

Indonesian and Dutch Researchers Study Banana Tree Disease

Friday, 18 November 2016 WIB, By: Marwati



Indonesia has a great variety of bananas, unlike those in the West. Spread of diseases that attack banana trees, however, are imminent.

“The variety of bananas in Indonesia plays a big role in food security, serving as source of income. But the global spread of disease affecting banana trees, such as Panama disease, is bringing disadvantages to the people of Indonesia,” said Agricultural professor from UGM, Prof. Siti Subandiyah, also coordinator for an international collaboration on banana diversity, on Thursday (17/11).

The event titled *The Indonesian banana: protecting a staple food from Panama disease collapse and exploiting its genetic diversity for discovery research* last from 5-12 November. The event is supported by The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences Scientific Programme Indonesia - Netherlands (KNAW-SPIN), and Research, Technology and Higher Learning Ministry.

The team with 19 members from Indonesia and the Netherlands researched into banana variety in Bantul and Cianjur. “This international and interdisciplinary cooperation builds the research grounds

to develop access to healthy food and decent rural community,” said Prof. Siti.

The Panama disease that attacks banana trees in East and South East Asia since the 1960s is one of the main focus of the research. In Indonesia, the disease grew rapidly and caused a significant impact on banana exports.

This served the background for the joint research. According to Siti, understanding to the relations between the banana, soil, land ownership, and market demand, have affected the banana diversity. Meanwhile, responses to plant diseases can also expedite understanding to the different dimensions of production, consumption, and marketing of banana in Indonesia.

“These all contribute to the decision making by agricultural groups, governments, trade networks and bioscience and biological research,” she said.

The research involve researchers from UGM, Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB), Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI), Wageningen University and Research (WUR), University of Amsterdam (UvA), KNAW-Netherlands Institute of Ecology (NIOO-KNAW), and KNAW-Fungal Biodiversity Centre (CBS).

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