

Analysis of The Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program: an Effort to Enhance Food Security and Village Economy

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Abstract

Keywords

Merah Putih Village Cooperative; Public Policy; Food Security; Rural Economy; Cirebon Regency

The Merah Putih Village Cooperative is a policy initiated by the government through Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2025. Village cooperatives were established to boost the people's economy and food security at the grassroots level, specifically in villages. This study aims to analyze the potential of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative in fostering food security and the village economy, as well as the challenges involved in implementing this policy. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method using purposive sampling to collect data. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with relevant government agencies and thoroughly reviewed documents regarding the Merah Putih Village Cooperative. The research findings indicate that the Merah Putih Village Cooperatives possess significant potential in efforts to enhance food security and the village economy as a means of reducing poverty. This potential stems from the business units established and structured in such a way. In Cirebon Regency alone, there are currently only 20 active village cooperatives out of a total of 424 village cooperatives that have established organizational management structures. The low number of active village cooperatives is due to the uneven progress of building construction. Additionally, the lack of initiative among the management of the Merah Putih Village Cooperatives in implementing programs poses a significant challenge to the implementation of this village cooperative policy. Therefore, efforts to accelerate development and raise awareness about village cooperatives must be more consistent so that this program can be implemented promptly.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a total land area of approximately 1,904,569 km² and 38 provinces spread across various islands. Given its vast territory, governance is not entirely centralized but is divided into several components to streamline public service delivery. According to Law No. 23 of 2014, decentralization is the transfer of governmental affairs by the central government to autonomous regions based on the principle of autonomy. The government divides governance into three levels: Provinces, Regencies and Cities, and Villages. According to the National Statistics Agency, Indonesia has 84,048 villages and sub-districts. Indonesia is a developing country that continues to demonstrate resilience in overcoming poverty and improving the standard of living for its people. Despite various efforts already undertaken, Indonesia is still seeking solutions to address unstable conditions. One

initiative undertaken by the administration led by President Prabowo and his Vice President Gibran is the establishment of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative.

A village is the smallest unit of government and has the autonomy to establish its own regulations in accordance with the village's needs, as stipulated in Law No. 6 of 2014 (Kusumaputra, 2017). Villages are expected to tap into their own potential to support self-reliance, both in terms of the village economy and food security for the community (Chantarasombat, 2018; Gartaula et al., 2017; Nasution et al., 2025). Village self-reliance is intended to raise the standard of living of the people in a country, with the goal of transforming that country into a developed nation. Rural development is a form of regional development, and it is an integral part of national development, aimed at improving the well-being of the people (Khumayah, 2021; Pawlak & Kołodziejczak, 2020).

Through Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2025, President Prabowo instructed ministers and relevant agencies to establish the Merah Putih Village Cooperatives, which are expected to achieve food self-sufficiency and a sustainable economy. This aligns with the vision of the “Father of Indonesian Cooperatives,” Mohammad Hatta, who established cooperatives in Indonesia with the aim of alleviating poverty. The system championed by Bung Hatta that remains relevant to this day is that cooperatives must be based on mutual aid and a sense of family. One concrete example of the recognition of the importance of the role of cooperatives in building the people's economy can be seen in the designation of Mohammad Hatta—a founding father and the first Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia—as the “Father of Cooperatives in Indonesia.” (Saputri et al., 2025).

The Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program was established in response to the government's recognition of poverty in this country. Cooperatives serve as a concrete manifestation of this model of collective enterprise. The program aims to fulfill the constitutional mandate and to build an inclusive and equitable national economy (Saputri et al., 2025). The government's objectives in establishing the Merah Putih Cooperative include: a) improving the welfare of rural communities through active participation in economic activities; b) creating new jobs to reduce unemployment rates in rural areas; c) lowering consumer prices through a more efficient distribution system, d) improving the farmers' terms of trade (NTP) so that farmers' welfare can increase, e) shortening the supply chain to reduce dependence on middlemen, f) modernizing cooperative management to better align with contemporary needs, g). enhancing financial inclusion by providing financial access to communities previously hard to reach, h). serving as an accelerator and aggregator for SMEs, i). supporting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas, j). reducing extreme poverty by providing inclusive economic opportunities, k). curbing inflation through more planned management of the distribution of staple goods (Afgani et al., 2025). Thus, the government led by President Prabowo aims to boost the economy in rural communities by establishing “Merah Putih” village cooperatives as a concrete solution to the problem of poverty.

