

**GOVERNANCE OF LEBAK REGENCY GOVERNMENT IN  
PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY BASED ON LOCAL  
WISDOM AMONG THE KASEPUHAN CITOREK INDIGENOUS  
COMMUNITY**

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**ABSTRACT**

Food security is a critical agenda in sustainable development. However, Lebak Regency faces declining rice productivity due to limited land, restricted access to fertilizers, and pest attacks. The indigenous Kasepuhan Citorek community maintains a food system based on local wisdom, including traditional agriculture, shifting cultivation, customary rice fields, and leuit (rice barns) as food reserves, which support social, cultural, and ecological sustainability. This study analyzes the governance of Lebak Regency in promoting food security based on local wisdom through policies, institutional support, and synergy with traditional practices. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, documentation, and literature review, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The findings indicate that the local government has strategic regulations and institutional programs, yet implementation is limited by institutional capacity, coordination challenges, and rule-implementation gaps. Synergy between the government and indigenous communities through participatory approaches strengthens food security by integrating traditional practices with modern interventions. The success of food security based on local wisdom depends on sustained collaboration and harmonization between formal policies and customary practices.

**Keywords:** *Food Security, Local Wisdom, Indigenous Communities, Government Governance, Kasepuhan Citorek*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Food security is one of the priority agendas of sustainable development (SDGs), specifically the second goal, which aims at achieving zero hunger. Global data indicate that the threat of a food crisis remains high: according to the FAO (2023), over 735 million people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger (FAO, 2023). Indonesia is not immune to this threat. Data from the Food Security Agency (*Badan Ketahanan Pangan – BKP*, 2022) show that several regions have experienced a decline in rice productivity due to climate change, land degradation, and limited access to agricultural production facilities (*BKP*, 2022). The Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (*AMAN*) estimates that the indigenous population in Indonesia ranges from 40 to 70 million people, spread across more than 2,000 indigenous groups. For instance, in Bali, there are approximately 1,488 customary villages actively participating in community food governance, including efforts to reduce food loss and waste (Bali Provincial Food Security Agency, 2023). In West Java, several indigenous villages such as Kampung Naga in Tasikmalaya and Kampung Cireundeu in Cimahi maintain rice barns and practice cassava-based food diversification (Fitriani & Hidayat, 2021). Furthermore, the Ciptagelar indigenous community in Sukabumi is known for maintaining food reserves for up to 20 years through customary rules (Detiknews, 2024).

Lebak Regency, as one of the regions in Banten Province, is categorized as “food resilient” according to the Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas (FSVA) (*BKP*, 2021). However, an interesting phenomenon is observed within the Kasepuhan indigenous community in this area, particularly in Citorek. The Kasepuhan people have a food management system based on local wisdom (indigenous knowledge) that has been passed down through generations, such as the *Seren Taun* tradition and an annual rice planting system without chemical fertilizers (Suryanegara, 2020). These practices reflect ecological, social, and cultural sustainability. Nevertheless, in Kasepuhan Citorek, rice production has declined due to limited arable land, restricted access to fertilizers, and threats from pests and drought. The Food Security Index (*Indeks Ketahanan Pangan – IKP*) of Lebak Regency has decreased in recent years, indicating vulnerabilities that need to be addressed (BPS Lebak, 2022). This situation is exacerbated by minimal support from village government institutions in promoting indigenous food programs, meaning that the potential of local wisdom has not been fully integrated into public policy.

Several studies indicate that indigenous local wisdom significantly contributes to food security. Rahman (2022) found that the Kampung Naga and Kasepuhan Ciptagelar communities in West Java maintain food reserves through traditional farming practices, the use of local rice varieties, and rice barns as internal distribution systems. Laalobang et al. (2021) showed that the Kabola community in East Nusa Tenggara utilizes local ecological knowledge by gathering wild edible plants from forests and rivers as an adaptive strategy to seasonal changes, although government support remains limited. Meanwhile, Rosada et al. (2024) documented traditional agroecological practices in Pinrang, South Sulawesi, where farmers employ crop rotation, drought-tolerant local

varieties, and water management based on local wisdom to mitigate crop failure risks.

