45 million hectares and productivity of about 5.21 tons per hectare. However, challenges in rice production continue to increase,

especially around urban areas. Factors such as agricultural land conversion, soil quality degradation, limited water resources, and the impact of climate change have threatened the stability of conventional rice production.

In this context, innovation in rice cultivation methods becomes crucial to ensure rice availability in the future, particularly in urban areas. One approach that has gained attention is hydroponic rice cultivation as a form of vertical farming. This technology offers the potential to optimize the use of limited land in Indonesia's major cities while addressing some of the constraints faced by conventional farming methods.

The hydroponic system, which is essentially a method of cultivation without using soil, has shown success in cultivating various types of plants, especially vegetables and fruits. Research by Resh (2013) demonstrated significant water use efficiency in hydroponic systems, with savings of up to 70-90% compared to conventional farming methods. When combined with the concept of vertical farming, this technology allows for optimal space utilization, which is highly relevant to urban contexts with limited land.

Although hydroponics is more commonly used for horticultural crops, some studies have shown its potential in rice cultivation. Setiaji et al. (2018) reported successful rice cultivation using the NFT (Nutrient Film Technique) hydroponic system in Indonesia, with yields comparable to conventional methods. These findings open up new opportunities to develop more efficient rice production systems that are adaptive to urban challenges.

However, the large-scale application of this technology in Indonesian cities is not without various challenges. Aspects such as high initial investment costs, intensive energy requirements, and the need for adaptation of specific rice varieties for hydroponic systems become critical issues that need to be addressed. Moreover, socio-economic factors such as public acceptance, technological readiness, and regulatory frameworks also play important roles in the successful implementation of this technology.

Given the urgency to ensure food security in urban areas and the potential offered by vertical hydroponic technology, it is important to conduct a comprehensive study on the opportunities and challenges of developing hydroponic rice cultivation in major Indonesian cities. This study aims to analyze the potential of this technology in the specific context of Indonesia, identify major obstacles, and formulate strategies for effective implementation. By understanding these potentials and challenges, it is expected to provide a scientific foundation for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in developing innovative solutions for urban food security in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study can also contribute to the global discussion on urban agriculture and the role of technology in addressing food challenges in an era of rapid urbanization.

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Methods

This research uses a systematic literature review approach. Literature searches were conducted on scientific databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Science Direct, using keywords such as "hydroponic rice", "vertical farming", "urban farming Indonesia", and "urban food security". Inclusion criteria include peer-reviewed articles, technical reports, and case studies published between 2010 and 2024 to ensure relevance and currency of data. A total of 57 relevant articles were analyzed to identify main themes related to the potential and challenges of hydroponic rice cultivation in Indonesia.

Result and Discussion

Potential for Development of Hydroponic Rice Cultivation

Hydroponic rice cultivation is an agricultural innovation that offers great potential to address food security challenges in the era of urbanization. This method allows rice cultivation without using soil, but instead utilizes nutrient solutions rich in essential elements for plant growth. One of the main potentials of hydroponic rice cultivation is land use efficiency. In Indonesia's major cities, where agricultural land is increasingly limited, this system allows for vertical rice production, optimally utilizing available space. Empty buildings, rooftops, even walls can be used for hydroponic rice cultivation, creating "vertical rice fields" in the middle of the city (Lakhiar, et al, 2018).

Water use efficiency is also an advantage of the hydroponic system. Compared to conventional rice planting methods that require water inundation, hydroponics can save water usage by up to 90% (Despommier, 2013). Water used in this system can be recycled, reducing waste and increasing sustainability. In terms of productivity, hydroponic rice cultivation has the potential to yield higher harvests per unit area compared to conventional methods. Better control over nutrients and conditions Environmental control allows for optimization of plant growth, which can result in up to twice the yield compared to traditional methods (Kalantari, et al, 2018).

Reduction in pesticide use is also an important potential. The closed hydroponic system reduces the risk of pest and disease attacks, thus reducing the need for chemical pesticides. This is not only beneficial from an environmental perspective but also produces

rice that is healthier and safer for consumption. Additionally, hydroponic rice cultivation opens up opportunities for the development of new rice varieties specifically adapted to this system. This may include varieties with shorter roots, faster growth, or other characteristics optimal for hydroponic conditions (Shama, et al, 2018).

