

Agrarian Reform as a Solution to Overcome Land Mafia in The Indonesian Agrarian Legal System

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Abstract. *Land mafia has become a serious issue within Indonesia's agrarian system, threatening both justice and legal certainty in land affairs. Practices involving the manipulation of land certificates, illegal land occupation, and collusion between corrupt officials and certain parties have caused significant harm to the public and hindered national development. This study employs a normative legal approach with descriptive analysis to examine the role of agrarian reform as a strategic solution to combat land mafia practices. The findings indicate that agrarian reform through land redistribution, asset legalization, and institutional strengthening can foster a more just and transparent land administration system. A comprehensive implementation of agrarian reform can disrupt the chain of land mafia operations by simplifying administrative procedures, digitizing land information systems, and enhancing oversight mechanisms. Furthermore, agrarian reform contributes to improving farmers' welfare, reducing land ownership inequality, and strengthening national food security. This study recommends the need for strong political commitment, effective inter-agency coordination, and active public participation in implementing agrarian reform. Strict law enforcement against land mafia actors and the development of an integrated land information system are key to the success of agrarian reform in establishing clean and accountable land governance.*

Keywords: *Agrarian Reform; Agrarian Legal; Land Mafia; Legal Certainty; Land Redistribution.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as an agrarian country with a land area of 1.9 million km², faces highly complex land-related problems. Land in Indonesia functions not only as an economic production factor but also as a social, cultural, and political foundation of society. However, the current agrarian system is confronted with serious challenges, particularly the practices of land mafia that threaten justice and legal certainty in land affairs.

The constitutional basis for land control in Indonesia is stipulated in Article 33 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution, which states that "land, water, and the natural

resources contained therein are controlled by the state and shall be used for the greatest benefit of the people.” This principle is further elaborated in Law No. 5 of 1960 on the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA), which serves as the main legal framework for Indonesia’s agrarian system. The UUPA mandates that land must have a social function and be utilized to promote the welfare of the people.

Over time, various laws and regulations have been enacted to govern land matters, such as Law No. 26 of 2007 on Spatial Planning, Law No. 2 of 2012 on Land Acquisition for Public Interest Development, and Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018 on Agrarian Reform. However, the implementation of these regulations still encounters significant obstacles in practice. Land mafia refers to organized networks engaging in illegal practices related to land control, administration, and transactions through various modes that violate agrarian legal provisions. These practices include falsification of land ownership documents in violation of the Ministerial Regulation of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/Head of BPN No. 3 of 2019 on Electronic Land Certificate Services; certificate forgery violating Article 263 of the Indonesian Penal Code (KUHP); illegal occupation of state or community land in violation of Article 6 of the UUPA; fraudulent land sales violating Article 378 of the KUHP on fraud; and collusion between corrupt officials and certain parties, breaching Law No. 31 of 1999 in conjunction with Law No. 20 of 2001 on the Eradication of Corruption.

The phenomenon of land mafia not only causes individual losses to society but also hinders national development and worsens social inequality. These practices contradict the principles of social justice mandated by Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, and they obstruct the goals of agrarian reform as stipulated in MPR Decree No. IX/MPR/2001 on Agrarian Reform and Natural Resource Management. Data from the National Land Agency (BPN) indicates that land conflicts in Indonesia reach thousands of cases annually, with most involving land mafia practices. This situation is exacerbated by the weak land administration system, overlapping regulations among sectoral laws, ineffective inter-agency coordination as mandated in Presidential Regulation No. 17 of 2015 on the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency, and suboptimal law enforcement in applying relevant criminal sanctions.

The complexity of agrarian legal issues is also linked to the implementation of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, which grants authority to villages to manage village land assets, often leading to jurisdictional conflicts with existing land regulations. Furthermore, Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, which regulates the division of governmental responsibilities in land affairs between the central and regional governments, has also caused coordination issues that can be exploited by land mafias.

