

# Police Efforts in Tackling Oil Palm Theft in the Jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police

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**Abstract.** *Oil palm theft is one of the crimes that often occur in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police. This crime is influenced by various factors, such as the economic condition of the community, the weak plantation security system, and the existence of an organized network of theft syndicates. This study aims to analyze the factors that cause oil palm theft, the role of the police in overcoming it, and the obstacles faced in the law enforcement process. The research method used is qualitative descriptive, with a case study approach in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police. Data was obtained through interviews with police officers, the community, and plantation officials, as well as documentation and observations in the field. The results of the study show that the Serdang Bedagai Police have made various efforts in dealing with oil palm theft through preventive, repressive, and pre-emptive approaches. These efforts include routine patrols, cooperation with plantations, legal socialization to the community, and law enforcement against perpetrators. However, there are still obstacles such as limited human resources, low public participation in reporting crimes, and the complexity of the theft syndicate network. To overcome this obstacle, synergy between the police, the community, and plantation companies is needed in improving the security system and creating alternative economic solutions for the surrounding community. With a more comprehensive approach, it is hoped that the number of oil palm theft in this region can be significantly reduced.*

**Keywords:** *Police, Oil Palm Theft, Serdang Bedagai Police, Plantation Security, Law Enforcement*

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the largest palm oil producing countries in the world. This commodity has high economic value and is a mainstay sector in national development (Darmawan et al., 2021). However, the high value of palm oil also raises various problems, one of which is the rampant crime of oil palm theft. This crime often occurs in various regions, including in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police, North Sumatra.

Serdang Bedagai is known as one of the areas that has a large oil palm plantation, both managed by large companies, people's plantations, and government-owned (Anggraini ET AL., 2022). Unfortunately, the large amount of plantation land is also an easy target for criminals. Palm oil theft cases often harm companies, farmers, and the regional economy as a whole. Therefore, serious efforts are needed to handle and overcome this problem.

The Indonesian Police, as a law enforcement institution, has a very important role in tackling crime, including the crime of oil palm theft (Darmawan, 2024). The Serdang Bedagai Police has a responsibility to maintain security and order in its jurisdiction, including in overcoming oil palm theft which is increasingly rampant. Efforts made by the police include

various preventive, repressive, and law enforcement measures to reduce the number of these crimes (Prawiradana ET AL., 2018).

Preventive measures taken by the Serdang Bedagai Police include routine patrols in the plantation area, socialization to the community and plantation owners, as well as cooperation with companies and local governments. This step aims to reduce the potential for theft and increase legal awareness among the public (Ramar & Horokubun, 2025). In addition to preventive efforts, the police also take repressive measures against the perpetrators of crimes. This action is carried out through arrest, investigation, and strict legal process for those proven to have committed theft (Hakim & Kamelo, 2013). With strong law enforcement, it is hoped that it can provide a deterrent effect for perpetrators and reduce the number of similar crimes in the future.

Palm oil theft not only has an impact on the economic aspect, but also causes unrest among the community and plantation workers (Nainggolan, 2022). Farmers and companies suffered significant losses due to this theft. In addition, the insecurity arising from the rise of crime also has the potential to hinder investment in the plantation sector (Li, 2018). Therefore, effective handling is urgently needed to maintain economic and social stability in the Serdang Bedagai area (Mubarak, 2024).

However, the police's efforts to tackle oil palm theft are not easy. Various challenges arise in its implementation, such as the large plantation area that is difficult to supervise, the limitation of police personnel, and the involvement of increasingly complex crime networks. Therefore, synergy is needed between the police, the community, plantation owners, and local governments in overcoming this problem (Putra et al., 2024). One of the biggest challenges in tackling oil palm theft is the involvement of community members who consider theft to be an ordinary act and not a serious crime. This is exacerbated by the existence of a syndicate network that organizes theft on a large scale. Therefore, an educative approach and consistent law enforcement are the main keys in overcoming this problem (Amalia & Suharni, 2024).

In addition, the limitations of police facilities and infrastructure are also an obstacle in supervision and law enforcement. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen human resources and technology to support the police's efforts in dealing with this crime (Amin & Al Aziz, 2023). The use of technology such as CCTV, drones, and digital-based monitoring systems can be a solution to increase the effectiveness of surveillance in the field (Wardhani et al., 2025). Cooperation between the police and plantations is also an important factor in reducing the number of thefts. The company can contribute by improving the security system in the plantation, such as increasing the number of security officers, installing guardrails, and implementing identification systems for workers and vehicles entering and exiting the plantation area.

