
Implementation of the Maslahah Principle in Modern Agricultural Systems in the Context of Income Distribution (A Case Study of Farmers in Tonra Subdistrict)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the maslahah principle in the modern harvesting-technology system within the context of farmers' income distribution in Tonra Subdistrict, Bone Regency, to examine the challenges encountered in its implementation, and to formulate strategies for applying the maslahah principle in achieving equitable income distribution. This research employed a qualitative approach with a field-research design. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving farmers, harvesting-technology owners, harvesting laborers, religious leaders, and village government representatives, and were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with validity ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings reveal that the implementation of modern harvesting technology reflects the maslahah principle through a profit-sharing system perceived as fair by farmers, lower harvesting costs, and time efficiency that increases farmers' income. However, several challenges remain, including limited transparency when the harvest volume does not match the agreed ratio, the need to strengthen workers' honesty, and the professionalism of technology owners in maintaining the operational readiness of harvesting machines. To strengthen the implementation of the maslahah principle, farmers and technology owners have adopted several strategies: careful planning of profit-sharing arrangements before harvesting, farmers' participation throughout the harvesting process, and the technology owners' responsibility for ensuring the operational readiness of harvesting equipment, together promoting a more equitable, transparent, and sustainable distribution of income. The study concludes that implementing the maslahah principle in modern harvesting technology is determined not only by the use of technology to raise productivity but also by the practice of transparency, honesty, responsibility, and cooperation among stakeholders. Agricultural modernization therefore contributes

not only to raising farmers' income but also to realizing *maslahah* through equitable income distribution and sustainable agricultural development.

Keywords: *maslahah principle, income distribution, modern harvesting technology, Islamic economics, agricultural modernization.*

1. Introduction

The advancement of agricultural technology has transformed the way farmers work. When farming activities were still carried out manually, every stage of cultivation demanded considerable time and physical effort. As agricultural technology developed, this pattern shifted: land preparation, crop maintenance, and harvesting can now be completed more quickly and efficiently. In the era of modern agriculture, technology functions as a supporting tool for farming activities, while farmers are the parties who make use of it to sustain their enterprises; technology and farmers are therefore two interrelated elements in the agricultural production process.

This study focuses on the harvesting process because combine-harvester technology has become common in modern farming and is an important object for further exploration. The use of modern harvesting technology in Indonesia began around 2015, first in Kalimantan before spreading to other regions, and it changed the way harvesting work is organized, previously a manual, hand-based activity carried out by farming groups.

Observation shows that Tonra Subdistrict, in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, is one of the areas that has gradually assimilated modern agricultural technology, given that most of its residents work as farmers and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Data from the subdistrict's agricultural extension agency records approximately 3,423 farmers cultivating a total of 6,454.88 hectares of rice fields across eleven villages, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Farmers, Rice-Field Plots, and Rice-Field Area by Village in Tonra Subdistrict

No	Village	Number of Rice-Field Plots	Number of Farmers	Rice-Field Area (ha)
1	Bulu-bulu	911	587	1,283.52
2	Gareccing	430	323	632.14
3	Biccoing	1,249	671	1,284.44
4	Ujunge	85	74	114.38
5	Libureng	419	256	473.72
6	Rappa	453	322	696.48
7	Bacu	388	249	370.66
8	Muara	300	217	324.32
9	Bone Pute	277	198	350.50
10	Padatuo	343	258	415.82
11	Samaenre	399	268	508.90
	Total	5,254	3,423	6,454.88

Source: Tonra Subdistrict Agricultural Extension Agency, processed by the author (2026)

This substantial number of farmers and area of cultivated land indicates that the agricultural sector plays an important role in supporting the local economy. With modern harvesting machines now used almost universally throughout the subdistrict at harvest time, the change in work systems inevitably affects farmers' income. Modern harvesting shortens harvest time and makes costs more measurable, but it also changes the pattern of sharing economic benefits: farmers now rely less on collective manual labor and more on a system centered on equipment and individual management. Modernization in Tonra Subdistrict therefore affects not only the technical aspects of production but also the pattern of income distribution among farmers.