From an economic perspective, the development of hydroponic rice cultivation can create new job opportunities in the urban agriculture sector. This opens up opportunities for younger generations to engage in modern agriculture, combining technology and innovation in food production. Finally, hydroponic rice cultivation aligns with the concept of smart cities and sustainable agriculture. Integration of technologies such as sensors, automation, and data analysis can further increase the efficiency and productivity of this system, making it a promising solution for future food security in major Indonesian cities (Al-Kodmany, et al, 2018).

Land Use Efficiency

The hydroponic rice cultivation system is a promising innovation in improving land use efficiency. This method allows rice production in limited areas, even in urban areas with limited conventional agricultural land. The use of hydroponic systems in rice cultivation can increase land efficiency up to 10 times compared to conventional methods (Lee, et al., 2020). This is possible because rice plants can be planted at higher densities and in vertical arrangements, optimally utilizing space.

A study conducted by Nguyen, et al. (2022) showed that hydroponic rice production can yield up to 50% more grains per square meter compared to traditional paddy methods. This increase is due to better control of nutrients, temperature, and other growth conditions. Moreover, hydroponic systems allow year-round rice cultivation, independent of conventional planting seasons. This can increase harvest index and overall land use efficiency (Kim et al., 2021). However, it should be noted that implementing a hydroponic system for rice cultivation requires a higher initial investment compared to conventional methods. Nevertheless, in the long term, high land use efficiency can compensate for these initial costs, especially in areas with limited land (Wang, et al., 2023). A study by Laksono and Sugiono (2017) showed that vertical hydroponic systems can increase land use efficiency by up to 80% compared to conventional methods. This is highly relevant for major cities in Indonesia such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan, where land availability is very limited (Laksono, et al, 2017).

Optimization of Water Use

Hydroponic rice cultivation systems offer great potential in optimizing water use, which is one of the main challenges in conventional agriculture, especially in areas with limited water resources. Research by Putra et al. (2020) found that hydroponic rice cultivation can save water use by up to 70% compared to traditional paddy methods. This becomes crucial considering that many major cities in Indonesia face water stress.

Research shows that hydroponic systems can save water use by up to 70-90% compared to conventional rice planting methods (Zhang et al., 2021). This efficiency is achieved through a closed circulation system that allows for water and nutrient reuse, as

well as reducing water loss due to evaporation and percolation common in traditional rice fields.

Modern hydroponic techniques such as Nutrient Film Technique (NFT) and Deep Flow Technique (DFT) have proven to be highly effective in optimizing water use for rice cultivation. A study conducted by Lim and Cho (2022) demonstrated that the NFT system can produce rice using only 10% of the water required in conventional methods, while maintaining or even increasing yields. Research shows that hydroponic systems can save water use by up to 70-90% compared to conventional rice planting methods (Zhang et al., 2021). This efficiency is achieved through a closed circulation system that allows for water and nutrient reuse, as well as reducing water loss due to evaporation and percolation common in traditional rice fields. Furthermore, the use of sensors and automation technology in hydroponic systems allows for more precise control of water and nutrient delivery. This not only optimizes water use but also increases nutrient efficiency and plant growth (Park, et al., 2023).

However, challenges in optimizing water use in hydroponic rice systems include energy requirements for water circulation and water quality maintenance. Nevertheless, the integration of renewable energy technologies and advanced filtration systems can address these issues, as shown in a study by Rodriguez, et al. (2024). Optimization of water use through hydroponic systems not only improves rice production efficiency but also contributes to environmental sustainability by reducing pressure on increasingly scarce water resources.

Increased Productivity

Widodo et al. (2019) reported yield increases of up to 25% in hydroponically cultivated rice compared to conventional methods, mainly due to better environmental control. Hydroponic rice cultivation has shown significant potential in increasing productivity compared to conventional methods. This increase is due to several key factors inherent in hydroponic systems.

First, precise control of plant nutrients allows for optimization of rice growth and development. Research conducted by Yamada et al. (2022) shows that proper adjustment of nutrient composition can increase yields by up to 30% compared to conventional methods. Hydroponic systems allow for more efficient nutrient absorption by plant roots, reducing waste and increasing the effectiveness of fertilizer use.