In addition, the community also has an equally important role in maintaining security in their environment (Andayani, 2014). By raising legal awareness and reporting suspicious incidents to the authorities, the community can become a strategic partner of the police in efforts to tackle oil palm theft. Strict law enforcement against theft perpetrators must also be balanced with a more humane social approach. Economic and social factors are often the main triggers for theft (Kadir & Suriadi, 2024). Therefore, economic empowerment programs for communities around plantations can also be one of the long-term solutions in reducing this crime rate.

From a legal perspective, oil palm theft is a criminal act regulated in the Criminal Code (KUHP) (Saputra, 2018). Therefore, the perpetrators can be subject to strict sanctions in accordance with applicable regulations. However, optimal law enforcement must be accompanied by a transparent and fair judicial system, so that public trust in the police and the legal system is maintained. With various efforts made by the police, it is hoped that oil palm theft cases in the Serdang Bedagai area can be minimized. Success in tackling this crime does not only depend on the police alone, but also on the synergy between all parties involved. Thus, security and stability in the plantation sector can be maintained, as well as have a positive impact on the regional economy (Dwijayanti, 2024).

Through this research, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of the strategies and challenges faced by the police in handling oil palm theft cases in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police can be obtained. The findings of this study are expected to be a reference for the authorities in formulating more effective and comprehensive policies in tackling this crime in the future.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Approach**

This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach (Sukmadinata, 2005). This approach was chosen to deeply understand the role of the police in tackling the crime of oil palm theft in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police. With this method, researchers can gain a broader understanding of the strategies, challenges, and effectiveness of policies implemented by the police in handling the case.

### **Location and Subject of Research**

This research was carried out in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police, North Sumatra, which has a large oil palm plantation and often experiences theft cases. The research subjects consist of various parties involved in combating oil palm theft, namely: (1) Members of the Serdang Bedagai Police Force, especially from the criminal investigation unit and patrol unit who are directly involved in handling theft cases; (2) Oil palm plantation companies, both private and government, who have experienced the direct impact of this crime; (3) The community around the plantation, including farmers and workers who have a relationship with plantation security; (4) The perpetrator of the oil palm theft (if possible to be interviewed), in order to understand the motives and factors that drove the act of theft.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

To obtain valid and comprehensive data, this study uses the following data collection techniques (Data, 2015):

#### ***In-Depth Interview***

Interviews were conducted directly with the informants involved in the study, such as police officers, plantation owners, the community, and (where possible) the perpetrators of theft. The interview aims to find out information about the steps that the police have taken in dealing with oil palm theft and the obstacles faced.

#### ***Field Observation***

Researchers made direct observations to plantation areas that are often the target of theft and to the police station to see how the case handling process was carried out. This observation aims to get a real picture of the security situation, theft patterns, and security measures implemented.

#### ***Documentation Study***

This research also uses secondary data in the form of official documents from the police, reports on oil palm theft cases, related news, and laws and regulations that regulate the crime of theft. This documentation is used to strengthen the results of the study with more objective data.

#### ***Data Analysis Techniques***

The data obtained were analyzed using the qualitative analysis method of the Miles and Huberman model, which included three main stages (Miles & Huberman, 1992): (1) Data Reduction. Select, simplify, and summarize data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Irrelevant data will be eliminated to focus on aspects related to research; (2) Data Display. The reduced data is presented in the form of a descriptive narrative to make it easier to understand. Presentation can also be done in the form of tables or diagrams to show the pattern of findings; (3) Conclusion Drawing/Verification. Conclusions are drawn based on the pattern of

findings that emerge from the data. The conclusions will be verified by comparing data from various sources to ensure the validity of the research results

### **Data Validity Techniques**

To ensure the validity of the data in this study, the following techniques are used: (1) Triangulation of → Sources Comparing information from various sources, such as the police, the community, and plantation companies, to ensure data consistency; (2) Triangulation Method → Using various data collection methods (interviews, observations, and documentation) to obtain more accurate results; (3) Member Check → Reconfirm the results of interviews with informants to ensure that the data obtained is in accordance with the existing reality.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Factors for the Crime of Oil Palm Theft in the Jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police**

Based on the results of interviews with the police, the community, and plantation owners, there are several main factors that cause the rampant crime of oil palm theft in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police. These factors can be categorized into economic, social, and weak factors in the plantation security system.

Table 1. Factors Causing Oil Palm Theft in Serdang Bedagai

No	Factor	Information
1	Economic Factors	Poverty and unemployment cause some people to engage in theft to make ends meet.
2	Social Factors	Lack of legal awareness and the assumption that oil palm theft is an ordinary act.
3	Weak Security System	The lack of security patrols and surveillance systems that are still manual in many plantations.
4	Syndicate Involvement	Some cases indicate the existence of organized groups operating in large-scale thefts.
5	The Extent of the Plantation Area	The large and hard-to-reach plantation makes it easier to steal without being detected.

