

Circular Economy Makan Bergizi Gratis Program: A Conceptual Product Based On Islamic Economy

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Abstract

Makan Bergizi Gratis Program (MBG) is a government policy to improve the quality of human resources by providing healthy food for school children. This program not only focuses on nutritional aspects, but also stimulates the local economy through the application of circular economy principles. This study aims to analyze the application of circular economy in the MBG program and review its relevance from an Islamic economic perspective. The method used is qualitative descriptive-conceptual with a literature study approach sourced from scientific literature, news articles, the Qur'an, hadith, and the thoughts of Islamic figures such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun. The analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques to map concepts related to resource circulation, local food supply chains, and Islamic ethical principles. The results show that the MBG program has implemented circular economy principles through budget efficiency, the use of local food ingredients, waste management, and community empowerment. From an Islamic perspective, this program indicates the harmony between the circular economy mechanism of the MBG and the values of social justice, wealth distribution, and public welfare as stated in QS. Al-Hasyr verse 7 and QS. At-Taubah verse 60. Islamic philanthropy such as zakat, infaq, sedekah, and waqf has the potential to support the sustainability of this program and strengthen the people's economy. Thus, the MBG represents a concrete implementation of collaboration between the circular economy and Islamic values to achieve sustainable prosperity.

INTRODUCTION

Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) Program is one of the government's strategic policy initiatives to improve the quality of Human Resources (HR) by providing nutritious food for school children, toddlers, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers (Merlinda & Yusmar Yusuf, 2025). Although this program aims to address nutrition and social welfare issues, the effectiveness of its implementation depends not only on the aspect of food provision, but also on how these resources are managed efficiently, sustainably, and have a positive impact on the local Indonesian economy. In practice, many social programs in Indonesia still operate with a linear economic model that produces high waste, dependence on external supplies, and lacks local community economic participation. This condition indicates a practical and theoretical problem, namely the need for an operational model capable of ensuring the program's long-term sustainability.

According to MacArthur (2015), the circular economy is an economic system designed to eliminate waste and maximize the value of resources by maintaining products and materials in continuous use through the principles of reduce, reuse, and recycle. Unlike the conventional linear economy, which follows the take-make-dispose model, the circular economy emphasizes resource efficiency, environmental sustainability, and long-term economic resilience. Therefore, the circular

economy provides a relevant theoretical framework for analyzing the implementation of the MBG Program, particularly in terms of resource management, local food supply chains, and food waste utilization.

From an Islamic economic perspective, values such as distributive justice, efficiency, and public welfare (*maslahah 'ammah*) are the main foundations of public policy (Almas, 2019). Islamic economic thought also emphasizes that economic activities should not only pursue efficiency but also promote social justice and sustainable welfare. Al-Ghazali argued that the fulfillment of basic human needs is one of the state's primary responsibilities, while Ibn Khaldun emphasized the importance of government intervention in ensuring equitable distribution of wealth and strengthening social welfare. These theoretical perspectives provide a conceptual basis for evaluating the MBG Program from an Islamic economic perspective.

Several previous studies have discussed free meal programs, both in the form of nutritional effectiveness studies, increasing student attendance, and their contribution to the local economy (Maharani et al., 2024) shows that implementing MBG has the potential to increase school participation and encourage the economic activity of MSMEs as food suppliers. Other studies highlight the benefits of local food procurement in strengthening regional supply chains and reducing inequality in food access in remote areas. However, these studies still focus on short-term social and economic impacts, without examining how these programs can be managed using modern sustainability approaches. On the other hand, literature on the circular economy, as presented by (MacArthur, 2015) and Kirchherr et al. (2017), has discussed how resource management can be designed to minimize waste and be regenerative. However, studies of the circular economy in the social sector, particularly in the context of national nutrition programs, are still very limited. Similarly, research in Islamic economics, while highlighting the role of zakat, infaq, sedekah, and waqf in social welfare, has yet to examine the integration of these instruments with circular economy mechanisms within government programs.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative design with a conceptual, descriptive-analytical approach. It aims to analyze the application of circular economic principles in the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG) and assess its alignment with Islamic economic thought. A conceptual, qualitative approach was chosen because it is appropriate for answering the research problem formulation, namely providing an in-depth understanding of classical Islamic theory and literature without requiring empirical measurements in the field (Akbar, 2024). This design allows researchers to map ideas, compare conceptual frameworks, and formulate theoretical interpretations relevant to the context of the MBG program. The sources for this research are not human participants, but rather written sources such as scientific journal articles, news, social media (Instagram), laws and regulations, verses of the Quran, Hadith, and the works of classical Islamic thinkers such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun. These sources were selected purposively based on their relevance, credibility, and connection to the main research variables: the circular economy, public nutrition programs, Islamic philanthropy, and the concept of *maslahah 'ammah*.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic document review, encompassing the identification, selection, and evaluation of literature from various data sources. Researchers used inclusion-exclusion criteria to ensure that only materials directly related to the concept of a circular economy, nutritious food policies, and Islamic economic values were analyzed in depth. The primary instrument in this study was a structured document analysis guide developed to group information into themes such as resource circulation, program design, sustainability strategies, and Islamic ethical foundations.

