

# Legal Review of Sharia Economics on the Practice of Rounding Weights in Palm Oil Trading in Mamuju Tengah Regency

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

### **Keywords**

*Palm oil trading, rounding practice, weighing scale, Sharia Economic*

This study discusses the practice of rounding scales in palm oil sales transactions in Tasokko Village, Karossa District, Central Mamuju Regency, from the perspective of Sharia Economic Law. The main issue raised is how the practice of rounding scales is carried out by the weighing party, and how this practice affects the rights of farmers as sellers. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data was collected through field observations and in-depth interviews with farmers and the weighing scale operators of UD. Pandang Raya. The research findings indicate that the practice of rounding weights is carried out by rounding the weighing results to the nearest ten, which often disadvantages farmers because the actual weight produced does not match the payment received. This contradicts the principles of justice ('adl), honesty (sidq), and mutual consent (ridha) in Islamic Economic Law, which require that every transaction be conducted voluntarily, fairly, and without harming either party. This study recommends the need for supervision and improvement of the weighing system in the field, as well as education for farmers and collectors so that transactions are conducted in accordance with Sharia provisions. These findings are expected to serve as input for relevant parties to create transparent, fair, and blessed buying and selling practices in accordance with the principles of Islamic economics.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Trade is one of the economic activities that is inseparable from human life as social beings (1). In practice, buying and selling is not merely an exchange of goods and services, but is also closely tied to moral principles, ethics, and the laws that govern it, particularly from an Islamic perspective. Islam, as a perfect religion, has regulated various aspects of muamalah (transactions), including buying and selling, emphasizing justice ('adl), honesty (sidq), and mutual consent (ridha) among the parties involved in the transaction (2). In Indonesia, palm oil is one of the leading commodities that plays an important role in supporting the economy of the community, especially in rural areas. Tasokko Village, Karossa District, Central Mamuju Regency, is one of the areas where the majority of the population depends on palm oil plantation yields. However, in the practice of buying and selling palm oil at the farmer level, there are still issues that can be detrimental to the seller, one of which is the practice of rounding weights (3). The practice of rounding weights is done by weighing the harvest using a bridge scale, then rounding the weight to the nearest ten. If the weight of the palm oil is 14 kg, it is rounded down to 10 kg, while if it is 16 kg, it can be rounded up to 20 kg. This rounding pattern often leads to unfairness for farmers, especially small-scale farmers who heavily

rely on every kilogram of their harvest. Many farmers feel disadvantaged because the actual weight they submit does not match the payment they receive.

In the context of Islamic Economic Law, such practices need to be re-examined. Articles in the Compilation of Islamic Economic Law stipulate that transactions must be conducted on a mutual consent basis, with honest and accurate measurements and weights. This principle is also emphasized in the Quran, Surah Al-Muthaffin, verses 1–3, which strongly condemns those who cheat in measurements and weights. Dishonesty in weighing not only harms one party but also contradicts the primary purpose of Islamic law, which is to achieve the welfare of the community (4).

Therefore, it is important to conduct research to explore in depth how rounding practices are applied in the field, their impact on farmers, and how such practices are viewed from the perspective of Islamic Economic Law. This research is expected to provide tangible contributions by offering insights to local governments, businesses, and the community to create a more fair, transparent, and Islamically aligned trading system.

### *1.2 Problem Statement*

- a. How is the rounding scale practice implemented in Tasokko Village's palm oil trading?
- b. How does this practice align with Sharia Economic Law principles?

### *1.3 Objectives and Scope*

This paper aims to examine the rounding scale practice in palm oil trading in Tasokko Village and evaluate its compliance with Sharia Economic Law. The scope focuses on transactions at UD. Pandang Raya weighing station.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Related Work*

Several previous studies have examined weighing practices in palm oil trading from an Islamic legal perspective. One of them is a study by Ahmad Supendi (2020) titled "The Implementation of Weighing in Palm Oil Trading Reviewed from the Perspective of Islamic Economics." Supendi highlighted the inconsistency between the scales used by collectors and the actual harvest weights measured by farmers, which often led to economic losses and ethical violations. He concluded that such practices do not reflect the Islamic values of honesty and justice, as they frequently disadvantage farmers, who are typically in a weaker position in trading structures.