Previous studies have generally shown that modern harvesting technology increases work efficiency, reduces post-harvest grain losses, and expands the area that can be harvested (Fatmawaty et al., 2023; Nur Ainul Islami et al., 2025), and that it raises farm income compared with manual harvesting (Parayudhi et al., 2022). What these studies have not examined in depth is how that additional income is distributed among the parties involved, particularly within the socio-economic context of rural communities.

This gap becomes especially important when viewed through the lens of *maslahah*, the Islamic economic principle of pursuing benefit and preventing harm while safeguarding, among the five higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shari'ah*), the protection of property (*hifz al-mal*). Within this framework, it is important to examine whether the income generated from harvesting technology is distributed without exploitation or injustice, since the Qur'an itself commands that trusts be given to those entitled to them and that judgment between people be carried out justly (QS. an-Nisa 4:58).

Building on this background, the present study investigates how the *maslahah* principle is implemented in the modern harvesting-technology system in the context of farmers' income distribution in Tonra Subdistrict, what challenges are encountered in that implementation, and what strategies are adopted to ensure a just distribution of income. Unlike prior research that emphasizes efficiency and productivity gains, this study examines modern agriculture from the standpoint of the *maslahah* values realized, or constrained, in the everyday practice of sharing harvest income.

2. Literature Review

Etymologically, *maslahah* derives from the Arabic root *ṣ-l-ḥ*, meaning something good, proper, and beneficial (Hasan, 2022). In terminology, scholars, including al-Buti in *Dawabit al-Maslahah fi asy-Syari'ah al-Islamiyyah*, define *maslahah* as a benefit that produces good and averts harm. Al-Ghazali argues that *maslahah* is essentially the pursuit of benefit and the rejection of harm while preserving the five higher objectives of Islamic law: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (Ibrahim, 2025). In economic activity, the principle is expressed through justice (placing every party's rights and duties proportionally), responsibility (fulfilling one's role and bearing the consequences of one's actions), benefit (*jalb al-manafi'*, producing tangible good for others), and trustworthiness/*amanah* (acting honestly and avoiding the misuse of authority) (Munir, 2023; Ayu & Azzaki, 2024; Nisa, 2025). *Maslahah* is commonly classified according to its stability, fixed (*thabitah*) versus changeable (*mutaghayyirah*), its recognition in the sources (*mu'tabarah*, *mulghah*, *mursalah*), and, following al-Shatibi, its level of necessity: *dharuriyyat* (primary), *hajiyyat* (secondary), and *tahsiniyyat* (complementary) (Agung Kurniawan & Hudafi, 2024).

Income distribution in Islamic economics refers to the allocation of the proceeds of production among the parties who contributed to it, encompassing not only social instruments such as *zakat*, *infaq*,

and sedekah but also market mechanisms such as rent and wages (ijarah) and profit-sharing. In agriculture, income can be distributed through wages, equipment rental, or profit-sharing arrangements between landowners and service or technology providers (Nufus et al., 2024). The Qur'an emphasizes this circulation of wealth so that it does not circulate solely among the wealthy (QS. al-Hashr 59:7), underscoring that distribution should serve the higher objective (maqasid al-shari'ah) of social justice and welfare.

Distributive justice, as a component of economic justice, concerns the fair allocation of wealth and opportunity within society (Am, 2016). Ibn Taymiyyah contends that a healthy economic system is measured not merely by the volume of production and transactions but chiefly by the justice of its distribution, rejecting the concentration of wealth among a limited group (Dewi & Jamal, 2025). Al-Ghazali situates economic justice within hifz al-mal, arguing that wealth must be protected from causing social harm, inequality, or exploitation (Kasmawati, 2025).

Modern agriculture refers to the shift from traditional cultivation toward mechanization, information technology, and precision-agriculture systems. According to Ruttan (2002), technological progress is a key driver of global agricultural productivity, and it also reshapes the social and economic structure of rural areas, including work patterns and income distribution (Mulyaningsih & Eng, 2025). The combine harvester in particular performs cutting, threshing, and cleaning in a single continuous operation, reducing the labor and time required for harvesting compared with manual methods, although it requires a relatively large capital investment (Fatmawaty et al., 2023).

