

# Realising Food Security and Social Protection

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There are many significant changes in social structures among villagers after the collapse of the New Order, especially in Java. The changes can be seen through their occupations, life style, demographic structure. Agriculture is no longer their main profession. Many of them went to the service provision, trade or industry. Farmers get older and just few people from the next generation are interested in farming, because they think being a farmer is a job with lower social status. Therefore, they choose to move to the city while senior urbanites choose to move to the suburban area. This situation created social distinction. This shift attracted the attention of Dr. Gerben Nooteboom, a professor from University of Amsterdam, who was one of the speakers of a seminar titled “Vulnerabilities, Food Security and Social Protection Politics in Indonesia” which was held by Centre for Demography and Policy UGM, collaborating with Policy Studies Magister and Doctoral program UGM, Wednesday (12/10). The distinction, according to Dr. Nooteboom, later caused many people to maintain their urbanite life style and made them sell their rice-fields to afford their life-style. It then caused the decreasing rice production.

Related to Food Security and Social Protection, Dr. John McCarthy from Australian National University, explained that this is one of primary right that ought to be guaranteed by the government. But, government cannot just rely on direct aid, such as rice for the poor, but also need to think of long-term solution, which is wider strategic policy. To make this policy, Indonesia needs to learn from another developing countries, such as Brazil and India. Therefore, government needs to think of the way to adopt their policy depending on Indonesia’s economy situation. “Indonesia becomes a laboratory of development, and we hope Indonesia can build their own approach

depending on the context of this country,” he added.

Another problem is social protection in Indonesia that sometimes becomes a political matter. According to UGM researcher, Dr. Mulyadi Sunarto, social protection policy is changed every time the cabinet changed. But, there is one thing that never changed, which is the increasing amount of social aid at a time closer to the general election.

“Many of financial aid are used to mobilize voters for the election,” he said. He observed that government tend to personalize social protection aid and use that policy for branding.

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