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From Forests to Food Security: The Role of Green Waqf in Promoting Food Sovereignty-Evidence from Bogor Waqf Forest, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study examines its potential as an Islamic social finance instrument to support food sovereignty in Indonesia. By integrating waqf into sustainable land management, it offers a value-based approach that promotes ecological preservation, equitable resource access, and community empowerment. While waqf has historically supported public welfare, its application in food systems remains underexplored, and existing green waqf research is often conceptual. Using a qualitative case study of a waqf forest in Bogor, this study draws on in-depth interviews and Creswell's thematic analysis. Findings show green waqf enables access to productive land, supports local food diversity, and promotes non-commercial food sharing, though challenges persist such as unclear land legality, weak nazhir capacity, and poor institutional coordination.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji potensinya sebagai instrumen keuangan sosial Islam dalam mendukung kedaulatan pangan di Indonesia. Dengan mengintegrasikan wakaf ke dalam pengelolaan lahan berkelanjutan, green waqf menawarkan pendekatan berbasis nilai yang mendorong pelestarian ekologi, akses sumber daya yang berkeadilan, serta pemberdayaan masyarakat. Meskipun wakaf secara historis telah berperan dalam mendukung kesejahteraan publik, penerapannya dalam sistem pangan masih jarang dieksplorasi, dan penelitian mengenai green waqf yang ada umumnya masih bersifat konseptual. Menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif pada hutan wakaf di Bogor, penelitian ini didasarkan pada wawancara mendalam dan analisis tematik Creswell. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa green waqf mampu menyediakan akses terhadap lahan produktif, mendukung keberagaman pangan lokal, serta mendorong praktik berbagi pangan nonkomersial. Namun demikian, masih

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	terdapat berbagai tantangan, seperti ketidakjelasan legalitas lahan, lemahnya kapasitas nazhir, dan kurangnya koordinasi kelembagaan.
Keywords: Islamic Endowment; Sustainable Land Governance; Food Equity; Agroforestry; Social Finance Innovation.	***Kata Kunci*:** Wakaf Islam; Tata Kelola Lahan Berkelanjutan; Keadilan Pangan; Agroforestri; Inovasi Keuangan Sosial.

A. Introduction

Indonesia has enormous potential for natural resources, especially in the fields of agriculture and forestry. One of the nations with the greatest forest cover in the world is Indonesia, which has more than 120 million hectares of tropical forest. According to Rusydiana et al. (Rusydiana, Sukmana, and Laila 2023), these woods are essential for preserving the equilibrium of ecosystems, controlling water systems, absorbing carbon emissions, and acting as the main source of support for nearby communities. At the same time, Indonesia's tropical environment and abundant biodiversity make it possible to grow a variety of strategic food commodities, giving the country's agricultural industry tremendous potential (Restiyani et al., 2023). These two sectors are structurally connected in order to protect economic and ecological sustainability.

But in recent decades, it has become clear that there are growing demands on agricultural land and forests. Massive deforestation has been caused by land-use change, illicit deforestation, the expansion of huge plantations, and the construction of environmentally hazardous infrastructure. Deforestation is one of the biggest dangers to environmental sustainability and the country's food supply, as seen by the substantial annual forest loss that Indonesia endures (Irfany et al., 2023). Weak legislative execution exacerbates this problem. Despite the enactment of Law No. 41/1999 on Forestry and its derivatives, forest degradation has not been successfully reduced by their implementation. Unresolved structural issues include uneven resource

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management, inadequate supervision, and tensions between environmental preservation and commercial exploitation.

One impact of environmental damage and deforestation is the disruption of community food security and sovereignty. Food sovereignty is not only related to food availability, but also concerns the rights of communities to manage land independently, maintain local production, and have sustainable access to agrarian resources (Ningsih, 2021). When communities lose access to land, forests, and water, their ability to independently meet their food needs is also eroded. In this context, dependence on food imports and corporate domination of the distribution system further weaken the position of small communities in the national food chain (Restiyani et al., 2023).