The conceptual framework of this study places the *maslahah* principle as the analytical lens through which the modern harvesting-technology system is examined in the context of farmers' income distribution. Modern harvesting technology is treated as the object of analysis: its presence changes not only the technical process of harvesting but also the way income is distributed among those involved. The study accordingly examines how justice, ease, and benefit are realized in practice, the challenges that constrain that realization, and the strategies farmers and technology owners employ to safeguard a fair and sustainable distribution of income.

3. Research Methods

This study is a qualitative field research using a descriptive-qualitative method, aimed at describing and interpreting the meaning of the phenomena, events, and social situations under investigation (Waruwu et al., 2023). Three complementary approaches were applied: an economic approach, focusing on farmers' income from the use of harvesting technology; a normative approach, drawing on Islamic values, specifically the *maslahah* principle, that safeguard the objectives of shari'ah; and a technological approach, used to identify the advantages and limitations of the modern harvesting system.

The research was conducted in Tonra Subdistrict, Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, over three months, comprising a fifteen-day literature study, one month of fieldwork, and one and a half months of data processing, report writing, and supervision. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving farmers, harvesting-technology owners, traditional harvest laborers, a religious leader, the head of the farmers' group, an agricultural extension officer, and a village government representative. Secondary data were drawn from documents, prior research, and official statistics.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, on the consideration that each informant possessed direct knowledge of, or authority over, the phenomenon under study (Sugiyono, 2014). The object of the research is the implementation of the *maslahah* principle in the modern harvesting-technology system in the context of income distribution.

Data were collected through non-participant observation of the harvesting-technology system in the field; structured and semi-structured interviews, guided by an interview matrix covering three aspects, the *maslahah* principle, the modern harvesting system, and income distribution, as summarized in Table 2; and documentation, comprising written, visual, and electronic records.

Table 2. Interview Matrix

Aspect	Indicator / Sub-theme
Maslahah principle	Hifz al-mal (protection of assets): machine efficiency in raising farmers' harvest yield compared with the previous system; profit-sharing agreement between farmers and technology owners (distributive justice); risk anticipation, since rapid harvesting shortens the time rice remains in the field.
Modern harvesting technology	Field-partnership mechanism: procedure for calling the operator, scheduling, and transparent sack-counting at the field; accuracy and transparency, i.e., farmers' trust in the operator's honesty when filling sacks (avoiding <i>gharar</i> /uncertainty in measurement); equitable access, i.e., ease for both small- and large-scale farmers in obtaining a machine turn during peak harvest season.
Income distribution	Farmers' net profit: the net income obtained from the harvest after costs; risk-sharing: the profit-sharing system applied; savings/capital: whether income can support the household or serve as capital for the next planting cycle.

Source: developed by the author (2026)

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, applied before, during, and after fieldwork, followed by descriptive-qualitative synthesis in which findings from the field were grouped by sub-theme and combined into a narrative account (Muhyiddin, 2017). The credibility of the findings was established through source triangulation, comparing information from farmers, technology owners, laborers, the religious leader, village government, the farmers'-group head, and the extension officer, and technique triangulation, comparing interview, observation, and documentation results (Susanto, 2023).

4. Result and Discussion

Research Location and Data Validity

Tonra Subdistrict lies administratively within Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, comprising eleven villages: Rappa, Libureng, Samaenre, Padatuo, Bulu-bulu, Gareccing, Bone Pute, Bicoing, Muara, Bacu, and Ujunge. Bordering both upland and coastal areas, the subdistrict offers diverse agricultural land, and its roughly 3,423 farmers cultivating 6,454.88 hectares make it a representative site for studying the effects of harvesting-technology modernization on income distribution. Modern harvesting machines are now used almost universally at harvest time, a shift that has reorganized not only the technical process of harvesting but also labor requirements, operating costs, and the sharing of proceeds between farmers and technology owners.