In practice, many village cooperatives remain inactive to this day. This is believed to be due to the hasty establishment of these cooperatives, resulting in their current state being limited to the creation of their organizational structures alone (Thayer, 2018). The lack of outreach from relevant government agencies is seen as hindering the implementation process, leaving many cooperative administrators unaware of the next steps. One of the fundamental challenges faced by villages is the limited access that residents have to business institutions

capable of fostering collective and sustainable well-being (Sucipto et al., 2025). The government is focusing only on certain villages that are deemed suitable for operating a “Merah Putih” village cooperative and have been designated as model villages.

The recruitment process for the cooperative’s management did not involve many community members; most of the community was not adequately informed about the establishment of this “Merah Putih” village cooperative. The cooperative’s organizational structure was established through a special village deliberation process, followed by a meeting to recruit the management of the “Merah Putih” village cooperative. The initial step in establishing the cooperative is to hold a village assembly. This assembly is a special meeting that involves the community in making important decisions, such as selecting the type of business the cooperative will operate, as well as drafting and adopting the cooperative’s articles of association (Arzewiniga, 2023). Government regulations stipulate that members of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative’s board of directors must have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, and it is recommended that board members hold a bachelor’s degree.

As of the issuance of the presidential directive in May 2025, the Suranenggala subdistrict has only three active “Merah Putih” village cooperatives, and some are still finalizing the administrative procedures needed to implement the cooperative program. According to Informatika (2025) Seventeen villages have already completed the establishment of the Merah Putih Cooperative, and the local government is committed to accelerating the process in the remaining 395 villages through cross-sectoral coordination, including with district heads and village chiefs. The active cooperatives currently operate three business units: a cooperative office, a grocery store, and a savings and loan program (Mushonga et al., 2019). The grocery stores in operation are supplied directly by government agencies or state-owned enterprises to meet supply needs. It is hoped that these operational units will enhance food security and economic growth in these villages (Ndlovu & Masuku, 2021; Yuliana, 2018).

The grocery store established by the Merah Putih Village Cooperative can enhance community food security while also boosting the village’s economic growth. The grocery store is designed to provide staple foods and daily necessities for the village community, through both retail and wholesale channels. Sales include rice, sugar, cooking oil, eggs, and other kitchen essentials, managed through an integrated distribution and logistics system to ensure stable prices and a consistent supply (Mardika et al., 2025). Affordable staple foods are accessible to the public; these affordable staples will ensure food security for the community amid Indonesia’s unstable economic conditions. The community can also sell their agricultural produce to cooperatives at prices set by the government; grocery stores established by village cooperatives not only ensure food security for the community but also create a beneficial economic cycle for the village.

The cycle of rural economic growth is not limited to grocery stores; cooperatives also provide savings and loan units. These savings and loan units are specifically for community members who are already cooperative members. They function as microfinance institutions that provide savings services, productive financing, and consumer financing to cooperative members. Their management must adhere to the principles of prudence and good cooperative governance to ensure they remain financially sound and trustworthy in the eyes of members (Mardika et al., 2025). The terms and conditions of the savings and loan unit are established in accordance with the cooperative’s management policies, with reference to government

policies. Loans to the community are required to be used as business capital and will be continuously monitored by the cooperative's management. If implemented effectively, economic growth and food security will gradually improve through the Merah Putih Village Cooperative program. The Merah Putih Cooperative holds significant potential for enhancing the economic well-being of rural communities (Saputri et al., 2025).