As a result, legal certainty in land matters is disrupted, and investments in agriculture and infrastructure development face significant constraints. This contradicts the mandate of Presidential Regulation No. 45 of 2018 on the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024, which emphasizes the importance of agrarian reform in enhancing community welfare and reducing inequality. Agrarian reform, as a strategic government policy regulated under Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018 on Agrarian Reform, holds great potential to address the issue of land mafia within the Indonesian agrarian legal system. This regulation mandates the redistribution of 9 million hectares of land and the legalization of 12.7 million hectares of assets by 2024. Agrarian reform aims not only to ensure fair land redistribution in line with Article 7 of

the UUPA—which prohibits excessive land ownership—but also to establish a land system that is transparent, accountable, and sustainable, based on the principles of good governance.

The implementation of agrarian reform is supported by several technical regulations, such as Ministerial Regulation of ATR/BPN No. 11 of 2016 on the Settlement of Land Cases, Ministerial Regulation No. 4 of 2017 on Procedures for Land Redistribution for Farming Purposes, and Ministerial Regulation No. 6 of 2017 on Procedures for Asset Legalization. Through a comprehensive approach encompassing legal, institutional, and socio-economic aspects, agrarian reform is expected to break the chain of land mafia practices and create better land governance in accordance with the principles of the rule of law. Implementing agrarian reform to combat land mafia practices requires an in-depth study on the effectiveness of existing legal instruments and policies. This is crucial for optimizing agrarian reform as a strategic solution while also identifying the obstacles and challenges faced in its implementation. This research is therefore relevant in providing academic contributions to the development of more effective and sustainable agrarian policies.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a normative legal research approach, which examines law as a set of norms or rules that apply within society. Normative legal research focuses on the analysis of statutory regulations, legal principles, and legal doctrines related to agrarian reform and the handling of land mafia practices within Indonesia's agrarian legal system. The study utilizes several approaches commonly used in normative legal research, namely:

2.1 Statute Approach

This approach involves analyzing all legal regulations relevant to the issue being studied, including the 1945 Constitution, the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA), and various statutory instruments concerning agrarian reform and the eradication of land mafia practices.

2.2 Conceptual Approach

This approach analyzes legal concepts related to agrarian reform, land mafia, legal certainty, and agrarian justice through the perspectives of legal scholars and the development of legal doctrines.

2.3 Case Approach

This approach involves the analysis of court decisions related to land disputes, land mafia practices, and the implementation of agrarian reform, in order to understand how the law is applied in practice.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Implementation of Agrarian Reform as a Means to Overcome Land Mafia Practices in the Indonesian Agrarian Legal System

The implementation of agrarian reform serves as a strategic and systemic effort to address land mafia practices that have long undermined justice, legal certainty, and

equitable land distribution in Indonesia. Land mafias typically operate by exploiting administrative weaknesses, regulatory overlaps, and the lack of transparency in land governance. These practices include the falsification of land certificates, illegal occupation of land, collusion with corrupt officials, and manipulation of land registration procedures. The widespread nature of such activities threatens the rule of law and the mandate of Article 33 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution, which places land under state control for the maximum benefit of the people.

Agrarian reform, as mandated by Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018, includes key programs such as land redistribution, asset legalization, and institutional strengthening. These components are designed to correct historical land tenure inequalities, recognize informal land ownership, and improve administrative efficiency. Through land redistribution, landless communities and small-scale farmers are granted access to land, thereby reducing the dominance of large landholders who are often connected to illicit networks. Asset legalization ensures that landholders, particularly those in rural and customary areas, gain formal legal recognition and protection, making it more difficult for land mafias to seize or dispute their land.

In addition, agrarian reform promotes the digitization and integration of land data systems, which enhances transparency, reduces administrative discretion, and limits opportunities for corruption. This is supported by programs such as the Complete Systematic Land Registration (PTSL), which aims to map and register all plots of land nationwide. By consolidating accurate and verifiable land information, the state strengthens its capacity to detect and prevent irregularities, thereby weakening the operational space of land mafias.

Furthermore, the implementation of agrarian reform must be accompanied by law enforcement improvements and inter-agency coordination, as mandated in Presidential Regulation No. 17 of 2015. The involvement of the Anti-Land Mafia Task Force (Satgas Mafia Tanah), legal reforms, and public education on land rights all contribute to the creation of a land governance system that is clean, accountable, and people-oriented.