Similarly, Hayatul Ichsan (2021) conducted a study titled "An Islamic Legal Review of Weighing Practices in Palm Oil Trading (Case Study in Pante Ceureumen District, West Aceh)." This research emphasized manipulative weighing practices and a lack of transparency between buyers and sellers. Ichsan argued that contracts in Islamic commerce must be based on mutual consent (*ridha*), clarity of the object being transacted (*ghayr gharar*), and honesty (*sidq*). Unilateral weighing without written evidence or clear information about weight measurements is inconsistent with these Islamic principles (5).

Both studies affirm that weighing practices in palm oil trading are a serious issue that affects not only economic justice but also the validity of transactions under Islamic commercial law. In this context, the weighing scale becomes a crucial instrument in determining the fairness of a contract (*akad*)



## 2.2 Research Gap

Although previous studies have addressed issues related to unfair and opaque weighing practices, very few have explicitly explored the practice of rounding scales as the central focus of inquiry. Rounding scales refers to the systematic practice of rounding actual weights to the nearest tens, often resulting in significant losses for farmers. For example, a measured weight of 14 kg may be rounded down to 10 kg, while 16 kg may be rounded up to 20 kg. This not only causes economic disadvantage but also creates uncertainty about the actual value of the transaction, thereby making the akad potentially invalid or imbalanced.

The literature on rounding practices remains scarce, despite its prevalence in small-scale agricultural trading, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, there is a lack of in-depth examination of the systemic impact of this practice on farmers' income and its compatibility with the principles of Islamic Economic Law, such as 'adl (justice), amanah (trust), and mushawarah (mutual consultation)

Therefore, this study is essential as it aims to fill the gap in the literature by focusing on rounding practices as a distinct form of transactional deviation. It seeks to contribute to the understanding of the ethical and legal dimensions of such practices and promote the implementation of Islamic economic principles in daily business transactions, especially in rural palm oil trade.

## 3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, which is considered appropriate for exploring social phenomena in depth, especially those related to individual experiences, perceptions, and practices in a specific context. The purpose of using this approach is to provide a detailed and accurate description of the rounding practices in palm oil trading and to analyze these practices based on Islamic economic law principles.

### 3.1 Data Collection

Primary data were obtained through direct field observation and semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants, including local farmers and weighing operators at UD. Pandang Raya in Tasokko Village, Karossa District, Central Mamuju Regency. The interview questions were designed to uncover the actual weighing process, the decision-making behind rounding practices, and the perceived impact on farmers' income and satisfaction (6).

Field observation was conducted to document real-time weighing practices, focusing on how measurements were recorded, how rounding was applied, and whether any standard procedures were followed. The combination of observation and interviews enabled the researcher to collect comprehensive data reflecting both practices and perceptions in the field (7).

### 3.2 Analysis Techniques

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. This process involved coding and categorizing interview transcripts and observation notes to identify recurring themes, patterns, and anomalies related to rounding practices. The analysis focused on understanding the extent to which rounding deviates from fair trading principles and its implications for the economic well-being of the farmers (8).

The researcher also compared the identified practices with normative guidelines from Islamic economic jurisprudence, especially in terms of fairness (*'adl*), mutual consent (*ridha*), and honesty (*sidq*), to evaluate their legitimacy under Sharia law (9).

### 3.3 Validation

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study employed data triangulation. This technique involved cross-verifying the information gathered from different sources—interviews with farmers, statements from weighing staff, and direct field observations. By comparing data from multiple perspectives, the researcher aimed to minimize bias and enhance the credibility of the results.