The terms and conditions of the savings and loan unit are established in accordance with the cooperative's management policies, with reference to government policies. Loans to the community are required to be used as business capital and will be continuously monitored by the cooperative's management. If implemented effectively, economic growth and food security will gradually improve through the Merah Putih Village Cooperative program. The Merah Putih Cooperative holds significant potential for enhancing the economic well-being of rural communities (Pakabu et al., 2025), b). Village Potential Analysis (Sucipto et al., 2025), c). Perspectives on Village Development and Governance (Saputri et al., 2025), d). Institutional Challenges and Opportunities (Arzewiniga, 2023), serta e). Operational Strategy of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative (Mardika et al., 2025). Although many studies have examined various aspects of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative, researchers have yet to find a study that delves deeper into how the cooperative's business units can enhance food security and boost the village economy. Therefore, this study will focus on the business units within the Merah Putih Village Cooperative.

Based on the background, this study aims to answer the following research questions: a) How does the Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program contribute to enhancing food security and the village economy?, and b) What are the challenges faced by the Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program in its efforts to enhance food security and the village economy?. These questions will be addressed using William N. Dunn's public policy framework through three variables: policy content, policy actors or stakeholders, and the policy environment. This study is expected to provide a new perspective for future research.

A cooperative is a type of business entity established on the principles of family solidarity and mutual aid. Cooperatives are formed with the specific aim of improving the well-being of their members and the community at large. Through this business structure, cooperatives are generally expected to drive economic growth.

The Merah Putih Village Cooperative (KDMP) is a program initiated by President Prabowo as a solution to boost the village economy and food security. The village economy is a locally-based economic management system focused on specific sectors. This circular economy aims to improve the welfare of rural communities so that they no longer depend on assistance from the central government. Village development serves as a strategic foundation for strengthening national resilience and achieving social justice (Saputri et al., 2025). The Merah Putih Village Cooperative is a new, more modern cooperative model that establishes new business units with a focus on community welfare. According to (Mardika et al., 2025) The primary objective of a cooperative is to improve the well-being of its members in particular and the community at large through the democratic management of economic resources. It is therefore clear that the government is serious about improving the standard of living of rural communities.

The Merah Putih Village Cooperative was established with various business unit models that are expected to be implemented by existing villages. According to MerahPutih.kop.id,

there are seven business units that the Merah Putih Village Cooperative can establish based on the specific needs of each village (MerahPutih.Kop.id, 2025)

Village food security is part of food self-sufficiency, which means that villages have sufficient—or even abundant—food supplies for the coming years. Food security is achieved through high productivity in agriculture, fisheries, plantations, and industry; high production is made possible by clear and structured systems.

The village economy is the result of good village governance. Economic growth in villages stems from community activities in the agriculture, plantation, and fisheries sectors, as well as the management of small and medium-sized enterprises, which foster a cycle of cooperation among community members.

Public policy refers to decisions made by the government to regulate society and address emerging issues. According to William N. Dunn (1994), policy analysis is heavily influenced by variables that serve as indicators of policy success, namely: 1) Policy Content, 2) Policy Stakeholders, 3) Policy Environment:

Referring to William N. Dunn's (1994) theory on public policy, the Merah Putih village cooperatives represent one manifestation of the government's policy implementation aimed at alleviating poverty. To analyze the Merah Putih Village Cooperative program, this study will utilize William N. Dunn's (1994) theory, focusing on whether the policies formulated by the government align with community needs, the quality and accountability of policy implementation, as well as other aspects such as economic, social, political, and cultural factors.

A study conducted by (Sucipto et al., 2025) The report on the Merah Putih Village Cooperative explains the village's potential in supporting this village cooperative program. Furthermore, research conducted by (Pakabu et al., 2025) Research on community economic empowerment has also focused solely on the process of establishing village cooperatives through village deliberations. Furthermore, the research conducted (Saputri et al., 2025) examining the Merah Putih Village Cooperative from the perspective of development and governance. The research was conducted by (Mardika et al., 2025) The study focuses on operational strategies within the Merah Putih Village Cooperative. However, the aforementioned study did not examine in depth how the business units within the Merah Putih Village Cooperative can enhance food security and the village economy. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze the village's potential in supporting this program by conducting a more in-depth examination of its business units.