From these studies, most research still focuses on indigenous communities' practices in maintaining food security. This study, however, offers a novel perspective by highlighting the role of the Lebak Regency Government's governance in promoting sustainable food security based on indigenous local wisdom. Thus, the research not only emphasizes the socio-cultural dimensions of indigenous communities but also examines the interaction between indigenous knowledge and public policy as well as regional governance—an aspect rarely explored in previous literature.

The contrast between the richness of indigenous local wisdom on one hand and the challenges of food security on the other underscores the importance of local government governance. Effective governance encompasses not only regulatory and policy aspects but also cross-sector coordination, empowerment of indigenous communities, and harmonization between modern and traditional systems (Kurniawan, 2019). Therefore, research on the governance of the Lebak Regency Government in promoting sustainable food security based on indigenous local wisdom is highly relevant, both for understanding ongoing practices and for formulating collaborative models between the government and indigenous communities to safeguard food sovereignty in the era of climate change and globalized food systems.

The research problem in this study is to examine how the governance of the Lebak Regency Government promotes sustainable food security based on indigenous local wisdom within indigenous communities, particularly through the roles of policy, institutional support, and its synergy with traditional practices that have long been maintained by these communities.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach to comprehensively explore the sustainability of food security in the Kasepuhan Citorek community. Research data were obtained from primary sources, including in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation, as well as secondary sources from official documents, archives, government reports, and relevant literature (Creswell, 2016). Informants were selected using purposive sampling, including customary leaders, village officials, and stakeholders knowledgeable about local food security conditions (Sugiyono, 2019). Data collection was conducted through literature review, direct observation, interviews, and documentation studies, with the researcher serving as the main research instrument (Emzir, 2016). Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation (Denzin, 2012).

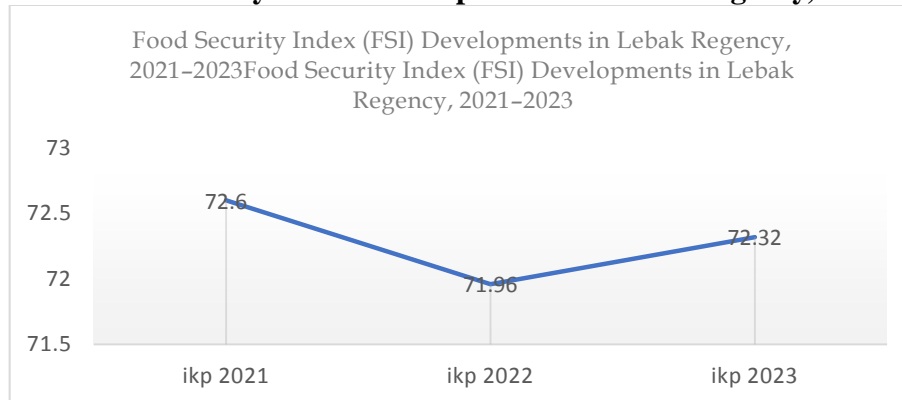
**C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**The Kasepuhan Citorek Indigenous Community and Food Security**

The Kasepuhan Citorek indigenous community in Lebak Regency represents one of the customary communities that continue to preserve ancestral value systems passed down through generations. They inhabit a customary territory of approximately 7,431 hectares in the Cibeber District, with a core population of around 2,504 individuals, comprising 772 households. The majority of the community members earn their livelihoods as farmers, gardeners, and agricultural laborers (BRWA, 2025). When extended to include descendants (incuputu) residing outside the core customary area, the Citorek community is estimated to number around 17,000 individuals (Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya Kemendikbud, 2023).

Food security within the Citorek community is closely linked to the indigenous knowledge systems they practice. Traditional agriculture, such as shifting cultivation (*huma*) and customary rice fields (*sawah adat*), is maintained with the primary principle of fulfilling community needs rather than commercial orientation (Iskandar & Ellen, 2007). A critical instrument in this food system is the *leuit*, or traditional rice granary, which functions both as a food reserve and as a spiritual symbol honoring Dewi Sri, the rice goddess. Customary regulations require that every harvest be stored first in the *leuit* before consumption or sale, thereby ensuring the long-term food sustainability of families and the community (Sutisna, 2018; Munjiah, Fajriani & Puspitasari, 2023).

