

## **IPB expert Spreading fragrance of Agarwood in RRI Friday, May 09, 2014**

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Already having agarwood, asking for sandalwood; already knowing, asking anyway. Although this is an Indonesian proverb, Indonesian people have not much used agarwood optimally. On the contrary, other countries use it, such as Arab, Taiwan, China, and Japan. The selling price of good quality agarwood reaches tens of millions rupiahs per kilogram.

This was stated by Dr. Gayuh Rahayu of the Department of Biology, Faculty of Mathematics and natural Sciences, IPB, as a resource person in program of Specialist Dialogue at RRI (6/5).

Dr. Gayuh explained, agarwood is traditionally used as incense, perfume mixture or aromatherapy. It can even be used as a preservative and ingredient of cough drug. It has wider uses: besides its use as incense and perfume ingredients, agarwood is used as a medicinal herb mixture because basically its fragrance can be used for aromatherapy. When you are Mecca, in the shopping malls there are some stores offering the burnt wood, most of which is agarwood.

Which type of agarwood has the high value? Dr. Gayuh replied, a healthy agarwood has a low value, but when the tree is sick and it releases blackish brown clumps of fragrance, called sapwood, it is of great value.

Dr. Gayuh further explained, sapwood is obtained with the help of fungus. There are several types of fungi such as acremonium, cylindrocarpon and Fusarium, which can result in sick agarwood trees. When the sick trees are trying to defend themselves from the fungi attack, they produce compounds that suppress the growth of fungi. Such compounds, when built up on the wood, make the previously white-colored wood become turn brown to blackish brown and become fragrant, and the fragrance easily spreads when the wood is burned.

When asked by a listener over the phone: "Are there any Indonesian farmers who have produced agarwood?" Dr. Gayuh answered, there are now some, they have not widely produced yet. The production of agarwood sapwood in Indonesia still relies on the nature, the agarwood trees in natural forests. Dr. Gayuh suggests those who wish to cultivate this tree learn from those who have initiated or consult an expert or researcher in this field. (Mtd).