

Framing the EUDR in Indonesia: Elite Narratives, Marginalized Voices, and the Structural Limits of Environmental Journalism

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Abstract

This study examines how Indonesian online media framed the European Union's Deforestation-Free Regulation (EUDR) in 2023–2024. The EUDR, which mandates deforestation-free supply chains, has faced strong opposition from Indonesia, the world's largest palm oil exporter, with officials accusing the EU of adopting a colonialist stance. Using a deductive quantitative content analysis of 273 news articles, we applied Semetko and Valkenburg's framing model to identify dominant frames, news sources, and tone. Our findings show coverage was dominated by elite-driven narratives, episodic frames, and conflict-oriented reporting, focusing on political disputes and trade implications rather than systemic commodity governance. Smallholder farmers, those most affected by the regulation, were absent or represented only indirectly through associations. Government officials and industry dominated sourcing, while NGOs offered more thematic and nuanced perspectives but were marginal in mainstream reporting. These patterns reflect structural constraints in Indonesian journalism: oligarchic media ownership, market-driven content, and limited environmental expertise in newsrooms. We argue that these conditions narrow the scope of environmental journalism, reproducing official narratives while overlooking marginalized voices. The study also highlights the role of NGOs in providing alternative framings and calls for greater integration of their perspectives in reporting on transnational environmental policy.

Keywords: EUDR, environmental journalism, media frame, systemic challenges

INTRODUCTION

The European Union's Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products (EUDR), set to take effect in December 2025, aims to curb deforestation linked to the EU's consumption of commodities such as palm oil, cocoa, coffee, rubber, and timber (European Commission, 2024). Although implementation has been delayed by 12 months, the regulation mandates deforestation-free supply chains, enforced through traceability tools like geolocation and satellite monitoring. Despite praise for its environmental aims, the policy has faced strong opposition, especially from Indonesia, the top global palm oil exporter (Suhardi & Fatchurrochman, 2024).

The Indonesian government, alongside industry actors, has argued that the EUDR disproportionately affects developing economies, restricts market access, and places excessive compliance burdens on smallholder farmers (Gunalan, 2024). Policymakers have accused the EU of using environmental concerns as a pretext for trade protectionism,

reinforcing historical North-South tensions in environmental governance (Primantoro, 2023). While the government mentioned potential impacts on smallholders, non-governmental organizations argue these communities remain sidelined in both policy and media narratives. Their disproportionate narratives raise concerns about environmental justice, as policies designed by the Western countries to promote sustainability may unintentionally marginalize vulnerable communities in the Global South that rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. The EUDR rigidly follows a standardized policy, using a one-size-fits-all approach rather than creating flexible, country-specific regulations. It does not take into consideration the differences and specificity of each country, whether it be the flora, fauna or its people and its traditions (da Silva, 2023).

This study seeks to uncover the framing of Indonesian media related to the EUDR. Whether the media coverage presents the voices of marginalized actors or reinforces elite-driven narratives that prioritize economic and trade concerns over social and environmental equity. However, previous research suggests that countries in the Global South, including Indonesia, often prioritize political and economic issues over environmental concerns. According to Ulandari and Hardjakusuma (2020), Indonesian news outlets generally lack dedicated environmental teams, and journalists often have limited environmental knowledge (Alaidrus, 2021; Rochyadi-Reetz & Teng'o, 2021). It leads to coverage that relies heavily on official political statements, which may align with government and industry interests rather than critically engaging with sustainability challenges. This dynamic raises questions about how Indonesian media represent the EUDR—whether as an environmental necessity, an economic threat, or a geopolitical conflict.

NGO's Critique Towards EUDR

Throughout 2023 to 2025, Indonesian NGOs have actively criticized the EUDR's narrow focus and lack of safeguards for smallholders. They have raised the voice on deforestation and forest degradation, human rights neglect, indigenous rights violations, and urge the government to give comprehensive support programs for smallholders to navigate the implementation of EUDR.

As of March 2023, Indonesian NGOs expressed dissatisfaction towards the European Union dialogue in December 2022 (Trend Asia, 2023). The dialogue between the European Commission, the European Union Parliament and the Council of the European Union which

aims to propose the regulation regarding ‘free products deforestation’ and ‘forest degradation’, which later be called EUDR (European Parliament, 2023). The NGOs criticized the regulation as it attempted to only limit the supply chain of commodities and products entering the EU market without resolving the underlying problems which drive deforestation and forest degradation.