**Table 1: Food Security Index Developments in Lebak Regency, 2021–2023**



*Source: Processed by the researcher (National FSVA Map Report)*

Banten Province’s Lebak Regency is categorized as a food-secure area according to the National Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas (FSVA). The Food Security Index (*IKP*) of Lebak Regency over the past three years, namely 2021–2023, was recorded at 72.60%, 71.96%, and 72.32%, all of which fall within the food-secure category. This achievement is inseparable from the socio-cultural roles and local wisdom of the community in maintaining food security. As noted by Khomsan et al. (2013), food is not merely a matter of consumption but also an integral part of a community’s or region’s identity. Furthermore, Indonesia’s food system is closely linked to agricultural practices based on the

traditions of specific ethnic groups, representing locally inherited knowledge passed down through generations (Perdanaputra & Prasodjo, 2018).

**Table 1: Comparison of the Food Security Index of Kasepuhan Citorek: Year 2021 vs. Year 2023**



Source: FSVA Map Report of Lebak Regency

In this context, Kasepuhan Citorek is one of the indigenous communities in Lebak Regency that plays a crucial role in maintaining sustainable food security. The customary territory of Kasepuhan Citorek covers approximately 7,431 hectares, with a core population of around 2,504 individuals or 772 households. When including incu-putu (descendants) residing outside the core area, the total population reaches approximately 17,000 people ([BRWA, 2025]; [Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya Kemendikbud, 2023]). Administratively, Kasepuhan Citorek is divided into five villages: Citorek Timur, Citorek Tengah, Citorek Barat, Citorek Sabrang, and Citorek Kidul. Traditional agriculture, including shifting cultivation (*huma*) and customary rice fields, remains central to community life, focusing on meeting the needs of families and the community rather than purely economic profit. This food system is reinforced by the presence of *leuit* (rice barns), which serve not only as food reserves but also carry spiritual significance in Citorek customs ([Iskandar & Ellen, 2007]; [Sutisna, 2018]; [Munjiah, Fajriani & Puspitasari, 2023]).

However, the FSVA report for Lebak Regency shows fluctuations in the Food Security Index (*IKP*) within Kasepuhan Citorek. Data from 2021–2023 indicate that two villages, Citorek Tengah and Citorek Sabrang, experienced an increase in *IKP*, whereas the other three villages—Citorek Timur, Citorek Barat, and Citorek Kidul—showed a decline. Thus, the food security system in Kasepuhan Citorek is not merely an economic strategy but also an integral part of cultural identity, spirituality, and sustainable environmental governance.

The sustainability of food security in Kasepuhan Citorek during 2023–2024 exhibits a concerning trend. This is evident from the data showing a significant decline in rice production, from 901 *pocong* in 2023 to only 674 *pocong* in 2024, representing a decrease of approximately 227 *pocong* (Aki Modo & Aki Jamri, 2024). This decline directly affects the food availability of the indigenous

community, given that rice serves as the primary staple and is also an integral part of the local wisdom system through storage in the *leuit*.

One of the main factors contributing to decreased productivity is limited access to both organic and inorganic fertilizers. Although the use of organic fertilizers has long been practiced, declining soil fertility, or *taneh haseum*, has caused the community to rely on inorganic fertilizers over the past  $\pm 30$  years. However, since 2023, fertilizer access has become increasingly constrained, as only one distributor serves five villages in Citorek. This shortage has hindered optimal rice growth and contributed to decreased harvest yields (Community Elder of East Citorek Village, interview, 2024).

In addition to fertilizer constraints, food security stability is also threatened by crop failure due to disease. Interviews with the indigenous community indicate that rice disease, locally known as *puputih*, causes rice grains to become empty or fail to develop entirely. This phenomenon was clearly documented in research records (February 2024), where certain fields experienced significant yield reductions due to this disease (N, Indigenous Community of East Citorek, 2024). Furthermore, issues of drought and limited irrigation prevent some paddy fields—particularly rainfed fields—from being cultivated. This reduces the area of productive farmland and exacerbates food availability challenges (S et al., Indigenous Community of Citorek, 2024).