The data analysis for this study used content analysis techniques. The collected data sources were sorted, compared across sources, and then synthesized to establish conceptual relationships. Because this study was qualitative, the procedures were structured sequentially to ensure clarity and replicability, with the types of data recorded including text interpretation, theme classification, and conceptual relationships. These stages provided sufficient information for other researchers to replicate the study with a similar approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

General description

The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) is a strategic policy of the Indonesian government for the 2024-2029 period which aims to improve the quality of human resources through interventions to address malnutrition issues and strengthening national Human Resources (HR) (Nango et al., 2025). This program has been implemented since Monday, January 6, 2025, targeting 570,000 school children through 190 Nutrition Fulfillment Service Units (SPPG) in 26 provinces. In its implementation, the MBG program not only focuses on providing healthy food but also acts as a catalyst for driving the local economy through a circular economy scheme, including the involvement of MSMEs, farmers, and related institutions (Rosida et al., 2024).

Conceptual Description of MBG Program

In this study, the free nutritious meal program implements the principles of a circular economy through four main aspects: (1) efficiency-based budget planning, (2) procurement of raw materials, (3) kitchen and waste management, (4) creation of an inclusive supply chain.

The following table presents an overview of the integration of these elements:

Circular Economy Aspects	MBG Program Practice	Economic Benefits
Budget Planning	At cost system with calorie calculation and regional cost index	Efficient use of the APBN

Procurement of Raw Materials	95% sourced from local farmers	Increasing farmer income
Processing and Distribution	Community-based soup kitchen	Job creation
Food Waste	Utilizing kitchen scraps for new products with economic value	Waste reduction, alternative energy

Table 1 MBG Program Integration Overview

In Ellen MacArthur's (2015) approach, the principles of reduce-reuse-recycle are reflected in the kitchen system of the Free Nutritious Meals program which processes organic waste into compost or biogas, as well as the use of reusable food containers. (MacArthur, 2015). This extends the product life cycle and reduces dependence on a linear economic system (take-make-dispose). Meanwhile, when linked to William Dunn's (2003) policy theory, an effective policy must be able to address public needs through data-driven planning, implementation, and evaluation, as well as the involvement of various stakeholders. (Ulfa & SI, 2025).

The study also found that the MBG program aligns with Islamic economic principles, particularly those related to resource equity, distributive justice, and the fulfillment of basic community needs. Values such as *maslahah* (benefit), sustainability, and equitable distribution of benefits are reflected in the program's structure. Furthermore, Islamic philanthropic instruments, namely *zakat* (alms), *infaq* (infaq), *sedekah* (alms), and *waqf* (endowments), have been identified as having the potential to serve as additional sources of support for the program's sustainability, particularly in supporting food financing for poor families, providing kitchen infrastructure, and reducing food waste through food donations.

DISCUSSION

Circular Economy Makan Bergizi Gratis Program

In its implementation, the Free Nutritious Meal Program is not only a strategy focused on meeting daily nutritional needs, but also opens up opportunities for integration with circular economy principles. This approach emphasizes efficiency and sustainability in resource management, similar to the principles used by Ellen MacArthur, which include waste reduction (reduce), reuse (reuse), and recycling (recycle) (Nugraha et al., 2024). The implementation of a circular economy in the MBG program is carried out through efficient budget planning, the use of local materials, the reuse of packaging, and community education on wise waste management.