Data validity was established through source and technique triangulation, comparing information obtained from farmers, technology owners, traditional laborers, the religious leader, the village government, the farmers'-group head, and the extension officer, and across interviews, observation, and documentation. Across sources and techniques, informants converged on a consistent pattern: modern harvesting technology brings a fairer profit-sharing arrangement, lower harvesting costs, and time savings that raise farmer income, even as it reduces manual laborers' involvement; informants also agreed that adjusting profit-sharing when harvest volumes fall outside the agreed ratio, the honesty of certain workers, and the mechanical condition of harvesting equipment remain recurring challenges, addressed through pre-harvest planning, farmer participation, and equipment inspection.

Implementation of the Maslahah Principle in the Modern Harvesting-Technology System

In Islamic economic thought, *maslahah* is oriented toward realizing benefit and preventing harm in human life, applying not only to worship but also to economic and contractual (*muamalah*) activity. According to al-Ghazali, *maslahah* is the effort to safeguard the higher objectives of *shari'ah* (*maqasid al-shari'ah*): religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. In this study, the implementation of *maslahah* in Tonra's modern harvesting system is analyzed through three core values: justice in income distribution, ease in harvest financing, and benefit through time efficiency.

a. Justice in income distribution. Justice means placing rights and obligations proportionally according to each party's role and contribution, rather than merely dividing outcomes equally (Kasmawati, 2025). In Tonra, farmers and technology owners share the harvest under a ten-to-one ratio: of every ten sacks harvested from a farmer's field, one goes to the technology owner and nine remain with the farmer. Bahril, a farmer, described the arrangement as considerably more favorable than the manual system, under which several categories of harvest labor once divided the proceeds. Muhlis, a local religious figure, likewise affirmed that the ten-to-one ratio is uncontroversial because it has become standard practice across the subdistrict.

Compared with the traditional manual system, in which harvest labor typically received a six-to-one share, the modern arrangement leaves farmers with a substantially larger portion, reflecting the *maqasid al-shari'ah* concern for *hifz al-mal* (protection of property) through a clear, mutually agreed division of proceeds, consistent with the Qur'anic injunction to act justly and do good (QS. an-Nahl 16:90).

The shift has nonetheless reduced the involvement of manual harvest laborers, since fewer workers are needed to operate a combine harvester than to organize a full manual harvesting party. Nurlisa, a former harvest laborer, explained that she no longer earns income from the rice harvest itself but has found other sources of income, while Hamdan, another former laborer, reported shifting to maize cultivation after the transition to mechanized harvesting. Such adaptation shows that *maslahah* in this context is realized not only through farmers' gains but also through the resilience shown by displaced laborers in finding alternative livelihoods, a process partly supported by village-government social-assistance programs that regularly update data on households still considered pre-prosperous, as noted by Jusriadi, a village official.

b. Ease in harvest financing. The value of ease (*al-taysir*) in *maslahah* reflects the *fiqh* principle that hardship calls forth ease (*al-mashaqqah tajlib al-taysir*). In the modern harvesting system, several costs previously borne by farmers, such as sacks and the harvest crew's meals, are now covered by the technology owner. Bahril noted that farmers no longer need to purchase sacks themselves, a cost he

described as considerable if borne independently, while Ridwan observed that meal costs for workers, once a farmer expense, are no longer charged to farmers and effectively add to their income; the farmers'-group head, H. Andi Usman, likewise cited faster harvesting and sack costs shifted away from farmers as the technology's two chief advantages.

From a maqasid al-shari'ah perspective, this reduction in production costs reflects hifz al-mal, protecting farmers' wealth from unnecessary erosion, while the resulting higher net income also supports hifz al-nafs (protection of life) by improving farmers' capacity to meet household needs. These findings are consistent with prior studies showing that mechanization lowers operating costs and increases farm efficiency (Parayudhi et al., 2022), while extending that literature by situating the cost savings explicitly within the maslahah framework.

c. Benefit through time efficiency. Jalb al-masalih, the pursuit of tangible benefit, is realized in Tonra chiefly through the time savings the harvesting machine affords. Ridwan explained that delayed harvesting exposes rice to declining quality, through mold from lodging or pest damage, and reduced grain weight, while Hamdan observed that mechanized harvesting has ended the long days farmers once spent in the fields at harvest time; Ridwan further noted that the resulting free time allows farmers to take on other work.

