

Clear and Clean Land Makes Food Estate a success

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Following the Program introduced by the Local Government of Merauke, East Kalimantan will launch a Food Estate on an area of 20 million hectares. For now a million hectares of land have been planted with oil palm trees and integrated with cattle farms.

This was delivered by Dr. H. Syachrumsyah Asri, SH as Head of Research and Development Institution in the Province of East Kalimantan as a guest speaker in a talk show titled "Preparation of East Kalimantan towards National Energy and Food Granary Supporting MP3EI as the Corridor III of Kalimantan". The talk show is in the series of activities for Agrinex 2012 that reaches the age of six years at the Jakarta Convention Center (31/3). Agrinex of this year takes the theme Agribusiness for all, held in cooperation with the Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) and PT. Performax.

Relating to the goal of East Kalimantan to become a national energy and food granary, Dr. Ir. Sumardjo Gatot Irianto, MS.DAA as the Directorate General for Agriculture Infrastructure and Facilities (PSP), Ministry of Agriculture, said that food estate and fuel estate would be successful if the status of land exploited is already clear and clean. Given good land status (clear and clean), the government does not have to bother to invite investors as financial investment will naturally come by itself. In addition, the labor force must not have a minimum education but must acquire adequate education to make agriculture rise.

"In my experience in the region, the conversion of agricultural land into a coal mining in Kalimantan is very tremendous. The conversion of rice fields into mining area gives bigger cash/money. It is very difficult to overcome. Operationally, the orientation is a daily cash system with the central government encouraging the development or opening of new areas expected to reduce the lost regions," he said.

Dr. Gatot notes that as long as the converted function of land can not be controlled, until the end of the world, food estate will remain a dream only. Thus, farming must change from the commonly dirty and ugly thing to a confident thing – rice field becomes rice estate.

"We can and must go there; agriculture must be built into something elite and giving pride. An image must be created, and only then people come in," he said.

As a native son of East Kalimantan, Dr. Syachrumsyah ensures that his region can be trusted and ready. "For the domestic investment, East Kalimantan is one of the top three largest in Indonesia and for foreign investment (PMA), one of the top five largest. Thus, it is evident that the many investments coming in mean that it is easy to invest in East Kalimantan. The local government provides good facilitations," he said.

In the meantime, if there are people interested to come as migrants, East Kalimantan is ready to accept provided those transmigrated do not cause problem but have certain skills. "So it is not merely to move people. Well for transmigration, there are 10 regencies that are ready. We have made an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Provincial Government of East

Java and Central Java as well as Yogyakarta (in relation to transmigration), for food estate and fuel estate so that the agriculture in East Kalimantan can develop on the land already available," he added. (Mtd)