1. Reduce

One implementation of the "Reduce" principle developed within the MBG in Indonesia is a mechanism for developing nutritious menus and optimizing the use of local food ingredients readily accessible through the kitchens of Satuan Pelayanan Pemenuhan Gizi (SPPG) in various regions. As shown in the image below:

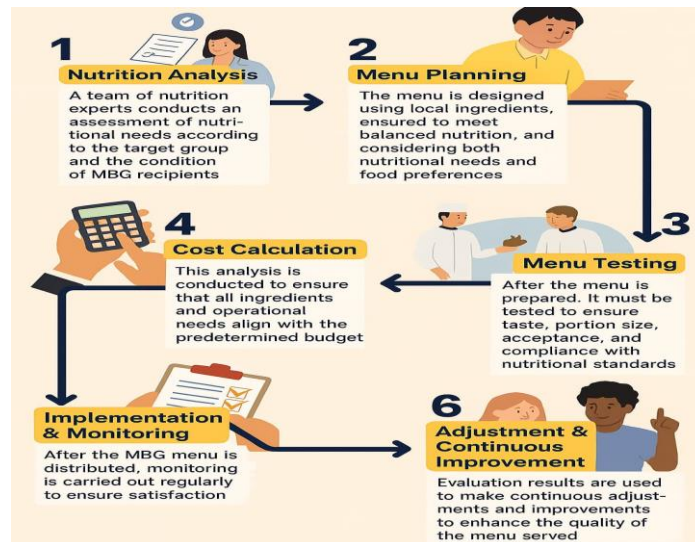


Figure 1 MBG Menu Arrangement Scheme
(Source: Instagram Badan Gizi Nasional)

The image above illustrates the systematic flow of how a food menu is designed to meet national nutritional standards while aligning with circular economy principles. This schematic demonstrates that menu development is not random, but rather involves a structured process that begins with nutritional needs analysis, calorie calculations, and the availability of local ingredients, all the way to final distribution in the form of ready-to-eat meals. This approach ensures that each meal provided not only meets the "four healthy five perfect" standards but also supports the sustainability of the local food supply chain.

2. Reuse

Meanwhile, the implementation of the reuse principle in the free nutritious meal program was implemented through a food distribution system using tote bags during Ramadan 2025. In practice, the Food and Nutrition Service Center (SPPG) in Warungkiara, West Java, packaged MBG in reusable tote bags. The goal was to minimize environmental waste. An illustration of this food distribution can be seen in the following image:

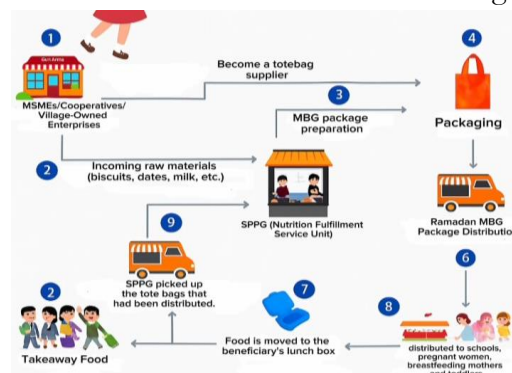


Figure 2 MBG Distribution Flow
(Source: Instagram Badan Gizi Nasional)

Figure 2 above shows that the distribution process begins with the procurement of tote bags by local economic actors such as MSMEs, cooperatives, and Village-Owned Enterprises (BumDes). The involvement of these local actors not only provides environmentally friendly containers but also strengthens the regional economy through a community-based supply

chain. The selection of tote bags as a packaging tool is a strategic step to minimize plastic waste, in line with the principles of a circular economy that emphasizes the reuse of goods to extend their life cycle. In the next distribution process, food will be packaged to beneficiaries using tote bags. Nutritious food is prepared and packaged by the Food and Nutrition Supervisory Agency (SPPG) according to food hygiene and safety standards. Once the food reaches the beneficiaries, the reuse process continues. Beneficiaries transfer the food from the tote bags to their own personal containers or lunch boxes. Meanwhile, the tote bags will be picked up, cleaned, and re-prepared for reuse by the SPPG.

From the analysis above, it is clear that this distribution system not only implements the principle of reuse but also encourages the social and economic involvement of local communities. MSMEs and BumDes benefit from tote bag production, SPPG builds operational efficiency, while beneficiaries are involved in packaging returns. This flow reflects the essential characteristics of a circular economy: collaboration, sustainability, and efficient resource utilization. It also demonstrates that the MBG program focuses not only on providing nutritious food but also on its environmental impact, thus encouraging the realization of an environmentally friendly, cost-effective program and strengthening local economic empowerment. Thus, the reuse principle in the MBG distribution flow is not only a technical solution but also a long-term sustainability strategy for this program.