Furthermore, the EUDR also neglected and ignored potential human rights violations in producing countries and neglected the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) by not referring to and requiring compliance with the international human rights standards. NGOs argue that the definition of “deforestation” used in the EUDR is too narrow, limiting it to agricultural conversion while omitting forest clearing for infrastructure development and mining. Additionally, the definition of “forest” does not include agroforestry, commonly practiced for generations by indigenous peoples and local communities. It will cause the forest managed by indigenous peoples vulnerable to conversion without being seen as a deforestation practice.

Regarding how the implementation of EUDR will impact smallholders, especially in their readiness to navigate the new traceability standards, NGOs, along with independent smallholders and plantation worker unions made a recommendation to the government (Trend Asia, 2024). Furthermore, NGO have been criticizing that the regulation also failed to acknowledge the initiatives that producing countries have implemented to address climate change and deforestation within their national boundaries (da Silva, 2023). Given these criticisms and these concerns, the coalition urged the Indonesian government to develop and implement comprehensive support programs for smallholders to prepare them to meet EUDR requirements and other global market demands, including the provision of technical and financial assistance for compliance with mandatory national sustainable commodity governance systems, such as Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) and Timber Legality Assurance System/”*Sistem Verifikasi Legalitas Kayu*” (SVLK).

Framing on the media

Scholars such as Entman (1993) and Iyengar (1991) have shown how frames influence the public understanding by emphasizing causes, consequences, and solutions. Entman elaborates how framing highlights "some aspects of a perceived reality" to increase their

prominence "in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Frames help the audience to understand the information and to make political decisions.

Frames play a crucial role in helping journalists organize and present information in news reports. Similarly, government officials, politicians, and public relations professionals use frames to effectively convey their messages and policies to the public (Rochyadi-Reetz & Wolling, 2022). Regarding environmental issues, media frames shape public perception by influencing how people understand the causes, effects, responsibilities, and potential solutions to various aspects of the problem.

Drawing on principles of media's role in public discourse, it is argued that in the context of EUDR, the media should emphasize the urge to improve the plantation industry governance, so that Indonesia is not left out of the international trade scheme and still achieve economic advancement amidst the EUDR. Furthermore, the media should likely address how smallholder farmers continue to face significant challenges, including expanding plantation areas in line with standards set by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO), and International Sustainability & Carbon Certification (ISCC). The EUDR could severely impact these farmers by excluding them from the EU trade market. Moreover, Indonesian farmers are also dependent on processing factories, have limited knowledge, and inadequate support to adapt to new schemes.

Investigate media frames from previous studies

This study adopts a deductive approach based on Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). This approach involves "predefining certain frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news" (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94). This method requires a clear understanding of which frames are likely to be present because "the frames that are not defined a priori may be overlooked" (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). However, this approach is advantageous as it "can be replicated easily, can cope with large samples, and can easily detect differences in framing between media (e.g., television vs. press) and within media (e.g., highbrow news programs or newspapers vs. tabloid-style media)."

This study uses the deductive approach with the framework by Semetko and Valkenburg (2006), which analyzed the frames used in the Dutch national media from May 1 to June 20, 1997, or the “Eurotop” meetings among the heads of government of the EU countries. Semetko and Valkenburg (2006) incorporated the study by Neuman et al., (1992) which identified several different frames that were common in U.S. news coverage of a range of issues, including conflict, economic consequences, human impact, and morality frames. Then, Semetko and Valkenburg also added the theoretical work of Iyengar (1991), which measured the “episodic” news, which refers to specific events, and “thematic” news, which refers to more analytical, contextual, or historical coverage.

Media Framing Research on Environmental Issues

Academic research on environmental news framing in Indonesia is still relatively limited. A few studies that we captured, for example Trisiah et al. (2021), analyzed geothermal energy coverage in *Republika.co.id* and *Kompas.com* between 2009 and 2019, using Entman’s (1993) framing theory. They identified 316 relevant articles through keyword searches and conducted a quantitative content analysis.