Additionally, member checking was conducted with several participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations and conclusions drawn from their interviews. This helped strengthen the authenticity and trustworthiness of the research findings.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Key Findings

The findings of this study reveal a recurring and systemic issue in the practice of weighing palm oil in Tasokko Village, particularly at UD. Pandang Raya. The use of rounding in weighing scales has become a standard procedure, whereby the actual weight of palm oil is adjusted—either rounded up or down—to the nearest ten kilograms. For example, if a farmer delivers 14 kg of palm oil, the weight is often rounded down to 10 kg, whereas if it reaches 16 kg, it may be rounded up to 20 kg. While this may appear to balance out in theory, in practice, the rounding disproportionately disadvantages small-scale farmers, especially those whose yields often fall just below the rounding threshold.

Many farmers interviewed expressed discontent and a sense of exploitation, stating that such a practice significantly reduces their income over time. Since palm oil is typically traded in large quantities, even a few kilograms of reduction per transaction can accumulate into major financial losses. These findings confirm that the rounding system creates inequality in trade transactions and systematically benefits the buyer (collector) at the expense of the seller (farmer), which violates the ethical and legal foundation of Islamic commerce.

### 4.2 Interpretation of Results

From the perspective of Sharia Economic Law, the rounding practice observed in this study stands in direct contradiction with fundamental Islamic principles that govern fair and ethical transactions. Three core principles are notably violated:

- 1) **Fairness (*'adl*):** Islam mandates that all commercial dealings must be based on justice. Rounding down weights without mutual agreement causes one party—farmers—to be consistently disadvantaged, which goes against this principle.
- 2) **Honesty (*sidq*):** Transparency and truthfulness are key elements in Islamic trade. Manipulating or modifying the actual weight for convenience, without full disclosure or consent, is considered a breach of honesty.
- 3) **Mutual Consent (*ridha*):** Transactions must occur with the full and willing agreement of both parties. In many cases, farmers were not informed about the specific mechanics of the rounding, nor were they given the opportunity to contest or negotiate the terms. This lack of clear communication undermines the spirit of *ridha*.

Furthermore, the practice resembles elements of *gharar* (uncertainty) and *zulm* (injustice), which are explicitly prohibited in Islamic jurisprudence. The asymmetry in power and information between the weighing operators and the farmers exacerbates the issue, leaving the latter in a vulnerable position (10).

These results highlight the urgent need for reform in local trade practices, especially in rural areas where access to information and institutional oversight is limited. The application of Islamic economic principles must not only be theoretical but implemented in real-world trade to ensure the protection of the weaker party and the overall ethical integrity of the marketplace

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Comparison with Prior Research

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research conducted by Ahmad Supendi (2020) and Hayatul Ichsan (2021), both of whom highlighted issues of manipulation and injustice in weighing practices within the palm oil trading sector. Supendi observed that discrepancies between actual and recorded weights led to substantial losses for farmers, emphasizing that such practices were inconsistent with Islamic economic ethics, especially in rural trade. Similarly, Ichsan noted the prevalence of non-transparent weighing systems that operated without proper documentation or farmer oversight, resulting in significant mistrust between sellers and buyers.

This present study strengthens those conclusions by providing a focused analysis on a specific form of manipulation: the rounding of weights. While Supendi and Ichsan addressed general malpractice in weighing, this study provides new empirical insight into how a seemingly minor adjustment—such as rounding weights to the nearest ten kilograms—can have systemic and recurring financial impacts on farmers. It shows that the injustice is not always blatant or overt but can be embedded in routine trade mechanisms that have become normalized and unquestioned over time.

Thus, this study extends the scope of prior research by demonstrating that structural practices, such as rounding, can perpetuate inequality under the guise of operational efficiency. It calls attention to the need for a more nuanced understanding of how subtle violations of Islamic commercial ethics can become widespread in local economies.

### 5.2 Limitations

While the findings of this study provide important insights, there are several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research was limited geographically to a single village—Tasokko—and a single trading point, namely the UD. Pandang Raya weighing station. As such, the results may not fully represent the conditions or practices occurring in other villages or regions, particularly those with different socio-economic dynamics or institutional structures.