Addressing today's multifaceted challenges requires the adoption of new strategies rooted in social and religious values embedded within local cultural contexts, rather than relying solely on market mechanisms or state intervention. One such value-laden Islamic concept is *waqf*, an Islamic social finance instrument aimed at preserving the long-term value of assets for the collective benefit. Waqf properties are dedicated for perpetual public use and are considered inalienable, meaning they cannot be transferred, sold, or inherited. Due to its enduring nature, waqf serves as a vital mechanism for safeguarding land and natural resources from short-term exploitation, while simultaneously fostering long-term social development (Ningsih, 2021).

In recent years, the idea of *green waqf* has gained traction. This refers to the utilization and stewardship of waqf assets particularly land, agricultural fields, and forested areas for the dual purposes of environmental protection and agricultural enhancement. As Gumansari et al.(Gumansari, Hannase, and Nurwahidin 2023) explain, this concept promotes waqf management guided by principles of social equity, ecological sustainability, and community empowerment. Green waqf holds the potential to mitigate pressing issues such as deforestation, land degradation, and unequal access to agrarian resources. By designating forests or lands as waqf, communities can gain

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legal and social protections over shared resources, while also utilizing them for sustainable food production (Irfany et al., 2023).

This conceptual development presents a significant research opportunity. To date, few academic inquiries have systematically integrated Islamic finance, environmental sustainability, and local food systems through the lens of green waqf. Amid ongoing ecological crises and food insecurity, there is a growing need for governance frameworks that are inclusive, sustainable, and rooted in ethical values. Green waqf has the potential not only to function as an asset preservation tool but also to act as a transformative mechanism for establishing equitable and resilient food systems (Ningsih, 2021).

This study introduces a novel intersection between Islamic social finance and food sovereignty by empirically examining the role of green waqf in sustainable land management and local food systems. The majority of waqf research still concentrate on the general producing sectors, such as healthcare or education. However, the research on green waqf frequently stays abstract, with little to no connection to food and ecological resilience (Hardiansyah et al., 2024; Hatimah et al., 2023). However, structural or technocratic approaches continue to dominate the literature on food sovereignty, and religiously based social finance tools are rarely included as part of the solution (Daigle, 2019; Schiavoni, 2017; Wittman & Blesh, 2017).

Accordingly, this research aims to examine the potential of green waqf as a strategic mechanism for strengthening local food systems and promoting food sovereignty. Using qualitative research methode with Creswell data analysis It intends to fill a critical gap in the literature by proposing a value-driven Islamic framework and offering practical insights for waqf asset management within environmental and agricultural contexts. In doing so, green waqf may be repositioned not only as a component of Islamic social finance but also as a foundational element of sustainable development and ecological justice.

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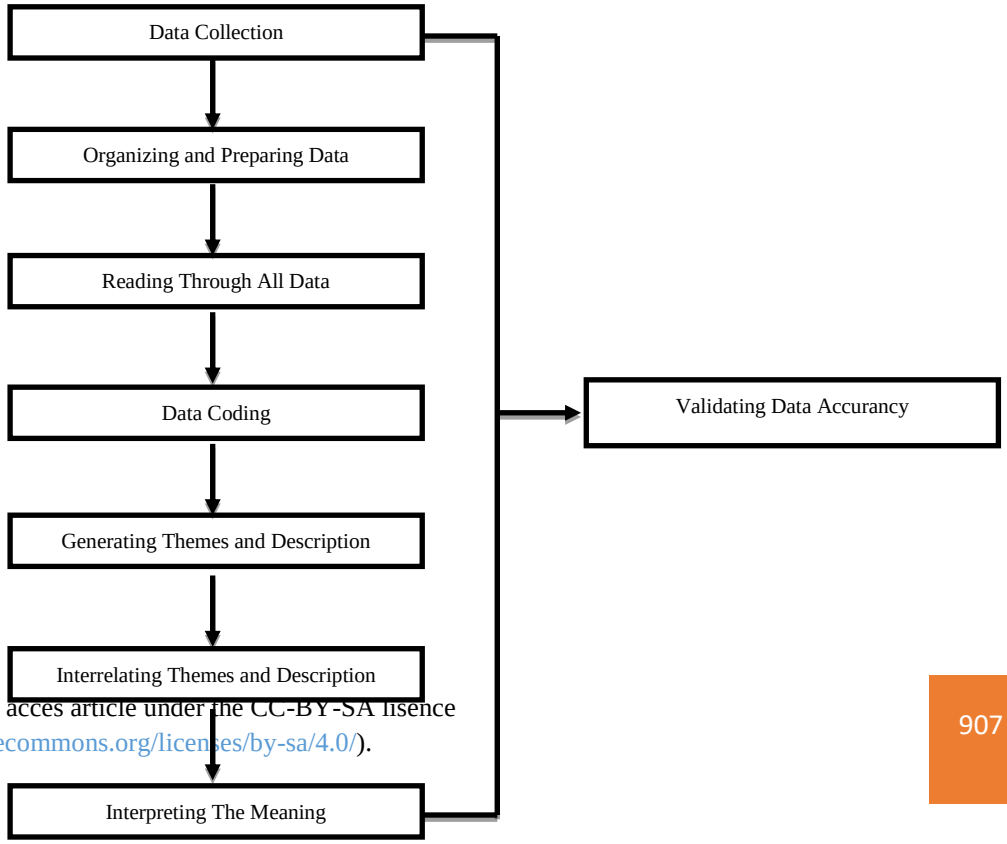
B. Research Method

