

Completing Doctorate after Researching Potato Farmers in Dieng

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For the people of Dieng in Central Java, potato has been able to change their lives. Potato crop has employed many workers and caused economic surplus for one time. Good agriculture economy, however, is not implemented there, which caused the farmers to suffer from debts leading to house and land sales. This phenomenon is observed by Hery Santosa which later was put in his dissertation entitled "Farming is Gambling: When Market Mechanism is Speculation Biased".

According to Hery, growing potato in Dieng is seen as improving social status. In the past two decades, plantation rises from 200 hectares to 5000 hectares.

"For the government, surplused potato production intensification can threaten the environment. For the local people, this caused new problems, such as bigger credit or reduced lands," said Hery during his open doctoral exam at Faculty of Cultural Sciences on Saturday (5/12).

According to Hery, potato economic burst had assembled market as the source of power for all players to compete in getting profit. Eventually, it is understandable if farmers considered the potato production process as uncertain and risky,



“This situation has turned the agriculture in Puncakwangi area of Dieng into a gambling arena. Farmers speculate to regain their victory amidst the deteriorating agroecosystem condition,” he said.

In the research, Hery found out 4 factors working behind production gambling practices. First, farmers were able to turn slow into fast agroecosystem that had long supported the economy in the area. Second, economic politics that enabled centrality of the market role. Third, value system that relate potato production to social status. Fourth, ideology for people not to fear the risks.

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