Based on the background and research gaps described above, this study aims to analyze the potential of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program in enhancing food security through its various business units such as grocery stores, warehouses, and agricultural services, examine its contribution to boosting the village economy by supporting local SMEs and agricultural produce marketing, and identify the challenges faced in implementing the program in Cirebon Regency using William N. Dunn's public policy framework encompassing policy content, stakeholders, and environment. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to public policy literature on village-based economic empowerment and food security, enrich cooperative management and rural development studies, and serve as a reference for future research, while practically offering implications for the government in evaluating and improving program implementation, for cooperative managers in optimizing business units, for village communities in

increasing awareness of cooperatives' economic benefits, and for researchers as empirical data for further studies on village cooperatives and rural development policies in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method as the foundation for an in-depth examination of the analysis of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative program aimed at enhancing food security and the village economy. The descriptive qualitative research method was chosen because it is considered highly effective in collecting the data to be analyzed in this study.

The researchers used purposive sampling in conducting the interviews. According to (Sugiyono, 2019) Purposive sampling is a sampling technique based on specific criteria. This study was conducted at the relevant government agency responsible for the Merah Putih Village Cooperative. To ensure that the data obtained is more accurate and reliable, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with sources who are competent in their respective fields, such as a) staff from the Cirebon Regency Cooperative and MSME Office, b) staff from the Cirebon Regency Village Empowerment and Development Office, and c) the Chair of the Cirebon Regency Cooperative Association (Dekopinda).

The data analysis technique employed was interactive analysis, as described by Miles and Huberman, involving repeated and ongoing analysis. This involved conducting in-depth interviews with staff from the Cooperative and SME Agency, as well as the chairperson of the Regional Indonesian Cooperative Council as key informants, and the Community and Village Empowerment Agency as supporting informants to gather data and information, as well as drawing on relevant journal articles. Analysis in this perspective encompasses three stages of activity: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (B. Miles and Huberman, 2014, in (Saleh, 2017). In-depth data collection was conducted to corroborate the data obtained by the researchers.

Data triangulation is used to analyze information gathered in the field to ensure the validity of the collected data. According to Denzim (2009), triangulation is the combination of various methods used to examine interrelated phenomena from different perspectives (Nurfajriani et al., 2024). Triangulation is used to ensure the credibility and validity of the data to be collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Merah Putih village cooperatives were established pursuant to Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2025, which requires all villages to establish cooperatives; the government aims for 84,048 villages and sub-districts across Indonesia to have cooperatives. This policy was implemented to combat poverty and improve food security for rural communities.

Research findings indicate that the Merah Putih Village Cooperative has the potential to boost the village economy. The village economy improves when the cooperative's business units operate effectively. The grocery store within the Merah Putih Village Cooperative can attract products from local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the village. Farmers can also sell their agricultural produce to the Merah Putih Village Cooperative at pre-agreed prices. Furthermore, food security can be achieved through the warehouse unit, which serves as a facility to store agricultural produce; the cooperative can then sell this produce to the

community.

In support of the village cooperative program, the government has conducted extensive outreach efforts through both social media and in-person outreach. The government has also established a special task force to monitor the progress of these village cooperatives. Additionally, the government provides technical guidance to enhance the capabilities of village cooperative administrators. The government has appointed PT Agrinas to oversee the construction of these “Merah Putih” village cooperative outlets.

According to the articles of incorporation of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative, Cirebon Regency has established 424 cooperatives; however, the reality on the ground shows that only 20 of them are active. This is due to the fact that not all cooperative buildings have been constructed—only about 20–30% have been completed—and a lack of initiative on the part of the management in implementing the village cooperative program.

The challenges facing the Merah Putih Village Cooperative include a shortage of qualified personnel to manage the cooperative, the perception among the community that the cooperative is solely a savings and loan business, and the fact that a building has not yet been constructed.

The Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program: An Effort to Enhance Food Security and the Village Economy

The Merah Putih village cooperatives, established under Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2025, have made significant progress; in Cirebon Regency, 424 cooperatives have been established and are already operational with governing bodies in place. In total, there are 20 village cooperatives that are currently operational. This was stated by the chairman of the Cirebon Regency Regional Cooperative Council: "The reality on the ground is that only 20 of the 424 villages in Cirebon Regency have operational cooperatives." The acceleration efforts aim to boost the village economy and enhance food security in the villages.

The village cooperative policy is a program with great potential to improve the economic well-being of rural communities, as it has been carefully designed by the government, with various regulations implemented by the relevant ministries to ensure the program is not merely a dormant initiative. Acceleration is being prioritized, particularly in the construction of retail outlets. In Cirebon Regency itself, the construction of these outlets is currently being carried out intensively in every village, in line with a statement from a staff member of the Community and Village Empowerment Agency who noted, "The construction progress is currently only between 20–30%." Accelerating construction is a concrete step taken by the government to ensure the success of the village cooperative program.

Outreach efforts regarding the Merah Putih Village Cooperatives have been intensively carried out, not only by the central government—which has formed a special task force dedicated to these cooperatives—but also by district and city governments. "We have also established district-level and sub-district-level task forces," said a staff member from the DPMD. In addition to direct outreach, the government is also actively conducting outreach through the Ministry of Cooperatives' social media and other social media platforms. According to the chairman of Dekopinda, the outreach is being carried out on a massive scale. "As for this outreach, it's already massive—the central government has been doing it extensively across various social media platforms, so it's already massive."

The Merah Putih Village Cooperative is a flagship government program and a priority

initiative. This program holds significant potential for boosting the local economy and enhancing food security in rural communities through six types of outlets established to support community needs. The outlets to be established include warehouses, health clinics, retail stores, savings and loan centers, agricultural service centers, and service providers. This potential can be fully realized if the cooperative's management is committed to building the cooperative with the goal of boosting the economy in their respective villages and ensuring an abundant food supply. Additionally, the establishment of these outlets or businesses aims to dispel the public's perception that cooperatives are solely involved in savings and loan operations.

This study applies William N. Dunn's (1994) theory to analyze the policy of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program, which has three dimensions: 1) Policy Content, 2) Policy Stakeholders, and 3) Policy Environment.

Policy Content

The substance of a policy consists of the policy's objectives, standards, and budget allocation for its implementation. The research findings indicate that the policy outlined in Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2025 aims to boost the rural economy and enhance rural food security. The standards established call for the establishment of six retail outlets or business units to support community needs.

The Indonesian government is fully committed to implementing this policy through the large-scale construction of business outlets in villages across the country. This demonstrates the government's seriousness in carrying out this village cooperative program. The government's support for the program is evidenced by the allocation of a budget of nearly 3 billion rupiah to build "Merah Putih" village cooperatives, with PT Agrinas designated as the primary contractor for the construction of business infrastructure.

Policy Stakeholder

The Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program involves numerous policymakers. The ministries involved cover nearly all sectors, with the Ministry of Cooperatives serving as the lead agency and supported by the Ministry of Villages. To fulfill its commitment to implementing the Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program, the government conducts regular outreach and monitoring by establishing special cooperative task forces from the national level down to the subdistrict level. This outreach is not limited to in-person sessions; the government also conducts extensive outreach on social media.

To ensure the success of its program, the government not only conducts public outreach but also enhances the capacity of the officials assigned to manage the program by providing technical guidance (BIMTEK) as part of an effort to improve the skills of the officials overseeing the Merah Putih Village Cooperatives. This guidance is provided directly by the Ministry of Cooperatives as the implementing agency.

Policy Environment

The policy environment is a dynamic factor that influences specific conditions, including the economy. Research findings indicate that the Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program holds significant potential for promoting sustainable rural economic development and enhancing food security. This potential stems from initiatives designed by the government, all of which aim to meet the needs of the community. From trade, health, agriculture, services, savings and loans, to warehousing, all are designed to boost the economy and food security.

The government aims to improve the economic well-being of the community from the grassroots level, meaning that economic growth must begin in villages as the smallest units of government.