Similarly, Rochyadi-Reetz and Wolling (2021) investigated how eight national media outlets covered climate change between November 2017 and December 2018. Using Entman’s framework, they categorized 629 articles into three main frames: “climate impact and science,” “climate politics,” and “climate action,” noting the near absence of coverage on “climate adaptation strategies.”

Trisiah et. al (2021) examined how major Indonesian newspapers framed geothermal energy over a decade-long period and identified “energy security” and used economic frames as the dominant narrative frameworks. The media presented geothermal energy as a reliable energy source yielding financial opportunities for investment and job creation. In a related study, Ulandari and Hardjakusumah (2020) assessed coal and renewable energy coverage across Indonesian media outlets from January 2019 to July 2020. The study identified three dominant frames in renewable energy discourse: moral values, economic considerations, and attribution of responsibility.

More recent thematic studies include Santang et al., (2024) on environmental framing in Indonesia’s new capital (IKN), Harahap et al., (2024) on renewable energy, and Adiprasetyo

et al. (2024) on flood reporting. While most of these studies employ Entman's model, Adiprasetio et al. (2024) adopted the framework by Semetko and Valkenburg (2006) and further enriched their analysis through interviews with journalists. These studies vary in their methodological approaches. While Trisiah et al. and Santang et al. relied on Google and in-site search functions, Rochyadi-Reetz and Wolling used a media monitoring service (Binokular), and Adiprasetio et al. employed Meltwater for more systematic data collection.

Overall, the literature suggests that environmental reporting in Indonesia remains underdeveloped compared to coverage of other pressing national issues such as corruption, terrorism, or economic challenges (Rochyadi-Reetz & Wolling, 2021). This limited attention can be attributed to several structural and institutional constraints. Most Indonesian newsrooms lack dedicated environmental desks, and many journalists possess limited expertise in environmental issues (Ulandari & Hardjakusuma, 2020). As a result, environmental coverage often depends heavily on accessible political statements, which may align reporting with government agendas rather than with environmental protection or sustainability (Alaidrus, 2021; Rochyadi-Reetz & Teng'o, 2021).

The structural challenges of Indonesian media are further illustrated in a study by Adiprasetio et al. (2024), which examined how online media framed major flood events in 2020-2021. Their findings show that political economy factors, including media oligarchy, centralism, market-driven content, and the dominance of official narratives, heavily shaped how floods were reported. This reinforces the idea that environmental reporting is filtered through the interests of powerful media owners and political elites.

From the above literature review, we try to find the gap to study the EUDR policy framing in news media. We want to see whether the media coverage presents the voices of marginalized actors or reinforces elite-driven narratives, whether the narratives prioritize social and environmental equity above economic and trade concerns. Hence, we ask: *(RQ1)* What frames on EUDR can be identified in Indonesian media, and how frequently do they appear in the coverage between 2023 and 2024?

Subsequently, Ulandari and Hardjakusuma (2020) mentioned that news outlets generally lack dedicated environmental teams and journalists often have limited environmental knowledge. Besides, journalists often rely on government statements which

may conflict with environmental sustainability goals. Hence, we ask: *(RQ2)* What news sources are used by journalists in covering EUDR?

Finally, we have attached the statements from the NGOs related to EUDR and we have acknowledged their concerns related to smallholders in Indonesia. Then, we want to assess how journalists are integrating alternative perspectives, such as from NGOs, in their reporting. So, we asked the third research question: *(RQ3)* What frames emerge when journalists use NGOs and think-tank as their news source?

METHOD

To address these research questions, a comprehensive quantitative content analysis of EUDR coverage in Indonesian media was conducted, deemed the most suitable method. A deductive coding approach was employed, holistically identifying media frames based on established coding schemes from previous studies.

Population and sample

This study examines all news articles containing the keyword “EUDR” published between January 2023 and December 2024. News is gathered through the media monitoring tool, Meltwater. We collected the news from 2023 to 2024 timeframe, using Indonesian Language only, and setting the location uploaded from Indonesia. Initially, a total of 4,032 news were collected with 2,074 news published in 2023 and 1,958 news published in 2024. We decided to analyze the news published by the media certified by Indonesia Press Council only, which resulted in 2,378 news content.

We sampled the article for further analysis with systematic sampling. Using the ratio 1:7 (95% confidence level, 5% margin of error), resulting in 340 final news articles. However, in the analysis, only 273 news articles were analyzed as some of the news articles were not available or unrelated to the EUDR issue.