Faster harvesting therefore protects both the economic value of the harvest (hifz al-mal) and, by easing the physical burden of manual labor, farmers' wellbeing (hifz al-nafs). Time no longer consumed by harvesting can be redirected to other productive activities, widening farmers' opportunities to diversify their income. These results corroborate earlier findings that mechanized harvesting improves work efficiency and productivity (Zakky et al., 2021), while showing further that the time saved constitutes an independent form of maslahah realized by farmers in Tonra.

Challenges in Implementing the Maslahah Principle

Although modern harvesting technology in Tonra has delivered clear benefits, efficiency gains, faster harvesting, and higher income, its implementation still faces obstacles that are technical as well as social in nature. Three recurring challenges emerged from the data: transparency in adjusting profit-sharing, the honesty of harvest-crew workers, and the professionalism of technology owners in maintaining equipment.

a. Transparency. A recurring challenge concerns adjusting the profit-sharing ratio when the actual harvest volume does not divide evenly according to the agreed formula. Yusuf, an agricultural extension officer, explained that when the harvest yields, for example, twelve sacks rather than a multiple of ten, the parties must renegotiate the division on the spot; farmers Bahril and Ridwan confirmed that in such cases they generally accept whatever arrangement is proposed, while the farmers'-group head noted that it is typically the technology owner who initiates and determines the revised split.

Although resolved amicably and consistent with the Qur'anic requirement that transactions rest on mutual consent (QS. an-Nisa 4:29), this pattern shows that the party controlling the equipment also tends to control the terms of any ad hoc adjustment, a condition that, if left unaddressed, could compromise the clarity (al-wuduh) that maslahah requires in every economic transaction (Pratikno, 2026).

b. Honesty. A second challenge concerns the integrity of harvest-crew workers. Muhlis reported that some workers, not all, select higher-quality grain or overfill the sacks allotted to their own

share, while Bahril noted that farmers cannot fully observe what happens inside the harvester's grain compartment during operation. Such practices resemble the Qur'anic prohibition of *tatfif*, cheating in measurement (QS. al-Mutaffifin 83:1-3), and show that the honesty of individual operators, not the technology itself, determines whether the agreed division of proceeds is actually realized.

Because part of the harvesting process is not directly observable by farmers, this finding illustrates that modernization has shifted part of the harvest's transparency from direct observation, characteristic of manual harvesting, to trust in the technology operator, a change that calls for stronger transparency mechanisms alongside individual integrity (Hani & Mecca, 2026).

c. Professionalism of technology owners. A third challenge concerns the mechanical condition of the harvesting equipment. Saharuddin, a technology owner, acknowledged that when the machine malfunctions, grain can fall to the ground and reduce the harvest volume, while Yusuf noted that a malfunctioning machine mixes straw into the grain and lowers its quality, and village official Jusriadi affirmed that an unhealthy combine harvester causes rice to be wasted during harvesting.

Because harvesting outcomes depend directly on equipment reliability, *maslahah* in this context requires not only the presence of technology but also its proper maintenance. Drawing on al-Shatibi's principle that the means to a benefit (*wasilah*) must be safeguarded, and the *fiqh* maxim that preventing harm takes precedence over securing benefit (*dar' al-mafasid muqaddam 'ala jalb al-masalih*), the study finds that machine readiness is itself a precondition for realizing *maslahah*, consistent with prior findings that poorly maintained harvest machinery increases harvest losses (Arsyad, 2024).