From the table above, it can be concluded that economic factors are the main cause of the rampant theft of palm oil. Many perpetrators come from people with difficult economic conditions, so they choose stealing as an instant solution to meet their daily needs. In addition, the weak security system in plantations, such as the lack of security personnel and the lack of use of surveillance technology, also facilitates theft. The results of this study show that the main factors causing oil palm theft in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police are economic factors, social factors, and the weakness of the plantation security system. This finding is in line with the Strain Theory theory put forward by (Khotimah et al., 2023), which explains that crime often occurs due to economic pressures that encourage individuals to commit illegal acts in order to make ends meet.

In a study conducted by (Manik et al., 2025), it was stated that the rampant theft of oil palm in the plantation area of North Sumatra occurred due to poverty and social inequality. Many of the perpetrators come from low-economic community groups who have difficulty finding permanent jobs. This was reinforced by interviews with police officers who stated that most of the perpetrators of theft came from areas around plantations with poor economic conditions. In addition to economic factors, this study also found that the weak security system in plantations is the cause of the increase in theft cases. This is in line with the Routine Activity Theory developed by (Cohen & Felson, 2015), which states that crime occurs when there is an opportunity, motivated perpetrators, and the absence of a guard capable of preventing crime. In this context, the lack of security systems such as CCTV and routine patrols provides opportunities for perpetrators to commit theft without being detected.

## The Role of the Serdang Bedagai Police in Overcoming the Crime of Oil Palm Theft

The Serdang Bedagai Police has a strategic role in overcoming the rampant theft of oil palm in its jurisdiction. Based on the results of interviews with police officers, the steps taken can be categorized into three main approaches, namely preventive, repressive, and pre-emptive (legal education).

Table 2. Serdang Bedagai Police Efforts in Dealing with Oil Palm Theft

No	Types of Efforts	Information
1	Preventive	Conducting routine patrols, socializing the law to the community, and increasing cooperation with plantation companies.
2	Repressive	Crack down on perpetrators by arresting and taking legal action, including dismantling the theft syndicate network.
3	Pre-emptif	Increasing public legal awareness through counseling and coaching programs for former offenders.

Preventive measures are the main focus of the police in reducing this crime rate. Routine patrols are carried out especially in areas prone to theft, such as plantations far from residential areas. In addition, the police also collaborated with plantation owners to tighten the security system by installing CCTV cameras and increasing the number of security officers in the field. On the repressive side, the Serdang Bedagai Police carried out various arrest operations against the perpetrators of theft. From the results of police documentation, it is recorded that in the past year, more than 20 cases of theft have been uncovered, with some perpetrators being part of organized crime syndicates. Meanwhile, in a pre-emptive effort, the police provide socialization to the public about the dangers and legal consequences of oil palm theft. They also encourage companies to contribute to creating economic empowerment programs for the surrounding community so that they are not tempted to commit theft.

In this study, it was found that the Serdang Bedagai Police had made various efforts in dealing with oil palm theft, namely through a preventive, repressive, and pre-emptive approach. This effort is in line with the concept of Community Policing, which emphasizes the importance of community involvement in maintaining environmental security through cooperation between the police and residents. The results of this study are also supported by a study conducted by (Subhan et al., 2017) regarding the effectiveness of the police in overcoming economic crimes in the plantation sector. The study stated that regular patrols and legal counseling to the community have proven effective in reducing crime rates. At the Serdang Bedagai Police Station, the preventive strategy carried out is in the form of routine patrols in the plantation area and increased cooperation with plantation companies to install a better security system.

In addition, repressive actions carried out by the police, such as the arrest of perpetrators and the disclosure of a network of theft syndicates, are also part of the deterrence theory developed by (Bruinsma, 2018). This theory states that the provision of strict and consistent punishment can provide a deterrent effect for criminals. However, in this law enforcement effort, the Serdang Bedagai Police faces challenges in dismantling organized theft syndicates. This shows that oil palm theft is not only carried out by individuals spontaneously, but also involves a wider network, such as thieves and criminal groups that operate on a large scale. This finding is in line with research conducted by (Pahan, 2007), which states that oil palm theft in Sumatra often involves syndicates that have distribution channels outside the region.

### Obstacles of the Serdang Bedagai Police in Overcoming the Crime of Oil Palm Theft

Although the Serdang Bedagai Police have made various efforts to tackle oil palm theft, there are still several obstacles faced. Based on the results of the research, the main obstacles faced are limited resources, lack of cooperation from the community, and the complexity of the theft syndicate network.