Second, better environmental control in hydroponic systems contributes to increased productivity. A study by Chen et al. (2023) demonstrated that optimal temperature, humidity, and light intensity settings in closed hydroponic systems can accelerate the rice growth cycle by up to 20%, allowing for more harvest cycles per year. Additionally, hydroponic systems allow for planting at higher densities. Research conducted by Kim and Park (2021) shows that using a vertical hydroponic system, productivity per square meter can be increased up to 5 times compared to conventional planting methods.

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Challenges in Developing Hydroponic Rice Cultivation

- **High Initial Investment Costs** One of the main challenges in developing and implementing hydroponic rice cultivation systems is the relatively high initial investment cost. Although this method promises increased productivity and resource use efficiency in the long term, the initial capital required often becomes a barrier for many farmers and investors. Hydroponic systems for rice cultivation require special infrastructure that is far more complex compared to conventional farming methods. According to a study conducted by Rahman et al. (2022), the initial setup cost for a commercial-scale rice hydroponic system can be 3-5 times higher compared to land preparation for traditional rice fields. The main components contributing to this high cost include advanced irrigation systems, water pumps, nutrient tanks, filtration systems, and support structures for plants. In addition, environmental control technology needed to optimize rice growth in hydroponic systems also requires significant investment. Li and Zhang (2023) reported that devices such as humidity sensors, pH controllers, LED lighting systems, and integrated management software can account for up to 40% of the total initial investment cost. Another factor contributing to the high initial cost is the need for skilled labor. Hydroponic rice systems require operators with higher technical knowledge compared to conventional agriculture. Training and recruiting competent personnel add to the financial burden in the early stages of the project (Nguyen et al., 2024). However, it is important to note that the long-term operational costs of hydroponic rice systems tend to be lower compared to conventional methods. Research conducted by Tanaka and Ono (2021) shows that after a period of 3-5 years, the efficiency of water and nutrient use, as well as increased productivity, can compensate for the high initial investment costs. To address this challenge, several approaches have been proposed. For example, Chen et al. (2024)

suggest public-private partnership models to distribute the initial investment burden. Meanwhile, Patel and Singh (2023) advocate the development of more affordable modular hydroponic systems to allow gradual adoption by small farmers. Although high initial investment costs remain a significant challenge, the long-term potential of hydroponic rice cultivation in improving food security and resource use efficiency continues to drive innovation and research in this field.

- **Energy Requirements** A study conducted by Rahman et al. (2022) revealed that vertical hydroponic systems require significant energy input, especially for lighting and nutrient circulation. This can be a challenge in Indonesian cities that often experience power outages. One of the significant challenges in developing and implementing hydroponic rice cultivation systems is the high energy requirement. Unlike conventional farming methods that largely rely on solar energy and gravity, hydroponic systems require substantial energy input to run various system components. According to a study conducted by Kim et al. (2022), commercial-scale hydroponic rice systems can consume up to 40% more energy compared to conventional planting methods. This energy consumption mainly comes from the operation of pumps for water and nutrient circulation, artificial lighting systems, and environmental control equipment such as temperature and humidity regulators. Furthermore, a study conducted by Pramudya and Wijaya (2021) revealed that vertical hydroponic systems require significant energy input, especially for lighting and nutrient circulation. This can be a challenge in Indonesian cities that often experience power outages. Water and nutrient circulation is a major component that requires energy in hydroponic systems. Research conducted by Zhang and Li (2023) shows that circulation pumps can account for up to 30% of the total energy consumption of the system. Pump efficiency and optimal distribution system design become key in reducing this energy requirement. Artificial lighting, especially in indoor or vertical hydroponic systems, is also a significant energy consumer. According to Nguyen et al. (2024), the use of LED lights to meet the photosynthesis needs of rice plants can account for up to 45% of the total energy consumption of the system. Although LED technology has improved energy efficiency, the need for intensive and continuous lighting remains a challenge. In addition, precise environmental control in hydroponic systems requires continuous operation of equipment such as air conditioners, dehumidifiers, and fans. A study by Wang et al. (2023) estimates that environmental control equipment can consume 20-25% of the total energy used in hydroponic rice systems. To address this challenge, several approaches have been proposed. Integration of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels and wind turbines, is becoming an increasingly popular solution. Research conducted by Rodriguez and Garcia (2024) shows that the implementation of hybrid energy systems can reduce dependence on the electricity grid by up to 60% in large-scale hydroponic operations (Pramudya and Wijaya, 2020). System design optimization is also becoming a focus to reduce energy requirements. For example, Patel et al. (2024) developed a rice hydroponic system that utilizes gravity for water circulation, reducing energy requirements for pumping by up to 40%. Although high energy requirements remain a challenge, continuous innovation in energy efficiency technology and renewable energy

integration continues to drive the development of more sustainable and energy-efficient hydroponic rice systems.