3. Recycle

The application of the recycling principle in the MBG Program is clearly visible in the food waste management flow chart:

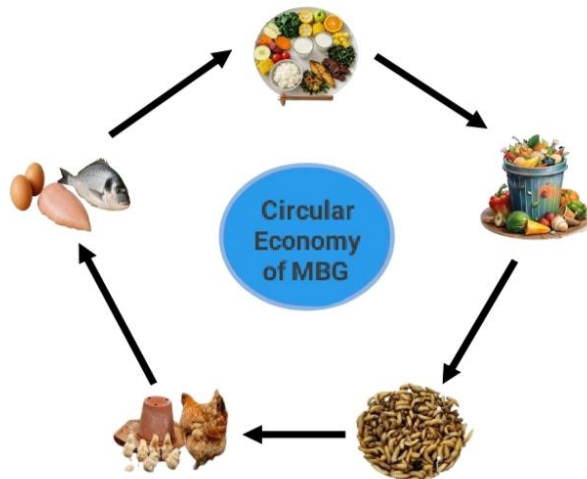


Figure 3 Circular Economy of MBG

This program demonstrates how food waste, typically considered trash, can be reprocessed into new resources that support a sustainable food system. Bappenas data indicates that food waste management (MBG) has the potential to produce 1.1 to 1.4 million tons of food waste per year. This enormous amount opens up a significant opportunity to create a productive waste utilization model. Rather than becoming waste that pollutes the environment, food waste can be used as raw material for animal feed, compost, or other bioconversion materials, thereby re-entering the MBG food production chain.

Figure 3 shows the practical application of the recycling principle by utilizing food waste

as feed for maggots (Black Soldier Fly larvae), implemented at the Tamansari SPPG and the Mutiara Keraton Foundation in Solo–Bogor. In its implementation, food waste from the community kitchen is not thrown away but is routinely collected to be processed into feed for maggot larvae. This model reduces organic waste while producing high-protein feed at a low cost. In the next stage, the harvested maggots are used as feed for chickens and fish farmed by partner foundations. The use of maggots as an alternative feed can reduce food production costs, while livestock products such as chicken, fish, and eggs are once again the main source of protein in the MBG menu. This means that MBG has successfully created a self-sufficient production cycle that reduces costs while strengthening community-based food security. This process is effective because all parties involved in the SPPG, partner foundations, and local communities are collaboratively involved in waste collection, processing, and utilization.

History of Islamic Economic Thought

The history of Islamic economic thought is a series of developments in economic ideas and concepts that have developed within the Islamic intellectual tradition from the classical to the contemporary era. This development reached its peak between the 6th and 13th centuries CE, when Islamic economics developed as a system that addressed not only economic activity but also integrated moral values, ethics, and social justice into all aspects of social life. (Risanti & Isnaini, 2024). During this period, Muslim thinkers began to formulate economic principles that emphasized balance (*at-tawazun*), equality, and the prohibition of exploitative economic practices. In the context of the development of global economics, the existence of Islamic economic thought is evidence that Islamic civilization had long had an organized economic system before the emergence of modern Western economics. Islamic economics itself is built on the primary foundation of the teachings of the Qur'an, Hadith, *Ijma'*, and *Qiyas*, which were later developed more systematically by classical scholars. The basic principle of Islamic economics is the achievement of holistic *al-falah* (well-being), both materially and spiritually (Afdhal et al., 2024). Therefore, every economic activity must be managed by considering distributive justice, protection of vulnerable groups, and sustainable resource management.