Codebook

Our study used the frame by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000); human interest frame, conflict frame, morality frame, economic frame, responsibility attribution frame, thematic and episodic frames (Iyengar, 1996). We also added the “news sources” frames and “tone toward the government/policymaker” as employed by Adiprasetio and Larasati (2020) and Adiprasetio et al., (2024).

Human interest frame: This frame centers on portraying the emotional side of the human being to an event, issue, and particular problem (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In this case, it means mentioning the smallholder farmers and how they navigate through these challenges.

Conflict frame: Indicates conflicts and disagreements between individuals, groups, or organizations (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Here, it can be operationalized through how the journalists see the bad actors behind this issue.

Morality frame: Places events, problems, or issues within the scope of morals, social norms, and religious teachings (Neuman, et al., 1992). In this context, it can be operationalized through broader context, such as deforestation, plantation governance, or how the government can prioritize the smallholders.

Economic frame: Refers to an event, problem, or issue related to its economic consequences on an individual, group, organization, or country (Graber & Dunaway, 2018). We operationalize this as how EUDR would affect the plantation industry, cost the business, and the change to commodity export.

Responsibility attribution frame: Defined as ‘a way of connecting responsibilities’ on solutions or problem-solving, whether to governments, individuals, or groups (Semetko & Valkenburg 2000). In this context, we see how the government, business association, and impacted countries navigate through the regulation.

Thematic and episodic frames: Thematic frames present problems and events within a broader context, focusing on systemic factors and encouraging a deeper understanding of societal or institutional dynamics, while episodic frames emphasize specific individuals or events, often personalizing issues and evoking emotional engagement. We operationalize a news as an episodic frame if it only touches the regulation problem, only focusing on an event/politician/government cooperation without touching the broader context such as plantation governance or addressing the systemic problem.

News Sources: The analysis of the news source is crucial for uncovering the underlying motivations, biases, and strategies that drive news framing. Codification of news sources was done inductively.

Tone towards the government: We examined both the tone toward the Indonesian Government and the EU revolving around EUDR, which means there will be a tone towards the Indonesian Government as well as the EU. The tone reflects the media's evaluative stance, which can shape not only individual opinions but also broader societal narratives about the policymaker's role, accountability, and effectiveness.

In this study, *human interest frame, conflict frame, morality frame, economic frame, and responsibility attribution frame* were coded with binary coding (1 represents "availability" and 0 represents "unavailability"). While the thematic frame and episodic frame were addressed with: 1 "thematic frame" and 2 "episodic frame" Lastly, tone towards the government can be codified using a five-point scale: -2, -1, 0, +1, and +2, ranging from very negative to very positive, based on Nijkraak et al., (2015), as well as NA for unavailability. We categorized the tone as -2 for very negative and +2 as very positive if the news is repeatedly emphasizing its critique towards the government/EU.

Intercoder reliability test

In conducting reliability tests, the study used two coders. After three rounds of coder training, the final pretest was conducted on 10% of the sample articles. Reliability calculations were done using Krippendorff's alpha, with the average result of the agreement 0.952. Therefore, these results meet statistical reliability requirements (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). Any discrepancies in reliability tests were resolved through discussion to achieve unanimous agreement and become the basis for the subsequent coding process.

The actual coding process was divided evenly between two coders and their assessments were later consolidated to form a comprehensive dataset. Only eight variables were included in the intercoder reliability test, as one variable "news sources" were done in open coding.

Table 1. shows the results of the reliability test.

Framing items		Krippendorff's alpha
News Frame	Human Interest Frame	1
	Conflict Frame	1
	Morality Frame	1

	Economic Frame	0.828
	Responsibility Attribution Frame	1
Thematic and Episodic Frames	Thematic and Episodic Frames	0.891
Tone Toward Policymaker	Tone toward Indonesian Government	1
	Tone Towards the EU	0.902

Findings

Media Frames on EUDR

To answer (RQ1), we first computed how frequently the different frame elements emerged in the articles. The results can be seen in [Table 2](#). We found out that “responsibility attributed frames” are the most frequent element (90.48%), especially with the Indonesian Government trying to negotiate with the European Union to either delay the implementation of EUDR, protesting this regulation, or to collaborate with other impacted countries to negotiate with the EU. However, this responsibility frame was not tied to systemic efforts to address the long-standing governance issues in the commodity sectors. The issue that has left the country vulnerable to such external regulatory shocks.