Second, this study relied heavily on qualitative methods, particularly interviews and field observation. While these methods allow for deep exploration of context and perception, they may lack quantitative validation to measure the exact financial loss caused by rounding practices over time. Moreover, farmers' responses may have been shaped by subjective experience or influenced by power dynamics, potentially introducing bias.

Finally, the study did not include the perspective of government regulators or religious leaders, whose insights could provide a broader understanding of how local trade practices are monitored and evaluated from legal and Islamic perspectives.

### 5.3 Future Research

To build upon the current findings, future research should expand to other regions that engage in palm oil trading or similar agricultural commodities to determine whether rounding practices are widespread or isolated. Comparative studies across different districts or provinces could provide a clearer national picture and offer valuable data for policymakers.

Additionally, researchers should consider incorporating quantitative methods to calculate the cumulative financial loss incurred by farmers due to rounding. Such data could be used to advocate for regulatory reforms and improved oversight mechanisms in agricultural markets.

Moreover, involving religious scholars, economists, and trade authorities in future studies would enrich the analysis by providing theological, legal, and policy-oriented perspectives. These stakeholders could help propose practical policy recommendations, such as the standardization of weighing procedures, the introduction of digital scales, or the requirement for printed receipts that reflect exact weights—measures that could ensure fairness, transparency, and full compliance with Sharia economic principles.

## 6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the rounding scale practice in palm oil trading, as observed in Tasokko Village, systematically disadvantages farmers and creates an imbalance in trade transactions. Although the rounding process may appear trivial or merely procedural, it has significant economic implications, particularly for small-scale farmers who depend heavily on the accuracy of every kilogram sold. When weights are consistently rounded down without prior agreement, farmers lose part of their rightful income, leading to economic injustice.

From the perspective of Sharia Economic Law, these practices are not only ethically problematic but also legally unacceptable. They violate essential Islamic commercial principles, such as honesty (*sidq*), fairness (*adl*), and mutual consent (*ridha*). The lack of transparency and clarity in the weighing process fosters distrust and inequality, which are contrary to the *maqasid al-shariah* (objectives of Islamic law), especially the protection of wealth (*hifz al-mal*) and prevention of harm (*daf' al-mafsadah*).

The findings reinforce the idea that market practices must be rooted not only in operational efficiency but also in ethical responsibility. In the context of Islamic economics, trade is not merely a means of profit-making but a form of worship (*ibadah*) that must be conducted with integrity and justice. Therefore, the continuation of unjust practices like rounding scales is not only detrimental from an economic standpoint but also spiritually and morally harmful.

## 7. Recommendation

To ensure compliance with Islamic economic principles and to protect the welfare of farmers, several key recommendations are proposed:

### a) Implementation of Accurate Weighing Systems

Traders and weighing stations should utilize digital or certified analog scales that provide precise measurements. The use of tamper-proof weighing equipment will reduce manipulation and enhance the accuracy of transactions.

### b) Transparent Documentation and Receipts

Every transaction should be accompanied by a written or printed receipt indicating the exact weight and corresponding price. This documentation will serve as proof for both parties and promote accountability.

**c) Farmer Awareness and Education**

Local farmers should receive training and education about their rights in Islamic trade, including principles of justice and transparency. This will empower them to advocate for fairer practices and resist exploitation.

**d) Involvement of Religious and Legal Authorities**

Local Islamic scholars (ulama), trade officials, and consumer protection bodies should be involved in monitoring and regulating trade activities in rural areas. Their presence can help ensure that business practices comply with both state law and Sharia.

**e) Policy Reform and Regulation**

Local governments should develop clear regulatory frameworks that prohibit arbitrary rounding and ensure enforcement through regular inspections. Incentives can also be given to traders who adopt ethical standards in their business operations.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders in the palm oil trading ecosystem—particularly in rural areas—can work together to restore justice, promote ethical trade, and align daily business activities with the values and objectives of Islamic economic law.

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