Thus, agrarian reform, when implemented comprehensively and consistently, can serve as an effective instrument to dismantle the systemic and structural foundations of land mafia practices in Indonesia, while simultaneously advancing the principles of social justice, legal certainty, and sustainable development in the agrarian sector. Therefore, agrarian reform functions not only as a tool for redistributive justice but also as a preventive and corrective measure to dismantle the structural conditions that allow land mafias to operate. When implemented consistently, transparently, and supported by strong political will and institutional synergy, agrarian reform can significantly reduce the prevalence of land-related crimes and promote a land governance system that is just, lawful, and people-centered.

3.1.1. Legal Basis for the Implementation of Agrarian Reform

The implementation of agrarian reform to combat land mafia practices is strongly grounded in Indonesia's agrarian legal system. Article 33 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution affirms that "the earth, water, and natural resources contained therein shall be controlled by the state and used for the greatest prosperity of the people." This principle provides constitutional legitimacy for the state to redistribute land and prevent land mafia activities that contradict the public interest.

Law No. 5 of 1960 on Basic Agrarian Principles (UUPA) in Article 7 prohibits excessive land ownership and mandates the prohibition of absentee ownership. This provision serves as a legal instrument to prevent the concentration of land control, which can be exploited by land mafias. Article 9 of the UUPA also stipulates that only Indonesian citizens may have full rights to land, water, and airspace, thereby preventing land control by foreign parties through land mafia operations.

3.1.2. Agrarian Reform Policy Framework

Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018 on Agrarian Reform serves as the operational foundation for the implementation of agrarian reform in Indonesia. This regulation mandates two main programs: redistribution of 9 million hectares of land and asset legalization for 12.7 million hectares during the 2018–2024 period. The land redistribution program, as stated in Article 8 of the regulation, aims to overcome land mafia practices by:

1. Redistribution of State Land

Based on Article 9 paragraph (1) of Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018, state land that can be redistributed includes land controlled by the state and land released for public purposes. Redistribution prevents land mafia operations that frequently exploit unclear state land status for illegal occupation.

2. Redistribution of Abandoned Land

Article 9 paragraph (2) states that abandoned land determined as state land can be redistributed. This aligns with Article 27 of the UUPA, which obliges landowners to utilize their land productively. This policy prevents land mafia practices that involve intentionally leaving land idle for speculative purposes.

3.1.3. Asset Legalization Mechanism as an Anti-Land Mafia Instrument

The asset legalization program, as provided in Article 10 of Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018, aims to provide legal certainty to communities occupying land without formal certificates. Ministerial Regulation of ATR/BPN No. 6 of 2017 on Procedures for Asset Legalization governs mechanisms to accelerate land certification and suppress land mafia activities through:

1. Simplification of Certification Procedures

Article 8 of the regulation simplifies document requirements for asset legalization, thereby reducing opportunities for land mafias to exploit complex and bureaucratic procedures.

2. Accelerated Certificate Issuance

Article 12 stipulates that asset legalization must be completed within a maximum of 30 working days. This acceleration prevents land mafias from manipulating the process during certification delays.

3.1.4. Institutional Strengthening and Land Information Systems

Presidential Regulation No. 17 of 2015 on the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency reinforces institutional capacity in implementing

agrarian reform. Article 3 mandates the ministry to manage agrarian and spatial planning affairs in an integrated manner.

The implementation of electronic land information systems, based on Ministerial Regulation of ATR/BPN No. 3 of 2019 on Electronic Land Certificate Services, addresses land mafia practices through:

1. Digitization of Land Databases

Article 5 mandates the development of an integrated land information system, which prevents duplicate certificates and data manipulation by land mafias.

2. Transparency of Land Information

Article 8 provides for electronic access to land information, enabling the public to verify land status and avoid deception by land mafias.

3.1.5. Resolution of Land Conflicts

Ministerial Regulation of ATR/BPN No. 11 of 2016 on the Resolution of Land Cases provides mechanisms for resolving land conflicts to counter land mafia activities. Article 6 outlines that land disputes can be resolved through mediation, adjudication, and enforcement.

This conflict resolution mechanism supports the fight against land mafias through:

1. Law-Based Mediation

Article 10 ensures that mediation is conducted based on applicable legal provisions, preventing biased outcomes that favor those engaged in land mafia practices.