The problem is further compounded by insufficient support from the village government for agricultural protection programs. These local programs are crucial for safeguarding rice crops from pests such as wild boars, monkeys, and other insects. However, during the 2024 planting season, the program was not implemented due to budget limitations, resulting in widespread crop damage caused by pests (Jaro Ace, Traditional Leader of Citorek, interview 2024).

From these issues, it can be concluded that the sustainability of food security in Kasepuhan Citorek faces serious challenges. If these conditions persist in the long term, not only will food availability be threatened, but also the socio-cultural systems that have historically supported food security based on local wisdom. This underscores the need for more systematic interventions from the regional government, including the distribution of agricultural production inputs, pest control, irrigation infrastructure improvement, and budgetary support for local indigenous programs, to ensure the sustainable maintenance of food security in Kasepuhan Citorek.

The sustainability of food security in Kasepuhan Citorek can be analyzed using the FAO (1996) framework, which emphasizes four main pillars—availability, access, utilization, and stability of food—alongside Maxwell's (1996) approach, which adds the dimensions of sustainability and entitlement to food. From the perspective of food availability, the decrease in rice harvest from 901 *pocong* in 2023 to 674 *pocong* in 2024 reflects a reduction in the community's food reserves. As a primary food source and part of local wisdom through storage in *leuit*, rice availability has become increasingly limited, thereby reducing household food stocks among the indigenous population.

In terms of food access, difficulties in obtaining both organic and inorganic fertilizers further exacerbate production conditions. The existence of only one

fertilizer distributor for five villages creates structural barriers in the distribution system of agricultural production inputs, preventing optimal rice growth. Regarding food utilization, the emergence of rice diseases such as *puputih* results in many empty or unripe grains. This condition not only lowers harvest yields but also affects the quality of consumed food, impacting the nutritional intake of the indigenous community.

For the stability dimension, drought, limited irrigation, and reduced arable land further threaten food sustainability. The non-implementation of the agricultural protection program in 2024 due to budget constraints also rendered rice crops vulnerable to pest attacks, such as wild boars and monkeys. This creates high uncertainty in maintaining sustainable food production. Meanwhile, within Maxwell's framework, the sustainability dimension is crucial. Indigenous local wisdom, which has historically supported food security—such as the use of organic fertilizers, storage of rice in *leuit*, and local agricultural protection programs—is increasingly weakened. Declining productivity due to land degradation, crop diseases, and limited government support makes the indigenous food security system increasingly fragile in the long term. Finally, from the perspective of the right to food (entitlement), insufficient government intervention in fertilizer distribution and support for indigenous agricultural programs creates vulnerability. The community's right to access food fairly and sustainably is not fully guaranteed, placing them at risk of worsening food insecurity in the future.

#### **The Role of Local Government in Food Security Governance**

Local governments play a central role in food security governance as they are the actors closest to the community and possess the authority to formulate policies, allocate budgets, and implement regional development programs. According to the *Undang-Undang No. 18 Tahun 2012* on Food, local governments are mandated to ensure the availability, affordability, and fulfillment of diverse, nutritious, balanced, and safe food for the population (Food Law, 2012). Within the framework of regional autonomy, this authority should be leveraged to integrate food policies with the local wisdom practiced by indigenous communities.

In the context of Lebak Regency, particularly in Kasepuhan Citorek, the role of local government can be observed in several key aspects. First, regulation and policy: local governments need to formulate policies responsive to the socio-cultural conditions of indigenous communities, such as recognizing and protecting traditional practices like the *leuit* system, organic farming, and agricultural protection programs. Such policies are crucial to ensure that local wisdom is not eroded by modernization, which may weaken the foundation of food security (Surati, 2023). Second, the provision of agricultural production inputs: one challenge in Citorek is limited access to inorganic fertilizers, as there is only one distributor serving five villages. Local governments should address this distribution bottleneck by increasing distribution points, providing subsidies, or encouraging local organic fertilizer production. These measures would enhance rice productivity and support sustainable food production (Khomsan et al., 2013). Third, strengthening agricultural infrastructure and technology: drought and limited irrigation that render farmland unproductive indicate the need for