Creswell's data analysis model serves as the methodological basis for this qualitative investigation. This strategy was adopted in order to thoroughly investigate and comprehend the connection between the idea of green waqf and the quest for food sovereignty. In order to identify important themes and contextual insights that reflect the social, ecological, and economic dynamics in the management of environmentally based waqf assets, the research was carried out methodically under the guidance of this framework. This included the collection, processing, and interpretation of data.

Creswell's qualitative analytical framework was chosen because of its adaptability and fit for exploratory research that calls for contextual and interpretive methods. This approach makes it possible to combine many kinds of data like document analysis, field observations, and in-depth interviews into a logical and methodical analytical procedure. Thus, the goal of this research is to give a thorough grasp of how green waqf might serve as a tactical tool to support a local food system that is sustainable (Creswell, 2007).

Figure 1: Cresswell's Analytic Concept



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The data analysis process in this study followed a structured sequence as designed by Creswell, with contextual adjustments tailored to the management of green waqf and its relevance to food sovereignty. The stages are outlined as follows:

1) Data Preparation

Primary data were obtained through interviews with waqf forest managers, while secondary data were collected from policy documents, academic publications, and institutional reports discussing productive waqf, sustainable land management, and food security in Indonesia. Additional references included literature on Islamic social finance and national food policy.

2) Manual Coding

Manual coding was conducted on interview transcripts and written documents, focusing on the following issues: (a) the objectives of green waqf management, (b) the forms and strategies of waqf asset utilization, (c) the relationship between green waqf and food security, and (d) the ecological and social impacts of waqf practices.

3) Data Organization

Coded data were systematically organized to reveal the interconnections between green waqf principles and strategies for achieving food sovereignty.

4) Data Reduction

Relevant information was selected while redundant or unrelated data were excluded to ensure analytical efficiency and thematic coherence with the research objectives.

5) Thematic Grouping of Coded Data

The coded data were then organized into four major thematic categories: (1) the contribution of green waqf to local food security, (2) the role of community

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participation in managing green waqf assets, and (3) the effectiveness of management models in supporting the goals of food sovereignty.

6) Ensuring Diverse Perspectives

Multiple data sources and respondent viewpoints were cross-checked to ensure a diversity of perspectives and to minimize interpretive bias. Triangulation was performed through comparative analysis of interviews, documents, and field observations.

7) Hierarchical Organization of Codes

Codes were structured from broad thematic categories to more specific subthemes to enable deeper exploration. The hierarchical structure in this study is outlined as follows:

Table 1: Thematic Categories

How green waqf supports food sovereignty ?	Objectives and Underlying Principles of Green Waqf	Sustainability values in waqf
		Asset and environmental protection
		Socio-religious motives of waqf institutions
		The role of Islamic values in natural resource governance
	Strategies and Operational Practices in Waqf Management	Types of land or forest allocated for waqf
		Agroforestry or sustainable agriculture methods
		Collaboration with communities and third parties
		Distribution systems of waqf product
	Contributions of Green Waqf to Food Security	Provision of local food (cassava, vegetables, fruits)
		Community access to productive land
		Diversification of food sources through waqf
		Empowerment of local farmers through waqf-based forest
	Challenges and Constraints in the Implementation of Green Waqf	Land legality issues
		Human and financial resource
		Institutional coordination
		Climate and ecological change

8) Narrative Development

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Analytical narratives were written for each major theme, synthesizing the data to explain how green waqf contributes to food security and portraying the dynamics of green waqf management within the local socio-ecological context.