Several important figures in the history of Islamic economic thought have made significant contributions to the development of economic ideas that remain relevant today. Al-Ghazali, for example, in his work *Ihya Ulumuddin*, asserted that the state has a responsibility to ensure a balanced distribution of wealth and to ensure the fulfillment of the basic needs of the people. (Utami & Arif, 2024). He emphasized that the primary goal of economic activity is not the accumulation of wealth, but social welfare. In his view, public policy should be directed toward maintaining social stability, creating justice, and promoting economic order to achieve general welfare. Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun's thought, through his monumental work, the *Muqaddimah*, provides an in-depth analysis of the relationship between political power, economics, and social stability. Ibn Khaldun argued that the state plays a crucial role in maintaining an inclusive economic system. (NURKHOIROH, n.d.). He emphasized that the primary goal of economic activity is not the accumulation of wealth, but social welfare. In his view, public policy should be directed toward maintaining social stability, creating justice, and promoting economic order to achieve general welfare. Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun's thought, through his monumental work, the *Muqaddimah*, provides an in-depth analysis of the relationship between political power, economics, and social stability. Ibn Khaldun argued that

the state plays a crucial role in maintaining an inclusive economic system.

In the context of modern policies such as the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG), the history of Islamic economic thought provides a strong theoretical foundation for the role of the state in ensuring the basic needs of society, especially food. The concepts of distributive justice, state responsibility, and strengthening socio-economic resilience as outlined by classical thinkers support the idea that the state has the right and obligation to intervene to ensure equitable access to food for all citizens. MBG, as a public policy oriented towards improving the quality of human resources through the provision of balanced nutrition, aligns with the principle of *maslahah 'ammah* (public interest), a core value in Islamic economics, as emphasized in QS. Al-Hasyr verse 7, that public assets must be managed by the state so that they “do not circulate only among the rich” (Sismita & Jamal, 2024). This verse provides sharia legitimacy for state policy in distributing basic needs universally, including food, for the sake of equitable prosperity.

Furthermore, when linked to the principle of circular wealth distribution, funding instruments such as *zakat*, *infaq*, *sedekah*, and *waqf* can serve as redistribution mechanisms, ensuring that wealth does not circulate solely among the wealthy but returns to the community in the form of social services. However, when linked to the universal Free Nutritious Meals program in Indonesia, funding with *zakat* funds clearly contradicts the sharia-compliant limit of *zakat* distribution to only eight *asnaf* (the beneficiaries) (Sismita & Jamal, 2024). As explicitly stated in QS. At-Taubah verse 60, which emphasizes that the provisions for *zakat* distribution are fixed (*ta'abbudi*) and cannot be extended to recipients outside the categories stipulated in the text. Therefore, non-*zakat* Islamic philanthropic instruments such as *infaq*, *sedekah*, and productive *waqf* are stated to be more relevant to support the implementation of MBG, for example for financing raw food materials from small farmers, the construction of *waqf*-based public kitchens, or the distribution of food to vulnerable areas. (SAPTUDIN & Mahfiana, 2024). Thus, Islamic economic thought is not only normatively relevant, but also provides a distribution model that is compatible with the circular economy approach that is at the heart of MBG.