Table 2. The results

Framing items	Frame(s)	Percentage
News Frame	Human Interest Frame	49.82%
	Conflict Frame	76.84%
	Morality Frame	49.08%
	Economic Frame	73.63%
	Responsibility Attribution Frame	90.48%
Thematic and Episodic Frames	Thematic Frame	15.38%
	Episodic Frames	84.62%

Tone Toward Policymaker	Tone toward Indonesian Government	2	23.81%
		1	42.86%
		0	15.02%
		-1	6.23%
		-2	2.20%
		NA	9.89%
	Tone Towards the EU	2	1.47%
		1	5.86%
		0	17.22%
		-1	44.32%
		-2	31.14%

As Muttaqien (2024) notes, the pressing need for better management of forests and commodities linked to deforestation has never been more evident. While the delay in EUDR's implementation buys time, it also serves as a critical reminder: Indonesia must act to reform its practices. The EUDR could be the push that forces the country to improve forest management and commodity governance in a way that benefits both the environment and Indonesia's long-term economic interests.

Interesting enough, the issue around commodity governance was also raised around the Presidential Debate in early 2024. One candidate, Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar, wants to address this issue by strengthening the sustainability certifications which Indonesia already has, the ISPO (Anisah, 2024). However, ISPO is considered to only partially meet the requirements of the EUDR. There are several areas that need to be strengthened, such as the definition of forests, the rights of indigenous communities, and the implementation of new systems (Hasan & Ahmad, 2023).

Meanwhile, candidate number 3, Ganjar Pranowo and Mahmud MD, wished to strengthen the non-traditional markets as replacements for the European Union market.

These non-traditional markets still have potential to be explored. Finally, the elected candidates, Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, promised to engage in diplomatic approaches and lobbying using international influence so that we are not being treated differently (Anisah, 2024). An approach that was not different from how the Indonesian Government addressed EUDR, but yet still failed to address the underlying commodity governance.

The second most frequent frame was the “episodic frame” (84.62%), over the “thematic frame” (15.38%). We found that the news categorized as episodic were only emphasizing certain political actors, for example Minister Airlangga Hartanto (11.3%), Minister Zulkifli Hasan (5.4%), or President Joko Widodo (4.7%). A significant portion of the coverage to Airlangga tended to serve more as political promotion than analysis, thus neglecting systemic governance issues underlying EUDR compliance.

It has been long known how intertwined the media and politics are. Previous studies (Armando, 2014; Wicaksono & Rianto, 2015; Arifuddin, 2016; Nainggolan, 2017; Syarief, 2022) have shown that. However, it is also worth mentioning how the framing towards political figures often neglects the actual systemic problem, which is the commodity governance and long-term economic impact of EUDR. Furthermore, episodic frame dominance such as found by Adiprasetyo et al., (2024) can lead to public viewing the issue as an isolated problem, without broader context or consideration to the systemic issue.

Unfortunately, we also found that thematic frames related to EUDR were presented not by journalists itself, but written by a researcher through an “opinion column” in the news outlet. For example, an opinion article at Kompas.com titled “Resisting the European Union and Reforming the National Palm Oil Ecosystem/Melawan Uni Eropa dan Membenahi Ekosistem Persawitan Nasional” could argue that besides EUDR is seen as discriminatory and could harm Indonesia's economy, it also stresses the importance of industry reform, concerns the broader issue of climate change, and the need for the country to diversify its markets and strengthen domestic regulations to ensure the palm oil industry's sustainability and global competitiveness.

Lastly, “conflict frame” was the third most dominated frame. There was the tendency from Indonesian news outlets to see EUDR as the conflict between Indonesia and the EU. The media would describe the EU as discriminative towards the palm oil producers, employing the

colonizer perspective on this regulation as it will impact the smallholders and Indonesian export commodity (Primantoro, 2023). Some scholars argue that this might be seen as a veiled protectionist measure. The EU may be setting barriers to entry for products from countries that cannot easily comply with the new regulation, so that European producers of alternative goods, such as sunflower oil, will dominate the market — both domestically and internationally (Nurshadrina, et al., 2023). This can be interpreted as the Government's indirect attempt to not deal with systemic change, shifting the blame towards the EU while using the overused “colonized angle”.