C. Results and Discussion

Green waqf, developed in the form of waqf forests, is an Islamic philanthropic initiative that integrates the values of sustainability, environmental preservation, and social empowerment (Alfarisi & Huda, 2023). According to the waqf managers interviewed, the creation of the waqf forest resulted from an increasing understanding that the advantages of waqf extend beyond its economic and physical aspects and encompass equally important intangible ecological aspects. The initiative's main drivers were often identified as carbon sequestration, landslip avoidance, and enhancements to local environmental carrying capacity. These principles are a reflection of the Islamic ethical commitment to public welfare (maslahah), which is the ultimate goal of waqf, and environmental stewardship (Umam et al., 2024).

Asset protection is a crucial initial concern. Land ownership legality is systematically enforced through the registration of waqf certificates with the National Land Agency (BPN) and the establishment of institutional structures in accordance with regulations, such as the separation of nazhir (manager) from the foundation. This reflects the manager's in-depth understanding of asset management risks and the need for long-term legal protection (Wibisono et al., 2025). Furthermore, environmental protection is implemented through an agroecological approach, selecting productive plant species appropriate to the soil contour and local conditions. This demonstrates a synergistic effort between ecological conservation and local food security through sustainable land use.

The waqf forest management model is not merely technical but also imbued with socio-religious values. The waqf is managed based on the principles of social enterprise,

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where small harvests are directly distributed to the community, while larger harvests, such as cloves, are sold and used for the foundation's social activities. This principle demonstrates a balance between financial sustainability and a philanthropic orientation (Houfi & Farhat, 2025). Community education and training activities on waqf principles are also conducted to strengthen public understanding and participation. This also serves as a form of internalization of Islamic values in collective and legally conscious natural resource management.

This waqf forest management also demonstrates the integration of legal, social, economic, and environmental aspects. The developed forests are not located in areas remote from the community, but rather located close to residential areas to allow for participatory management. Residents are involved in daily maintenance, product management, and training activities such as carbon accounting and productive crop cultivation (Rawat et al., 2025). In addition to serving as a conservation area, these lands also serve as centers for community-based empowerment and education. The presence of food stalls, ecotourism, and access to livestock such as sheep also demonstrate innovative functional waqf-based resource management.

In terms of financing and collaboration, waqf forests rely not only on land waqf but also open channels for cash waqf, infaq, and grants. This funding is then managed through collaboration with BAZNAS (National Agency for the Eligibility of Beneficiaries) in programs such as Zakat Community Development (ZCD), as well as grant support from the state budget and other external partners. This financing model demonstrates the flexibility of waqf as an Islamic social financial instrument that is adaptive and responsive to community empowerment needs (Billah et al., 2024). Partnerships are also expanded through a network of academics, journalists, and communities that are part of a collaborative platform for the promotion and development of green waqf.

In practice, sustainable agricultural activities are implemented through the planting of productive trees such as durian, breadfruit, and avocado, as well as the

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cultivation of shade-grown crops like coffee, cassava, and taro. This innovation maximizes the potential of forest land without damaging its ecosystem. Furthermore, residents are permitted to graze livestock in certain areas under strict controls to maintain ecological balance. Previously conducted fish pond activities have been discontinued due to safety concerns, demonstrating the ongoing evaluation and adjustment of field practices. This overall strategy demonstrates a sound ecological understanding within the context of waqf utilization (Anwar et al., 2025).

Although waqf forests cannot meet all the community's food needs due to limited land contours that preclude rice cultivation, their contribution to food access remains significant. The available harvests are not only enjoyed by local residents but also distributed to social institutions such as foundations and orphanages. In other words, while the contribution to food sovereignty is not comprehensively structural, the existence of green waqf has opened up space for the emergence of alternative food systems that are more participatory, inclusive, and value-based (Mulyana et al., 2021). This research shows that green waqf has the potential to strengthen local food systems sustainably through transformative Islamic social finance channels.