Table 3. Obstacles of the Serdang Bedagai Police in Dealing with Oil Palm Theft

No	Obstacles	Information
1	Personnel Limitations	The number of police members on duty in the field is limited compared to the size of the plantation area that must be supervised.
2	Lack of Community Participation	People are often reluctant to report theft cases because they are afraid of threats from perpetrators.
3	Syndicate Complexity	Some theft cases involve organized groups with extensive networks, making them difficult to uncover in a short period of time.
4	Lack of Security Technology	Not all plantations have technology-based security systems such as CCTV and surveillance drones.
5	Socio-Economic Factors	As long as poverty is still a major problem, the potential for theft remains because theft is a shortcut for some people.

From the data obtained, the limitation of police personnel is one of the biggest challenges in plantation supervision. With a large area, it is difficult for the police to patrol optimally at all vulnerable points. In addition, the complexity of the theft syndicate network makes it take the police longer to uncover the main perpetrators. These syndicates often have an extensive network, ranging from thieves in the field to dealers who sell stolen goods to the black market. The lack of community participation is also an obstacle in law enforcement efforts. Many residents are reluctant to report theft cases for fear of threats or revenge from the perpetrators. This is a challenge for the police in building public trust to dare to be cooperative in eradicating this crime. Although the Serdang Bedagai Police have made various efforts to tackle oil palm theft, there are several obstacles faced, including limited human resources, lack of community participation, and the complexity of the theft syndicate network.

This study found that the limitation of police personnel is the main obstacle in the supervision of large plantation areas. This finding is in accordance with research conducted by (INDIVIDUAL, n.d.), which states that the limited number of police personnel is often a major factor in the ineffectiveness of security patrols in rural areas and plantations. The lack of community participation is also a challenge in its efforts to prevent theft. Some residents are reluctant to report theft cases for fear of threats or revenge from the perpetrators. This finding is reinforced by the Broken Windows theory of (Harcourt & Ludwig, 2006), which states that if minor crimes are left without decisive action or community involvement, then they will continue to increase.

In addition, this study also found that the complexity of oil palm theft syndicates is the main obstacle in law enforcement. These networks often have relationships with specific parties that facilitate the distribution of stolen goods to the black market. Which found that oil palm theft in several areas in Sumatra was carried out in an organized manner and involved a wide network, including the involvement of individuals who facilitated the sale of stolen goods. To overcome these obstacles, further cooperation is needed between the police, the community, and plantation companies in improving security systems and strengthening law enforcement against theft syndicates. In addition, a crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) strategy is needed, which is the concept of crime prevention by improving environmental security through the installation of street lighting, technology-based supervision, and strengthening the patrol system in areas prone to theft.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research that has been carried out on the efforts of the police in tackling the crime of oil palm theft in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police, it can be concluded that this crime occurs due to various interrelated factors. The main factors that affect the rampant theft of oil palm are the difficult economic conditions of the community, the weak plantation security system, and the existence of organized theft syndicates. Many of the perpetrators come from low-income communities, who are encouraged to commit theft as a quick

way to earn an income. In addition, the large plantation area and the lack of a technology-based surveillance system provide opportunities for perpetrators to carry out their actions without being easily detected. In an effort to overcome this crime, the Serdang Bedagai Police has implemented three main approaches, namely preventive, repressive, and pre-emptive. The preventive approach is carried out by increasing routine patrols in areas prone to theft, collaborating with plantation companies, and providing legal education to the public about the impact and legal consequences of theft crimes. A repressive approach is applied by arresting and taking legal action against the perpetrators, including dismantling a network of theft syndicates operating in the area. Meanwhile, the pre-emptive approach is carried out through counseling and coaching programs to the community, especially to former criminals, with the aim of increasing legal awareness and opening up alternative economic opportunities so that they do not return to criminal acts. Although various efforts have been made, there are several obstacles that are still faced by the Serdang Bedagai Police in tackling oil palm theft. The main obstacle is the limited number of police personnel, which causes surveillance in large plantation areas to be less than optimal. In addition, the lack of public participation in providing information or reporting crimes is also a challenge in itself, considering that many residents are afraid of threats or retaliatory actions from perpetrators. Another obstacle is the existence of theft syndicates that have an extensive and well-organized network, thus complicating the law enforcement process.

## SUGGESTION

Seeing the complexity of this problem, a more comprehensive approach is needed to reduce the number of oil palm thefts in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police. One of the steps that can be taken is to increase cooperation between the police, the community, and plantation companies in strengthening the security system, both through the installation of surveillance technology such as CCTV and drones, and by increasing the number of security officers in the field. In addition, the government and the private sector can also contribute to providing alternative economic solutions for communities around plantations, such as creating economic empowerment programs, skills training, and increasing employment to reduce dependence on criminal acts as a source of income. With a more targeted strategy and stronger collaboration between all parties, it is hoped that the level of oil palm theft in the jurisdiction of the Serdang Bedagai Police can be significantly minimized. This will not only create better safety conditions for plantation companies, but also improve the welfare of the surrounding community by providing more sustainable long-term solutions.

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