- Rice Variety Adaptation Research by Utami et al. (2023) shows that not all rice varieties are suitable for hydroponic cultivation. Further research is needed to develop or adapt rice varieties suitable for this system. Rice Variety Adaptation in the context of Hydroponic Rice Cultivation faces several unique challenges that require special approaches in variety development and selection. The factors related to the adaptation of rice varieties cultivated hydroponically are as follows:
 - ✓ Root System: Rice variety adaptation: Development of rice varieties suitable for hydroponic systems is needed. Adaptation of the rice root system is one of the main challenges in implementing vertical hydroponic rice cultivation. Rice plants have naturally adapted to waterlogged environments, with a root system that has aerenchyma to facilitate gas exchange in anaerobic conditions (Colmer, 2003). However, in hydroponic systems, rice roots must adapt to very different conditions. Research by He et al. (2020) shows that hydroponically grown rice experiences significant changes in its root morphology and physiology. Hydroponic rice roots tend to be longer, more branched, and have more root hairs compared to conventional paddy rice. These changes allow for more efficient nutrient absorption in hydroponic solutions. Nevertheless, the main challenge lies in the selection and development of rice varieties that can adapt well to hydroponic systems. According to a study conducted by Fragoso et al. (2021), some rice varieties show higher phenotypic plasticity and are able to adapt better to hydroponic systems. They found that varieties with more flexible root systems and responsive to environmental changes have higher yield potential in hydroponic systems. Therefore, targeted plant breeding programs to develop special hydroponic rice varieties become very important. The main focus should be given to characteristics such as nutrient use efficiency, tolerance to oxidative stress, and optimal root architecture for vertical hydroponic systems.
 - ✓ Water Use Efficiency: Water conservation: Hydroponic systems show remarkable water use efficiency. Research by Resh (2013) demonstrates water savings of up to 70-90% compared to conventional farming methods. In the context of rice cultivation, this can result in significant water savings compared to traditional paddy methods (Putraa, et al, 2020). The adaptation of rice root systems in vertical hydroponic cultivation plays a key role in improving water use efficiency. According to a study conducted by Yang et al. (2020), hydroponically grown rice undergoes significant modifications in its root architecture, which directly impacts water and nutrient absorption efficiency. They found that hydroponic rice roots have a higher root hair density and more even distribution, allowing for more efficient water absorption from the nutrient solution. Furthermore, research by Nguyen et al. (2021) revealed that hydroponically grown rice shows increased expression of genes related to water transport, such as aquaporins. This increase contributes to higher water use efficiency at the cellular level. They also observed that hydroponic rice plants have better

stomatal control, which reduces water loss through excessive transpiration. A comparative study conducted by Li et al. (2019) compared water use efficiency between conventional paddy rice and hydroponic rice. They found that hydroponic rice has up to 3-4 times higher water use efficiency. This is largely due to the more efficient root system in absorbing water and the plant's ability to better regulate its water needs in a controlled environment. Nevertheless, Zhang et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of optimizing nutrient solution composition and irrigation cycles in hydroponic systems to maximize water use efficiency. They found that adjusting irrigation cycles based on plant growth stages can further improve water use efficiency without sacrificing crop yields.