News Sources

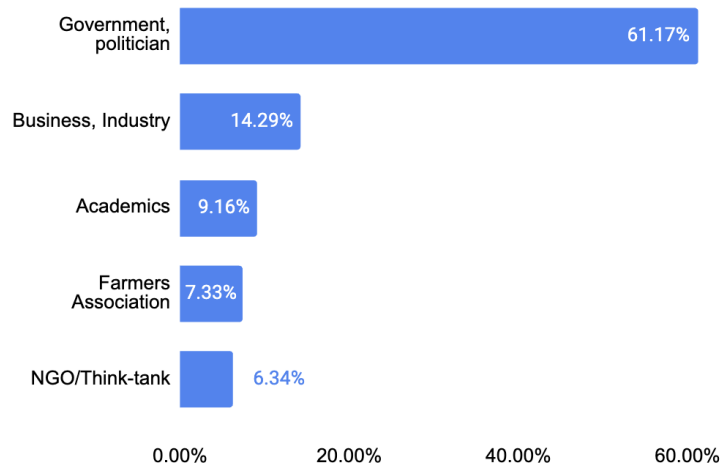
To answer (RQ2), we paid attention to the sources journalists relied on to write the news. We found that Indonesian journalists often cite from the government and press releases (61.17%), and then followed by quotations from the industry and businessmen (14.29%). They also quote from academics, NGO/think tanks, and farmers associations, but it counts in just a small percentage from the overall data. This finding confirms the results from previous research (Eide & Kunelius, 2010; Irwansyah, 2016; Rochyadi-Reetz & Wolling, 2022; Adiprasetio et al., 2024).

While the reason behind quoting government officials and politicians is because environmental news was not selling enough for the media (Alaidrus, 2021), Indonesian journalists would go for topics deemed familiar for the majority of people such as topics such as corruption, terrorism, or economic challenges (Rochyadi-Reetz & Wolling, 2021). Furthermore, where quoting government is prevalent for environmental reporting, our findings also showed that this resulted in positive tone towards Indonesian Government (42.8% news stories with positive tone/1 and 23.8% with very positive tone/2) and negative tone for the European Union (44.3% and 31.1% for negative and very negative stories).

We also found that journalists only quoted smallholders through their associations such as Asosiasi Petani Kelapa Sawit Indonesia (Apkasindo) or Serikat Petani Kelapa Sawit (SPKS). We did not find a quotation from the smallholders in our data. This likely reflects the concentration of newsrooms in Java, which is far from smallholder communities (Indonesian Press Council, 2024). Hence, it would not be cost effective for journalists to travel outside Java to cover this issue as smallholders are located outside the island. Moreover, the nature of

mainstream news in Indonesia is fast-paced reporting, leaving only small room for more in-depth coverage.

Figure 1. News Sources Regarding EUDR



Note: we only categorized five most cited sources and we acknowledge that some articles contain multiple sources

Alternative Voice From NGO

We tried to quantify the frames with NGO and Think-tank as the news source. We found that the responsibility attribution frame is dominant here, counting as 88.24%. In overall data, the responsibility attribution is also the dominant one. The second most used frames are human interest frame, conflict frame, morality frame, and economic frame that counted as much as 70.59% respectively, even though it is not found on the same exact articles.

Table 3. Frames with the sources from NGO and Think-tank

Frames From NGO	Percentage
Human Interest Frame	70.59%
Conflict Frame	70.59%
Morality Frame	70.59%
Economic Frame	70.59%
Responsibility Attribution Frame	88.24%
Thematic Frame	41.18%
Episodic Frames	58.82%

The articles that offer NGO's perspective could give more nuance regarding this issue. Firstly, CSOs and NGOs expressed their readiness to support Indonesia in addressing the EUDR issues, acknowledging the strategic importance of palm oil for smallholder farmers and the reality that Europe cannot be entirely free from palm oil. We did not find this point on the mainstream news as well as the lack of Government's efforts to accommodate smallholders.