Green waqf is a conceptual and practical innovation in the Islamic social finance system that holds significant potential for supporting sustainable development, particularly in the food sector. As an Islamic financial instrument, green waqf not only emphasizes social benefits but also provides an ethical and structural framework for managing natural resources, particularly land (A. S. Rusydiana et al., 2023). In the context of food sovereignty, green waqf bridges the gap between preserving religious assets and sustainably meeting basic community needs. As an Islamic financial instrument, waqf has distinct characteristics from zakat and sadaqah. Waqf is productive, long-term, and oriented toward asset preservation (hifz al-māl) with the ongoing distribution of benefits (Bozik, 2025). When applied to productive land or forests, waqf not only maintains resource sustainability but also directly contributes to the provision and availability of food for the community. This strategic value

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demonstrates that green waqf is not only spiritual but also has measurable economic and ecological dimensions (Irfany et al., 2023).

The advantage of green waqf is its ability to create a more equitable food distribution system. Because it is based on the principles of justice and social ownership, the yields from waqf land can be distributed to communities in need, rather than simply sold at the highest market price. In times of food crises and commodity price inflation, the existence of this system is crucial for maintaining food access for vulnerable groups. Waqf acts as a social buffer in the food system (Ningsih, 2021). Green waqf also opens up space for the implementation of agroecological systems that support food diversification. Local food crops such as cassava, breadfruit, and vegetables can be cultivated alongside protected trees, thus supporting ecosystem balance while strengthening local food security. This diversification is important for reducing dependence on certain commodities and increasing adaptation to climate change (Jannah et al., 2021).

Green waqf also offers an alternative value-based agricultural financing. In many cases, the agricultural sector faces limited capital and a high risk of business failure (Adobor, 2020). Through waqf funds, agricultural infrastructure development, seed purchases, farmer training, and technical assistance can be financed without burdening small businesses with debt or interest. This makes waqf an inclusive financial instrument that empowers the food sector more comprehensively (Sukaina et al., 2022).

However, strengthening the role of green waqf as an Islamic financial instrument in the food sector still faces significant challenges. First is the issue of the legality of waqf land. Many productive waqf assets lack clear legal status, either in terms of land certification or institutional recognition. This lack of clarity hinders potential collaboration between waqf managers and financial institutions and limits access to state support (Jannah et al., 2020). The second obstacle is the limited human resource capacity to manage waqf professionally. Green waqf management requires cross-disciplinary expertise: agrarian, sharia, environmental, and financial management. The

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lack of training and competency standardization for nazhir hampers effective management and program sustainability. Furthermore, limited operational funds also force many green waqf initiatives to rely on spontaneous donations without systemic support (Irfany et al., 2023).

Institutional coordination is another challenge. Green waqf, inherently cross-sectoral, requires synergy between waqf institutions, zakat authorities, local governments, and environmental agencies. Unfortunately, there is no policy or collaborative platform that enables comprehensive program integration. As a result, many potential assets and social finance initiatives operate independently without a common policy direction (Restiyani et al., 2023).

Green waqf faces increasing ecological pressure and climate-related hazards in addition to institutional challenges. Soil, water, and weather all have a direct impact on food security. Waqf-managed land is nevertheless susceptible to degradation and a drop in productivity in the absence of technological innovation and agroecological adaptation. This emphasises how urgent it is to combine environmental science, sustainable agriculture technologies, and waqf practices (Sukmana & Rusydiana, 2023).

The revolutionary potential of green waqf in promoting food sovereignty is still significant in spite of these limitations. Waqf asset development can be extended into underserved communities that are frequently left out of traditional agricultural strategies by utilising the network of mosques, Islamic schools, and social organisations . Green waqf has the potential to be a scalable and inclusive model that is replicated at the national level with the help of cooperative institutional ecosystems and supporting policies. In the long term, green waqf can serve as a foundation for community-based food systems that are independent of corporate control and global market volatility (Maulida & Rusydiana, 2025). Such a model reinforces the principles of self-reliance and reclaims communal authority over strategic resources. This vision aligns with the core aim of food sovereignty: to ensure that communities have the right and capacity to define their own food systems.