2. Administrative Adjudication

Article 15 mandates that adjudication ensures legal certainty regarding the status of disputed land, thereby stopping land mafias from exploiting legal ambiguities.

3.1.6. Sanctions and Law Enforcement

The implementation of agrarian reform is supported by strict legal sanctions against land mafia practices. Article 15 of the UUPA provides for criminal sanctions against violators of agrarian laws, which can be applied to land mafia perpetrators. In addition, Law No. 31 of 1999 in conjunction with Law No. 20 of 2001 on the Eradication of Corruption Crimes can be used against corrupt officials involved in land mafia networks.

1. Administrative and Criminal Sanctions

Article 23 of Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018 stipulates administrative sanctions for officials who fail to properly implement the agrarian reform program, thus serving as a preventive measure against collusion with land mafia actors.

Criminal sanctions are also enforced. Article 263 of the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) concerning document forgery and Article 378 of the KUHP on fraud can be applied to land mafia perpetrators who manipulate land documents.

3.1.7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Article 24 of Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018 mandates the implementation of monitoring and evaluation in the execution of agrarian reform. This monitoring system is intended to detect and prevent land mafia practices through the strict supervision of land redistribution and asset legalization processes. The monitoring and evaluation implementation includes:

1. Periodic Reporting System

Article 25 requires all institutions involved in agrarian reform to submit periodic reports to the President, enabling the detection of potential land mafia practices.

2. Auditing and Inspections

Article 26 allows agrarian reform implementation to be audited by both internal and external oversight bodies, ensuring early detection of land mafia activities.

Through comprehensive implementation of agrarian reform based on existing legal regulations, land mafia practices can be systematically and sustainably eradicated within the Indonesian agrarian legal system.

3.2. Obstacles and Challenges in the Implementation of Agrarian Reform as a Solution to Overcome Land Mafia Practices, and Strategies to Overcome Them

The implementation of agrarian reform in Indonesia faces numerous obstacles and challenges that hinder its effectiveness as a solution to combat land mafia practices. Law No. 5 of 1960 on Basic Agrarian Principles (UUPA) is the primary legal foundation regulating land rights and states that land must be controlled by the state and used for the greatest prosperity of the people.

However, Law No. 41 of 1999 on Forestry stipulates that forest areas are excluded from the scope of the UUPA. As a result, many lands considered private property by the National Land Agency (BPN) are regarded as forest areas by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK). Law No. 18 of 2013 on the Prevention and Eradication of Forest Destruction strengthens the protection of forest areas, yet fails to synchronize the legal status of lands that have been inhabited or cultivated by communities for decades.

Additionally, Law No. 26 of 2007 on Spatial Planning establishes regional spatial plans (RTRW), which are often inconsistent with data from the BPN or KLHK. For example, an area may be designated as an industrial zone in the RTRW, while forestry maps classify it as forest area—even though the BPN has issued private land certificates for that same area.

Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018 on Agrarian Reform governs the mechanisms for implementing agrarian reform. However, its implementation often encounters obstacles due to the need for alignment with data and regulations from other institutions.

Key Obstacles:

3.2.1. Overlapping Land Regulations

Overlapping regulations result from the abundance of land and natural resource-related laws that are not integrated into a single framework. This leads to institutional conflicts and legal uncertainty. Examples of overlapping regulations include:

1. Law No. 5 of 1960 (UUPA)
 - a. The main legal foundation for land rights.
 - b. Declares that land must be controlled by the state for the people's welfare.
2. Law No. 41 of 1999 on Forestry
 - a. Forest areas are excluded from the scope of the UUPA.
 - b. As a result, land recognized as private by BPN may be claimed as forest by KLHK.
3. Law No. 18 of 2013 on Forest Destruction Prevention
 - a. Reinforces forest protection but does not resolve land tenure for long-inhabited community lands.
4. Law No. 26 of 2007 on Spatial Planning
 - a. Designs regional spatial plans (RTRW), often inconsistent with BPN or KLHK data.
 - b. Example: an area may be designated as industrial in the RTRW, classified as forest in KLHK maps, and have a private land certificate from BPN.
5. Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018 on Agrarian Reform
 - a. Regulates agrarian reform mechanisms, but implementation is often hindered by the need to align with other agencies' data and regulations.