government intervention in building water infrastructure, improving irrigation channels, and providing appropriate technology to mitigate climate change impacts. This aligns with inclusive food governance principles emphasized by FAO (1996), which states that food stability is influenced by the availability of functional infrastructure and distribution systems. Fourth, support for local food protection programs: the non-implementation of agricultural protection programs in 2024 due to budget constraints illustrates weak local government support for community initiatives. Local governments must ensure dedicated budget allocations for proven effective programs that protect crops from pests and wildlife (Jaro Ace, interview, 2024).

Food security governance by local governments extends beyond administrative and technical aspects; it must also be grounded in local wisdom that has long sustained indigenous communities. The role of local government in bridging modern policies with traditional practices is key to achieving sustainable food security in Lebak Regency (Perdanaputra & Prasodjo, 2018).

The role of local government in safeguarding the food security of Kasepuhan Citorek's indigenous communities is guided by regional regulations. Several local regulations explicitly provide legal foundations for strengthening local food governance.

First, the *Peraturan Bupati Lebak No. 3 Tahun 2016* on the Protection of Sustainable Agricultural Land emphasizes the importance of preventing farmland conversion. This regulation is highly relevant to Kasepuhan Citorek, where food security depends heavily on the availability of rice fields and *huma* (swidden fields). Implementing this regulation can protect indigenous agricultural land from conversion threats while safeguarding the availability pillar in the FAO (1996) food security framework.

Second, the *Peraturan Bupati Lebak No. 66 Tahun 2023* on Food Reserve Management provides local governments with instruments to ensure food availability when local production declines. In the context of Citorek, which experienced a decrease in rice production from 901 *pocong* (2023) to 674 *pocong* (2024), government food reserves can serve as a buffer stock, maintaining food availability and access while minimizing the risk of food insecurity.

Third, the *Peraturan Bupati Lebak No 111 Tahun 2020* on the Position, Organizational Structure, Duties, and Functions of the Food Security Agency strengthens local government institutions in handling food-related affairs. The Food Security Agency is authorized to manage technical issues, including fertilizer distribution, agricultural extension, pest control, and strengthening food infrastructure. Institutional support becomes particularly crucial when the Citorek community faces challenges such as limited fertilizer access, rice diseases, and drought.

Fourth, the *Peraturan Daerah Kabupaten Lebak No. 7 Tahun 2023* on the Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW) 2023–2043 provides a strategic framework for allocating agricultural space sustainably. This spatial plan ensures that indigenous areas like Citorek retain adequate space for traditional agricultural activities, supported by functional irrigation infrastructure. This aligns with the stability

pillar in the FAO food security theory, where food security can only be achieved if spatial and environmental factors are sustainably managed.

These regulations provide a legal framework to protect land, regulate food distribution, and ensure the availability of village food reserves (*CPPDes*). However, policy research indicates that implementation remains suboptimal due to institutional capacity limitations, weak inter-agency coordination, and insufficient participatory mechanisms involving indigenous communities in program formulation and implementation (Perdanaputra & Prasadjo, 2018; Mutiarin, 2014). From a governance theory perspective, food security governance in Lebak Regency still faces governance gaps. First, there is a gap between formal regulations and on-the-ground implementation (rule–implementation gap), evident in stalled village food reserve programs and limited oversight of fertilizer distribution. Second, technical institutional capacity remains weak in responding to food crises, such as pest attacks or plant diseases. Third, the weak collaborative network among local government, village authorities, and indigenous communities indicates that collaborative governance practices have not yet been fully realized. Consequently, policies tend to be top-down and insufficiently accommodate local knowledge, despite the proven importance of local wisdom, such as the *leuit* system, in sustaining food security (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

#### **Synergy Between Government and Indigenous Communities**

The implementation of regional autonomy principles that respect local uniqueness, as stipulated in Article 18(5) of the 1945 Constitution and Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, emphasizes the importance of local freedom in managing governance according to local conditions. In this context, Lebak Regency has demonstrated synergy between *regelrecht* and *bestuursrecht* through the creation of regional regulations supporting local wisdom-based food security and implementing programs aligned with the needs of the Kasepuhan Citorek community.