Strategies for Ensuring Just Distribution of Income

To sustain the benefits already realized and to address the challenges above, farmers and technology owners in Tonra have adopted three main strategies: pre-harvest planning of profit-sharing, farmer participation, and technology owners' responsibility for equipment readiness.

a. Pre-harvest planning of profit-sharing. To prevent disputes, technology owners calculate the profit-sharing ratio before the harvest begins, weighing operating costs and a reasonable margin for their service against a fair share for the farmer. Saharuddin explained that the division is worked out in advance based on the costs and services involved, following the same reasoning previously used under the manual system, while the farmers'-group head affirmed that the agreed ratio reasonably reflects the technology owner's fuel costs and diligence in harvesting, regardless of field size or grain quality.

This advance calculation embodies the principle of clarity (*al-wuduh*) in an economic contract, reducing the potential for *gharar* (uncertainty) and reflecting Yusuf al-Qaradawi's view that Islamic economic activity must rest on justice and balance so that no party is disadvantaged (M. Ridwan, n.d.).

b. Farmer participation. A second strategy is farmers' presence at the harvesting site to observe the process and the final division of the harvest. Bahril noted that communication between farmers and technology owners is especially important, and most frequent, at the point of dividing the harvest, while Muhlis emphasized the importance of speaking up whenever something appears amiss. Although some farmers, such as Ridwan, now rely on a phone call to learn the harvest volume rather than being present in the field, informants agreed that on-site presence remains valuable as a safeguard against the honesty concerns discussed above.

This practice reflects the concept of *shura* (consultation), reinforcing trust and accountability between the parties involved (Yoga Pernama & Nisa, 2024).

c. Technology owners' responsibility for equipment readiness. A third strategy is a pre-harvest inspection of the machine to identify and repair any defects before it is deployed to the field. Saharuddin stressed that machine health is checked and any damaged parts repaired and funded before operation, while village official Jusriadi advised that technology owners should be strongly encouraged to service their equipment fully before entering the field, since machine condition strongly affects harvest outcomes.

This preventive practice, consistent with Schultz's (2002) view that agricultural productivity gains depend on farmers' and operators' ability to manage available technology effectively, illustrates the fiqh principle of preventing harm (*dar' al-mafasid*) as a precondition for realizing benefit (*jalb al-masalih*).

5. Conclusion

This study concludes, first, that the implementation of the *maslahah* principle in Tonra Subdistrict's modern harvesting system is reflected in a profit-sharing arrangement perceived by farmers as fair, lower harvest costs, and time savings that together raise farmer income; at the same time, modernization has reduced the involvement of manual harvest labor and prompted a social adjustment in which displaced workers seek alternative sources of livelihood, partly supported by government social-assistance programs.

Second, several challenges continue to constrain the full realization of *maslahah*: limited transparency when harvest volumes deviate from the agreed profit-sharing ratio, the honesty of some harvest-crew workers in handling the division of grain, and the professionalism of technology owners in maintaining the mechanical readiness of harvesting equipment. These challenges show that the success of technology adoption depends not only on the tool itself but on the ethical conduct of the people operating it.

Third, farmers and technology owners in Tonra have adopted several strategies to safeguard equitable income distribution: calculating the profit-sharing arrangement carefully before the harvest begins, farmers' participation and presence throughout the harvesting process, and technology owners' responsibility for inspecting and maintaining equipment before it is deployed. These strategies strengthen transparency, minimize potential loss, and balance the rights and obligations of farmers and technology owners so that the benefits of modern harvesting technology can be sustained over time.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce that the *maslahah* principle in Islamic economics is not merely conceptual but can be observed concretely in the practice of modern agriculture, particularly through the interaction of cost efficiency, harvest speed, and the clarity of profit-sharing arrangements. Practically, the study suggests that farmers and technology owners can use pre-harvest profit-sharing calculations, farmer oversight, and equipment inspection as a reference for building more transparent and mutually beneficial partnerships. For policy, local governments and agricultural extension services are encouraged to promote the adoption of harvesting technology in ways that attend not only to efficiency but also to the fairness of income distribution, through guidance, oversight, and education for farming communities so that agricultural modernization delivers benefits equitably, particularly for farmers as the primary actors in agricultural production.

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