3.2.2. Overlapping Land Data

Data conflicts arise because different institutions maintain separate and uncoordinated land databases that are not regularly updated. As a result, a single land parcel may be claimed by multiple parties. For example:

1. National Land Agency (BPN) / Ministry of Agrarian Affairs (ATR)
 - a. Manages land title and certificate data.
 - b. Occasionally issues certificates for land that KLHK claims as forest or that the RTRW designates as industrial.
2. Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK)
 - a. Manages the Indicative Map of Suspension of New Licenses (PIPPIB) and forest area maps.
 - b. Many forest claims are not definitively established but still treated as protected forest areas.

3. Local Governments

a. Prepare RTRW as a guideline for regional development, often inconsistent with data from BPN or KLHK.

Concrete Example:

In Kalimantan, an Indigenous community has long managed land and received ownership certificates from BPN. However, during a spatial audit, KLHK claimed the land as a limited production forest area. As a result:

1. The certificate is deemed invalid.
2. The community may face criminalization for allegedly occupying forest land illegally.
3. Land mafias exploit this inconsistency to claim or trade the land.

Strategic Solutions:

1. Spatial Data Integration through the One Map Policy

As regulated by Presidential Regulation No. 9 of 2016, this policy unifies all thematic maps into a single, standardized national map.

2. Regulatory Synchronization Across Ministries and Agencies

A unified legal basis and land governance system are needed to ensure institutional coherence.

3. Complete Systematic Land Registration (PTSL)

This program aims to legally and digitally register all land parcels across Indonesia to eliminate uncertainty and fraud.

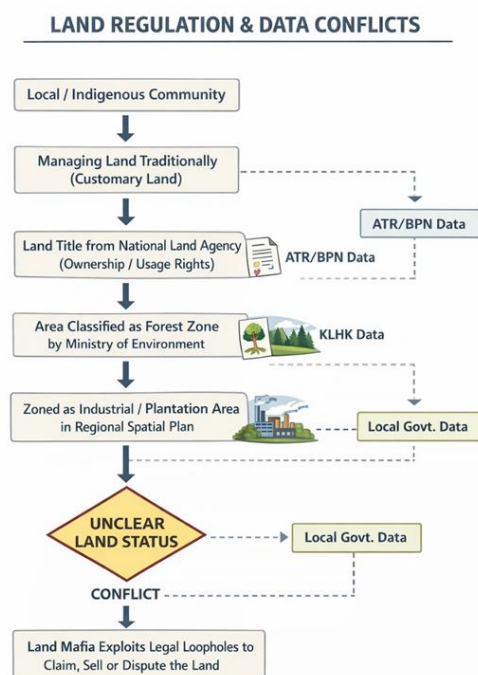


Figure 1. Land Regulation & Data Conflict Scheme

Source: Author's analysis 2025

3.3. Case Example in Central Kalimantan

Case: Conflict Between Dayak Indigenous Communities vs Palm Oil Company

1. Location: Seruyan Regency, Central Kalimantan
2. Issue:
 - a. The Dayak indigenous community has managed customary land for generations.
 - b. A palm oil company obtained a Right to Cultivate (HGU) from the National Land Agency (BPN), but the HGU covers customary land that was never relinquished.
 - c. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) claims part of the area is still classified as production forest.
 - d. According to the regional spatial plan (RTRW), the land is allocated as an industrial zone.
3. Conflict:
 - a. The community lost access to the land, and legal status is unclear.
 - b. Brokers and irresponsible individuals began claiming land for personal gain.

3.3.1. Resolution & Preventive Strategies

Resolution and prevention strategies for overlapping regulations and land data can be addressed through the integration of national spatial data by implementing the One Map Policy, as regulated under Presidential Regulation No. 9 of 2016, which aims to consolidate all sectoral thematic maps into a single consistent reference map.