- ✓ **Harvest Quality:** Vertical hydroponic rice cultivation is a promising innovation in addressing the challenges of land limitations and climate change. This system enables efficient and sustainable rice production in urban environments or areas with limited land. However, the success of this system heavily depends on the adaptation of appropriate rice varieties for hydroponic conditions. Recent research shows that rice varieties adapted for vertical hydroponic systems have special characteristics that support optimal growth and high harvest quality. For example, a study by Chen et al. (2020) revealed that rice varieties with more branched and dense root systems have higher nutrient absorption efficiency in hydroponic systems, which positively correlates with yield increases of up to 20%. Moreover, genetic adaptation to increase tolerance to abiotic stress has also become a main focus. Zhao et al. (2021) reported the development of rice varieties that show increased tolerance to temperature fluctuations in closed systems, resulting in better yield stability. These varieties showed lower yield reductions (only 5-10%) compared to conventional varieties (15-25%) when experiencing temperature stress. In terms of harvest quality, the adaptation of rice varieties for hydroponic systems has shown promising results:
- ✓ **Increased nutrient content:** Research by Li et al. (2022) and Suharso (2022) demonstrated that rice varieties adapted for vertical hydroponic systems have 15% higher protein content and up to 25% increase in essential mineral content such as zinc and iron compared to the same varieties grown conventionally.
- ✓ **Improved milling quality:** A study conducted by Yamamoto et al. (2023) found that rice from varieties adapted for hydroponic systems has a higher percentage of head rice (reaching 85%) compared to conventional methods (70-75%), indicating improved milling quality.
- ✓ **Optimization of aroma profile:** Recent research by Park et al. (2024) successfully developed aromatic rice varieties that adapt well in vertical hydroponic systems, producing rice with a stronger and more stable aroma profile, as measured through analysis of the compound 2-acetyl-1-pyrroline (2AP).

Although these results are very promising, challenges remain in widely adopting vertical hydroponic rice cultivation systems. High initial costs and the need for specialized skills in system management are still major obstacles. However, with ongoing research and technological developments, it is expected that the adaptation of rice varieties for this

system will continue to increase, paving the way for more efficient and sustainable high-quality rice production in the future.

Implementation Strategy

Government Policy and Support Rapid urbanization in Indonesia has prompted the government to adopt innovative approaches to ensure food security and urban environmental sustainability. Vertical cultivation of crops has emerged as a potential solution to optimize food production in limited urban land. The following is a narrative description of government policies and support related to the implementation of vertical farming in urban areas:

National Policy Framework

The Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture has incorporated the concept of urban farming, including vertical farming, into the national food security strategy. This aligns with the global agenda for sustainable urban development (Orsini et al., 2013). This policy aims to increase local food availability and reduce dependence on imports. Implementation at the Regional Level: Several major cities in Indonesia have adopted policies that support vertical farming. For example, Jakarta has issued regulations that encourage the development of urban agriculture, including vertical farming, as part of the city's food security and greening strategy (Suryadi, 2020).

Education and Training Programs

The government, through the Department of Agriculture and related institutions, organizes training programs on vertical farming techniques. This is in line with findings that education and community empowerment are key to the success of urban agriculture (Tornaghi, 2014, Putra, et al, 2020 and Nugraha, et al, 2020)

Incentives and Material Support

Some local governments provide assistance in the form of seeds, growing media, and vertical farming equipment. This approach has proven effective in encouraging community participation in urban agriculture programs (Opitz et al., 2016).

Integration with Urban Planning

Vertical farming is beginning to be integrated into urban spatial planning. This is in line with the concept of "edible green infrastructure" which integrates food production into the urban landscape (Russo et al., 2017).

Public-Private Partnerships

The government encourages cooperation with the private sector to implement vertical farming on a larger scale. This approach has proven successful in several cities around the world (Specht et al., 2014).

Research and Development

Government research institutions are directed to conduct research on vertical farming technologies suitable for urban conditions in Indonesia. This is important given the need to adapt technology to local contexts (Kalantari et al., 2018). Emission Reduction Policy: Vertical farming is included as one of the strategies in the city's carbon emission reduction

program. Studies show that urban agriculture can contribute to climate change mitigation (Lin et al., 2015). Challenges in implementing this policy include inter-agency coordination, limited budget allocation, and lack of trained human resources. However, with regular evaluation and policy refinement, it is hoped that vertical farming can contribute significantly to food security and urban sustainability in Indonesia.

Conclusion

Hydroponic rice cultivation as vertical farming has significant potential to enhance food security in Indonesia's major cities. Its main advantages include efficient use of land and water, as well as increased productivity. However, challenges such as high investment costs, energy requirements, and adaptation of rice varieties need to be addressed. To optimize this potential, the following are necessary:

1. Supportive government policies, including financial incentives.
2. Investment in research and development for rice variety adaptation and system optimization.
3. Comprehensive training programs to improve the skills of urban farmers.
4. Public-private partnerships to address investment challenges.

Further research is needed to assess the long-term economic viability and environmental impact of large-scale implementation of hydroponic rice cultivation in urban Indonesia.

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