This principle recognizes that each region has unique characteristics, potentials, and needs, requiring policies and regulations tailored to local conditions. In Kasepuhan Citorek, the sustainability of food security relies heavily on traditional agricultural practices and long-standing socio-cultural systems of the indigenous community. Therefore, the implementation of regional autonomy principles that respect local uniqueness is crucial. Regulations that accommodate local practices and involve indigenous communities in planning and decision-making are more effective in supporting food security. Conversely, policies ignoring local aspects may cause conflict and reduce program effectiveness. Hence, local governments must understand and respect local uniqueness when formulating policies. Collaboration between government and indigenous communities in developing local wisdom-based food security policies produces adaptive and sustainable solutions. Thus, the principle of regional autonomy respecting local uniqueness is not only normative but also a practical strategy for building robust and sustainable food security in Kasepuhan Citorek.

This synergy manifests in several operational mechanisms. First, through technical collaboration, the Food Security Agency provides support integrated with local practices, such as seasonal fertilizer distribution, community-based pest

control, and government food reserve distribution complementing the *leuit* capacity. Second, through recognition and preservation of local wisdom, the government supports the *Seren Taun* ritual, which not only expresses cultural values and gratitude but also ensures equitable and sustainable harvest management. Third, although still limited, participatory approaches have begun to involve communities in planning and monitoring food distribution, reflecting early stages of collaborative governance where public decisions accommodate local knowledge rather than being purely top-down.

From a governance theory perspective, this synergy demonstrates the strength of integrating formal regulations with proven indigenous practices. The *leuit* system and traditional rituals constitute social capital that reinforces community resilience, while government institutional support enhances the effectiveness of technical and strategic interventions. This synergy also strengthens three FAO food security pillars: availability, through land protection and food reserve management; accessibility, through reserve distribution and technical extension; and stability, through land conservation, sustainable agricultural practices, and social solidarity embedded in local culture.

However, challenges remain. First, the rule–implementation gap persists, as some regulations have not been fully operationalized, e.g., village food reserve programs remain limited. Second, technical institutional capacity is still inadequate in responding to food crises, such as pest attacks or climate change. Third, collaborative networks among government, villages, and indigenous communities need strengthening to make decision-making more participatory, transparent, and responsive to local knowledge.

Thus, despite the formal regulatory and institutional framework, the success of food security in Kasepuhan Citorek heavily depends on tangible synergy between government and indigenous communities. Integrating formal policies with local practices not only sustains availability, access, and stability of food but also reinforces cultural values, community identity, and social capacity. A more collaborative and participatory governance approach is key to realizing optimal and sustainable local wisdom-based food security.

#### D. CONCLUSION

The sustainability of food security in Kasepuhan Citorek heavily relies on the integration of local wisdom practices with the role of local government. Traditional agricultural systems, including *huma*, indigenous rice fields, and the *leuit* as a food reserve, constitute social, cultural, and spiritual foundations supporting food availability and stability. The application of regional autonomy principles that respect local uniqueness is key to establishing adaptive and responsive public governance, where government policies align with time-tested indigenous practices. Synergy between government and indigenous communities through participatory and collaborative approaches strengthens program effectiveness, enhances accountability, and minimizes implementation failure risks.

This indicates significant challenges, including gaps between formal regulation and field practice, limited technical capacity, and suboptimal cross-

sectoral coordination. The Lebak Regency government, through regulations and institutional programs, provides technical and strategic instruments to enhance production, distribution, and food protection capacities. Governance analysis shows that the effectiveness of government interventions still faces obstacles, including limited institutional capacity, rule–implementation gaps, and low participation of indigenous communities in decision-making. The synergy between normative and administrative authority and local practices demonstrates that applying regional autonomy principles respecting local uniqueness not only strengthens collaboration but also establishes adaptive, sustainable, and culturally informed food governance. Consequently, the success of local wisdom-based food security in Kasepuhan Citorek depends on the continuity of government–community collaboration that harmonizes modern policies with local traditions sustainably.

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