In addition, regulatory harmonization between Law No. 5 of 1960 (UUPA), Law No. 41 of 1999 (Forestry), and Law No. 26 of 2007 (Spatial Planning) is necessary to prevent conflicts and overlaps. Strengthening recognition of indigenous peoples' rights is also supported by Constitutional Court Decision No. 35/PUU-X/2012, which affirmed that customary forests are not part of state forests. To prevent land document abuse, digitalization strategies through the Systematic Complete Land Registration (PTSL) Program by the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN) are essential.

Furthermore, the establishment of an Anti-Land Mafia Task Force, based on presidential directives and inter-agency coordination, is a preventive step toward eradicating land mafia practices in a firmer and more systematic manner.

3.3.2. Strategy to Address the Problem

The strategy to resolve overlapping regulations and land data—one of the main barriers to agrarian reform and efforts to combat land mafias—must be carried out holistically and integratively. A key strategic move is the implementation of the One Map Policy, which aims to unify all maps and spatial data from various government

institutions into one standardized and verified national reference map. With an integrated map, land claim conflicts and overlapping land use can be minimized.

Furthermore, regulatory harmonization is essential to address conflicts between sectoral laws such as the Basic Agrarian Law, Forestry Law, and Spatial Planning Law. This harmonization must be accompanied by a review of overlapping policies to ensure legal certainty and clear institutional authority.

On the other hand, strengthening the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights over customary land should be prioritized, including the enforcement of Constitutional Court decisions that affirm the existence and land rights of traditional law communities.

The digitalization of land administration through the PTSL program is also a crucial step, as it accelerates the validation of land rights and prevents document manipulation frequently exploited by land mafias.

All these strategies must be supported by the formation and strengthening of specific institutions or task forces mandated to crack down on land mafia practices and cleanse the land administration system of corrupt officials. Public involvement in land data verification, redistribution, and agrarian reform monitoring is equally important to ensure that the reform process is participatory and accountable.

With this comprehensive strategy, the implementation of agrarian reform is expected to be effective and serve as a real instrument in closing the space for land mafia activities in Indonesia.

Strategies to Overcome the Issues:

1. Simplification and Harmonization of Regulations

Reformulating and aligning land regulations to prevent overlapping and enhance legal certainty for the public.

2. Digitalization and Integration of Land Data

Developing an integrated land information system across institutions to improve transparency and prevent document falsification.

3. Institutional Strengthening and Law Enforcement

Enhancing the capacity of institutions such as ATR/BPN and law enforcement agencies to take firm action against land mafia practices, including through the formation of a special anti-land mafia task force.

4. Community Empowerment and Public Participation

Involving the public in land data verification, redistribution, and agrarian reform monitoring to ensure transparency and public oversight.

5. Land Bureaucracy Reform

Improving the integrity and accountability of land-related bureaucracies to minimize corruption and collusion with land mafias.

Simplification and harmonization of regulations are crucial to unify and align various land laws that currently overlap and conflict, such as Law No. 5 of 1960 (UUPA), Law No. 41 of 1999 (Forestry), and Law No. 26 of 2007 (Spatial Planning). The goal is to ensure legal certainty, clarify institutional authority, and prevent land use conflicts. With uniform and supportive regulations, agrarian reform can proceed more effectively and be safeguarded from land mafia interests.

Improving the integrity and accountability of land bureaucracies is also key to minimizing corruption and collusion with land mafia actors. Agrarian reform should not only be a means to redistribute land access equitably but also serve as an effective mechanism to close off opportunities for land mafia practices within Indonesia's agrarian legal system.

4. CONCLUSION

Overlapping regulations and land data are among the primary barriers to agrarian reform in Indonesia and provide loopholes for the proliferation of land mafia practices. The lack of synchronization between various sectoral laws and inconsistent data across institutions like BPN, KLHK, and local governments results in legal uncertainty regarding land ownership and utilization. Therefore, a comprehensive resolution strategy is needed, including the implementation of the One Map Policy, regulatory harmonization, land data digitalization, and strengthening the recognition of indigenous peoples' land rights. In addition, firm law enforcement through the establishment of an anti-land mafia task force is necessary. With these strategic measures, agrarian reform can be carried out fairly and transparently and become a vital instrument in realizing agrarian justice and protecting people's land rights in Indonesia.

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