

UGM Food Expert Earns Awards

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Food safety expert, Prof. Dr. Ir. Endang Rahayu Sutriswati, was awarded the Adhikarya Pangan Nusantara 2015 award in the category of researchers in the field of food security services. The award is given directly by the President Joko Widodo at the State Palace on Monday, December 21, 2015.

Professor of the Faculty of Agricultural Technology UGM is selected to receive the award because of her commitment in researching the safety of local food. In addition, she is keen to educate community, SMEs, and farmers to pay attention to the security of agricultural products that they are producing, in order to avoid contamination of toxins that are harmful to health.

Trisye, her popular name, is proud for the award she won. Her commitment in research about food microbiology on agricultural products based on grains such as corn, peanuts, cocoa, and coffee can contribute to nation food security. The issue of food security is an important issue that should be a priority for many parties. Food safety is an important part in the organization of food, considered a serious threat not only at national level, but also on a global scale.

"In Indonesia, there are still many cases of food poisoning or disease due to unsafe food products due to contamination of bacteria, toxins, and chemicals that are harmful to health," she explained, Wednesday (23/12), in her office.

According to Trisye, one of the issues that must be addressed is to suppress bacterial contaminants and toxins in food products by SMEs. Some of food products produced by SMEs are still polluted by bacteria or toxins because they do not handle food products properly, especially at the stage of post-

harvest and distribution. It is caused by lack of technology use and adequate human resources.

"Many of fungal toxin contamination were found in the form of aflatoxins, ochratoxin, fumonisin in some of SMEs food products which exceed the maximum threshold. The toxin contamination has the potential to stimulate the emergence of cancer in the future. Besides, it also makes local agricultural products become uncompetitive in the global market," said the head of of Doctoral Program in Food Science of UGM.

Therefore, the prevention of the emergence of post-harvest and distribution toxins need to be dealt immediately. This could be done by raising awareness of the dangers of toxins contamination among farmers on their agricultural products. Likewise, the seller and the buyer also need to pay more attention to the safety standards of food products.

"The government is expected to facilitate the farmers or a group of small and medium enterprises in order to produce food products that are safe for consumption," said Trisye, an active member of national food security network and the Expert Panel for Indonesian Mycotoxin Risk Assasement Center (INARAC). Another effort that could be done is providing warehouse storage facilities that have good quality. Next, providing a drying machine for agricultural products.

"With the proper post-harvest handling, agricultural products are expected to be free of toxin contamination and could be accepted in the international market," she hoped.

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