Concept Scheme Makan Bergizi Gratis Program

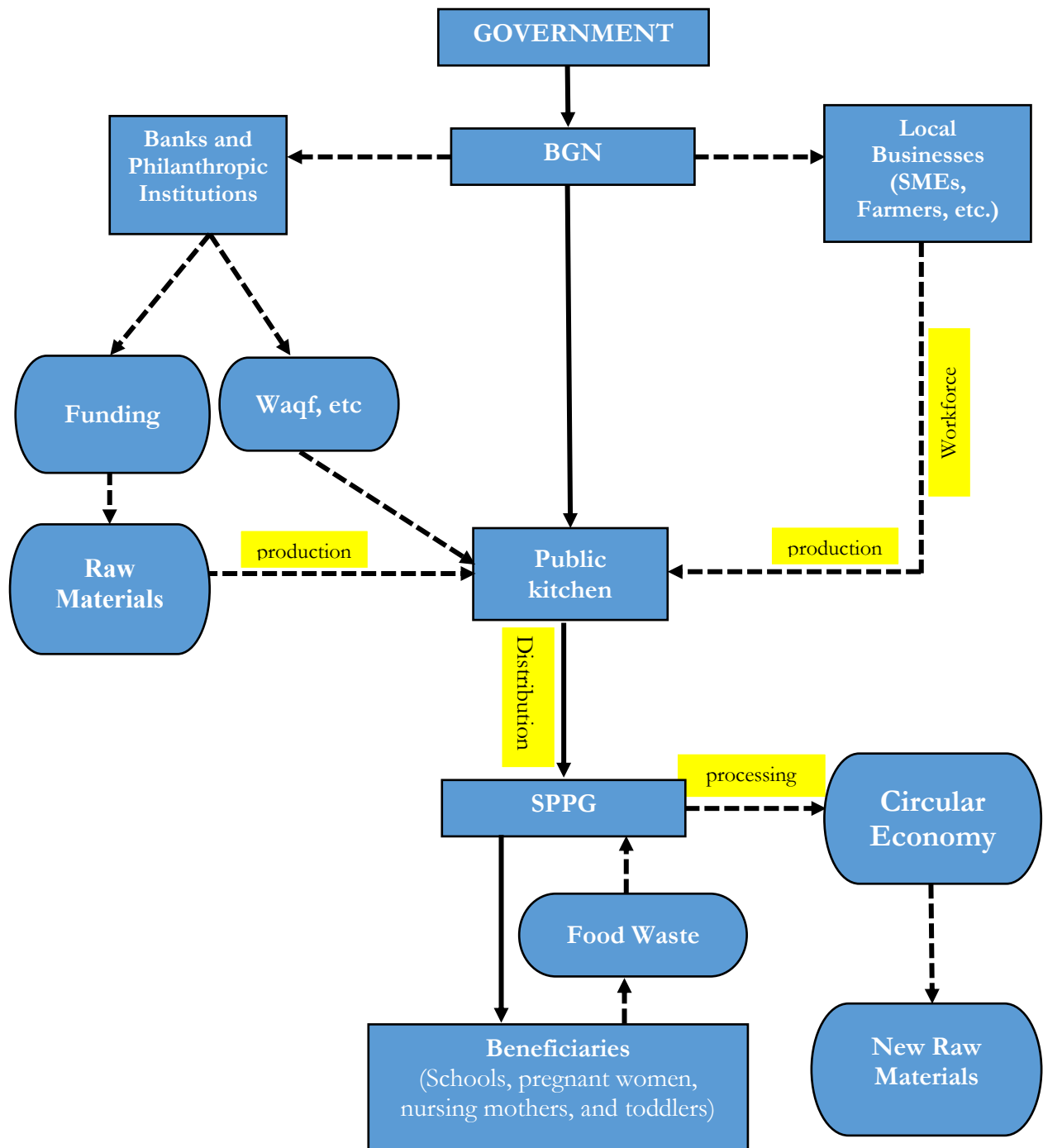


Figure 1 Concept Scheme Makan Bergizi Gratis Program
(Source: processed data (2025))

Keterangan:
 → Chain of Command
 - - - - - Coordination Line
 [] Program implementing institutions/actors
 () Program process/flow/results

CONCLUSION

Research shows that the MBG Program in several locations has implemented many important elements of a circular economy through budget efficiency, utilization of local food ingredients, optimization of community kitchens, and processing food waste into new resources such as maggot feed and compost. The integration of the Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle principles is also evident in the National Nutrition Agency's (BGN) menu development scheme based on nutritional needs and the availability of local ingredients, the use of tote bags as reusable packaging, and the utilization of food waste in the livestock production chain. The implementation of these practices is carried out not only to reduce waste and reduce dependence on linear systems, but also to encourage community economic participation and strengthen regional food security.

Research findings also demonstrate the alignment of the circular economy mechanisms within the MBG with Islamic economic principles, particularly the values of distributive justice, sustainability, and *maslahah 'ammah* (community welfare). The classical thinking of Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun emphasizes the vital role of the state in ensuring the fulfillment of basic needs, including food, in a fair and sustainable manner. The MBG program reflects this role by ensuring equitable access to food and stimulating local economic potential. Islamic philanthropic instruments such as *infaq* (donations), *sadaqah* (charity), and productive *waqf* (endowments) also have the potential to support the program's sustainability, although *zakat* (alms) cannot be used universally due to the *ta'abbudi* (distribution) provisions.

However, this study has limitations due to its conceptual nature and reliance on literature data without empirical verification in the field. Therefore, generalization of the results requires caution. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to conduct empirical analysis of MBG implementation in various regions, including the effectiveness of local supply chains, the quality of SPPG kitchens, and waste management systems. Comparative studies on the integration of Islamic philanthropy in program financing are also needed to find more sustainable funding models. By expanding the research base and strengthening collaboration between stakeholders, MBG has the potential to become a food policy model that not only addresses nutrition issues but also promotes economic development and sustainability in accordance with Islamic values.

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