The Merah Putih Village Cooperative is designed as a modern cooperative that does not limit itself to savings and loan services. Other business units have been established as symbols of economic empowerment and food security in the village. The trading unit is one such unit with significant potential to boost the village economy. Not only does it offer affordable basic necessities, but if the Merah Putih Village Cooperative's trading operations are properly optimized, they will create an economic cycle across regions. It is not only basic necessities that can be traded, but other local commodities can also be traded within this cooperative business. The marketing scale that can be utilized is not limited to just one village; the marketing of local commodities can be carried out among Merah Putih Village Cooperatives throughout Indonesia.

The government is establishing warehouses to promote rural food security by providing a storage facility for community harvests. The harvests produced by farmers will be purchased by the village cooperative at a mutually agreed-upon price, without the price being driven down as it is by middlemen. Crops purchased by the cooperative can be sold directly to the community at relatively low prices, or the cooperative's management can sell agricultural commodities to cooperatives in other villages.

The business units within the village cooperative are interconnected, with each one supporting the others. The government has made it easier for farmers to carry out their activities; fertilizers and agricultural tools are provided through the cooperative's business units. Marketing can be handled by the village cooperative, so farmers do not face difficulties in selling their produce, and prices can be mutually agreed upon.

Challenges in the Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program

Every program inevitably faces challenges. These challenges can certainly hinder the program's progress. Based on the research findings, there are many challenges to be overcome in implementing the Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program. The greatest challenge in the village cooperative program is human resources that lack competence in the cooperative sector, consistent with the results of interviews with staff from the Community and Village Empowerment Office, who stated, "In every village, every board member, and every cooperative, the implementation is different, the community's character varies, and the implementation may also differ." This was further reinforced by a statement from the chairman of the Cirebon Regency Cooperative Association (Dekopinda), who said, "Human resource capacity varies, right? Finding college graduates in villages is both easy and difficult; some are just adequate, and their capabilities are also just adequate, so this will inevitably vary depending on the board members' capabilities." The fact that the public views cooperatives solely as savings and loan institutions reflects that knowledge about cooperatives remains low in Indonesia.

The lack of initiative among cooperative leaders remains a challenge for this program; of the 424 village cooperatives in Cirebon Regency, only 20 are actively implementing the village cooperative program. The willingness of cooperative leaders to implement the program is considered low, resulting in only a small number of active village cooperatives in Cirebon Regency. Price competition is also a potential issue, as every village has a grocery store, leading

to competition not only among village cooperatives but also with other retail stores.

These are the challenges that the government must certainly address to ensure that the village cooperative program proceeds in accordance with its original objectives. As part of efforts to boost the economy and food security in rural areas, the government must promptly address these challenges.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the Merah Putih Village Cooperative plays a significant role in enhancing food security and the village economy through its business activities spanning healthcare, agriculture, grocery stores, warehousing, and services. In enhancing food security, the cooperative's service sector facilitates harvest transportation, grocery stores meet basic community needs, and agricultural business units provide farmers with loans, capital, and supplies such as fertilizer. In boosting the village economy, grocery stores serve as sales partners for local MSME products and enable the resale of agricultural produce outside the region. However, significant challenges remain, including changing public perception that limits cooperatives to savings and loan activities, lack of initiative among cooperative leaders, uneven infrastructure and facility construction, and potential price competition with retail stores.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. For the government, it is recommended to intensify outreach and education programs to shift public perception of cooperatives as multi-business institutions, accelerate the equitable construction of business facilities across all villages, and provide continuous technical guidance and capacity building for cooperative managers. For cooperative managers, it is recommended to increase initiative in implementing the cooperative program by actively developing the six established business units and building partnerships with local SMEs and farmers to create a sustainable economic cycle. For village communities, it is expected to actively participate in and utilize the cooperative's services and business units to improve their economic welfare. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct quantitative or mixed-method studies to empirically measure the impact of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative Program on food security and economic growth, and to expand the research scope to other regions in Indonesia to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the program's implementation and effectiveness.

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