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From the perspective of Islamic finance, strengthening the role of green waqf is also essential in broadening the scope of socially relevant instruments. While waqf has traditionally been associated with education and health, it is time for waqf to be actively directed toward more structural sectors such as food and the environment. This expansion not only reinforces the contemporary relevance of waqf, but also restores its position as a dynamic foundation for civilizational progress (Muqorobin & Agustiyani, 2017).

The integration of green waqf within national public policy frameworks represents a transformative shift from conventional market-based and state-centric approaches toward a participatory and value-driven model of resource governance. Public policy plays a decisive role in institutionalizing green waqf by providing legal certainty, fiscal incentives, and administrative coordination among various stakeholders. The inclusion of waqf-based land management in agrarian and environmental policies would not only ensure the sustainable use of natural resources but also strengthen community ownership in achieving food sovereignty (Ishak et al., 2025). By aligning green waqf with public policy objectives, the state can operationalize Islamic social finance as a complementary instrument for addressing structural challenges in food production, land inequality, and environmental degradation.

From a policy perspective, the mainstreaming of green waqf requires an enabling institutional environment that bridges the regulatory gap between religious philanthropy and sustainable development governance. Governments can design integrated policy instruments—such as waqf-based agricultural zones, fiscal incentives for environmentally oriented waqf projects, and legal mechanisms for land registration—to encourage broader participation and investment. Moreover, collaboration between public agencies, Islamic financial institutions, and local communities can facilitate the mobilization of idle waqf assets into productive and ecologically beneficial uses (Swadia Gandhi Mahardika and Afifa Tanweer 2025). This policy innovation could

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transform green waqf into a cornerstone of inclusive and sustainable food systems, aligning religious values with long-term national development strategies.

Comparative policy insights from countries such as Malaysia reveal that effective integration of waqf into national development agendas depends on coherent legal frameworks, professional management standards, and multi-sectoral partnerships (Mahmud & Noordin, 2024). Indonesia could adopt similar policy pathways by establishing a national roadmap for green waqf development under the coordination of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture. This roadmap should outline specific policy instruments for land certification, waqf asset mapping, and community-based agroforestry programs. By embedding green waqf within the architecture of public policy, Indonesia can enhance its capacity to achieve food sovereignty while advancing a distinctly Islamic model of sustainable development that harmonizes ethical finance, environmental protection, and social justice.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that green waqf is a strategic Islamic social finance instrument with significant relevance for advancing food well-being at both local and national levels. Unlike conventional approaches that rely heavily on market mechanisms or state intervention, green waqf offers a values-based alternative emphasizing asset perpetuity, distributive justice, environmental sustainability, and participatory empowerment. By utilizing waqf land for sustainable agricultural practices, green waqf contributes to stable food access, local commodity diversification, and more equitable distribution systems. Contextually, the unique strength of green waqf lies in its integration of spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions within a single resource management framework. The inalienability of waqf land ensures long-term continuity of land use for public benefit. In the face of global food and environmental crises, green waqf offers not only a moral imperative but also a practical and inclusive model for sustainable food systems.

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However, the findings also indicate that the realization of green waqf's potential is hindered by several structural challenges. These include unresolved legal status of waqf land, limited managerial capacity among waqf administrators (nazhir), inadequate human and financial resources, and weak institutional synergy. Without a strong regulatory and institutional framework, green waqf risks remaining a visionary ideal without systemic impact. Therefore, green waqf should not be seen merely as a symbol of Islamic spirituality or philanthropy, but as a transformational instrument capable of addressing contemporary challenges in food and environmental governance. Strategic and adaptive utilization of waqf assets grounded in Islamic ethical values and informed by socio-ecological contexts can serve as a foundation for building food systems that are not only resilient to crisis but also sovereign in value and structure. The development of green waqf should be prioritized within future social finance and agrarian policy agendas. Future research should expand the empirical scope through comparative studies across different regions and models of green waqf management. Incorporating quantitative approaches will also be essential for systematically measuring the economic, ecological, and social impacts of green waqf. Additionally, the integration of green waqf with other Islamic financial instruments such as productive zakat and green sukuk deserves further investigation to support the creation of a more holistic and measurable Islamic social finance ecosystem for the food and agricultural sectors.

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