

Tropical Peatland is Susceptible to Fires

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Indonesia has the largest tropical peatlands in the world. "Indonesia has about 20 million hectares of tropical peatlands that scattered on the island of Borneo, Sumatra and Papua. Tropical peatlands have important and strategic role in environmental conservation," said Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Bogor Agricultural University (IPB), Dr. Ernan Rustiadi representing Rector in the event of the Summer School 2011 with the theme 'Management of Tropical Peatlands Strategy: Development and Conservation', Tuesday, 8 November 2011. The event which was held on 8-19 November 2011 as part of the Integrated Field Environmental Science, Global Center of Excellent (IFES-GCOE), Indonesian Liaison Office, was the regular program of the cooperation between Bogor Agricultural University with Hokkaido University, Japan.

Government of Indonesia ever had the worst experience in the utilization of tropical peatlands. 1 million hectares of Peatlands were damaged by the failure of rice self-sufficiency projects. But now, several private companies have successfully utilized tropical peatlands for oil palm and coconut plantation. I hope that previous failures and successes are the subject of our discussion in designing a platform for wise policy for peatlands utilization in the future," said Dr. Ernan.

Researcher of Faculty of Agriculture Hokkaido University, Prof. Ryusuke Hatano expressed that tropical peatlands are very susceptible to fire and natural damage. Tropical peatland areas are prone to fire hot spots. "A lot of peatlands were on fires during the El Nino. I hope the scientific discussion we have will produce the technology enable to overcome these problems," said Prof. Ryusuke.

The Indonesian Summer School is part of the series which consisted of lecture, discussion and field trip to Riau and Kalimantan. Indonesian Summer School 2011 program was participated by 57 young scientists, 38 (thirty eight) of whom were students, the rest or 19 (nineteen) of whom were faculty members from universities in Malaysia, China, Mongolia, Russia, Japan, Indonesia, India and Finland. (Wied).