Secondly, NGO such as Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI) also highlight the lack of regulation on the responsibility of EU financial institutions to ensure their investments don't contribute to deforestation and human rights abuses. Thirdly, WALHI, Greenpeace, and Satya Bumi also urged financial institutions to stop funding companies involved in environmental destruction and consider the postponement a "step backward" in global deforestation efforts and express concern about potential deforestation during the delay period. They hope the delay is used to prepare for the regulation, not weaken it.

The alternative voice also considered voices from smallholders, which failed to be accommodated by mainstream media. As previously mentioned, the media only addressed smallholders through the association and assumed how they would be impacted without adequate field reporting or interviews. However, this issue was addressed by the Institute for Development of Economics and Finance (INDEF) which involved 500 farmers in three major palm oil producing provinces (Siak, Mesuji, and Ketapang). The survey revealed that 94% of respondents had never heard of the EUDR, this survey was rarely mentioned by news outlets in our data. This lack of awareness poses a significant negative impact on regional economies, as farmers unable to meet the requirements would be unable to export their products to Europe.

Furthermore, the NGO also suggests several key actions, such as Government-led dissemination to the farmers and local governments about EUDR. The government should also support the smallholders through concrete actions such as financial, technical, and training support to implement the regulation. In the long run, national sustainability standards like Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) are crucial. These mandatory standards can drive widespread adoption of sustainable practices and provide a baseline for the market.

The NGO also calls for collaboration between the Indonesian government, the EU, and organisations like RSPO to create an ecosystem that supports smallholders and promotes a sustainable palm oil industry. Also, if Indonesia wants to present alternative narratives that

do not feel discriminating, the country needs to create better policies to address climate change at the international level. Moreover, companies are urged to embrace transparency in palm oil governance as a key to sustainability, building consumer trust, and maintaining brand reputation. Finally, the civil society coalition suggests that Indonesia use the 12-month postponement as an opportunity to strengthen commodity governance, improve inter-ministerial coordination, and support smallholders to meet EUDR requirements.

Conclusion

Our study reveals that Indonesian media coverage of the EUDR largely reproduces elite-driven narratives, dominated by government statements and a focus on political actions and conflicts rather than in-depth analysis of systemic issues. The voices of marginalized communities, particularly smallholder farmers, are largely absent or indirectly represented. Previous studies, such as Santang et al., (2024), which investigated framing of the new capital in Kompas.id also found more constructive news related to infrastructure development. Moreover, study by Trisiah et al., (2022) also covers an overwhelmingly positive tone regarding geothermal energy, covering geothermal as a reliable source and discussing the economic impact of this energy. It also lacks attention to the local community and environmental impact.

This highlights a structural issue within Indonesian environmental journalism, which often lacks dedicated expertise and resources, leading to a reliance on accessible political statements. While journalists can be to blame, the nature of such outlets, which is fast-paced and more focused towards the output, hinders journalists from conducting in-depth, field-based environmental reporting. Given the structural characteristics of mainstream media, similar findings are likely to recur in future studies. This also highlights a limitation of tools like Meltwater, which primarily monitor such outlets.

Our study also identifies a critical role for NGOs in providing alternative, more nuanced perspectives on EUDR that highlight smallholder concerns, systemic issues, and calls for greater accountability and collaboration for genuine sustainable commodity governance. The findings suggest that while the EUDR presents challenges, it also serves as a catalyst for Indonesia to improve its forest and commodity governance. Environmental NGOs have also taken the step in mainstreaming environmental news reporting by organizing workshops and training programs to enhance journalists' expertise, provide research and data for journalists

to write comprehensive reports, as well as taking journalists to the field to meet marginalized communities and observing the impacted locations. This support has also helped journalists to conduct reporting while not relying on a small newsroom budget.

However, these initiatives are better received by alternative outlets such as The Gecko Project, Mongabay Indonesia, Project Multatuli, and Betahita. They often collaborate with local NGOs such as Trend Asia, WALHI, Greenpeace, and Pantau Gambut to produce environmental in-depth reports that amplify the voice of impacted communities, highlighting environmental degradation, and holding the corporate and Government accountable. Those issues were often overlooked by mainstream outlets and tight newsroom budgets. NGO's initiatives and alternative voices by alternative news outlets actually open an avenue for future research. We recommend future studies related to framing on environmental news to focus on alternative media and we encourage scholars to capture the strategies and challenges facing environmental NGOs to advocate for a better environmental reporting.

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