

Reform in Welfare Rice toward Non-cash Food Aid

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Rice for the Poor programme, or now known as *Welfare Rice*, has been implemented by government since 1998. But currently, the government has replaced it with non-cash food aid. Responding to this issue, Department of Social Economic Agriculture of Faculty of Agriculture UGM holds a discussion themed *Welfare Rice Policy and Farmer's Welfare* on Tuesday (6/6) at Gadjah Mada University Club.

Resource persons attending the event are Prof. Dr. Drs. M. Husein Sawit (Agriculture Research and Development), Karyawan Gunarso (Director for Operation and Public Service of Logistics Agency), Elias Payong (Assistant to Deputy Head in Economic Ministry, Redy Prasetyo (Head of Sub-division of Economic Ministry), and Panji Winanteya Ruki (Deputy Head of the Ministry). Other speakers are Dr. Jamhari (Dean of Faculty of Agriculture), Prof. Dr. Dwidjono Hadi Darwanto (Economic Agriculture Professor, and Dr. Jangkung Handoyo Mulyo (Head of Social Economic Agriculture Department).

According to Prof. Husein, there were weaknesses in the *Rice for the Poor* programme on the management aspect, which was not right in terms of target, quantity, timing, price, and administration.

But these have been reformed with the distribution pattern of rice being changed to e-voucher.



Government will distribute the non-cash aid worth Rp110,000,00 per month to the poor people. The aid can be spent to buy rice or other food stocks in places already appointed before. It is not cashable to minimise the risk for abuse. A test of this scheme has been done in 44 cities in Java and outside Java with at least 1.4 million households receiving the aid in 2017.

Dr. Jamhari responded that the *Rice for the Poor* had contributed to the stabilisation of rice price and increase in farmer's welfare. He said if the distribution mechanism was left to the market this would reduce optimisation of rice husk absorption by the Logistics Agency. Should this happen, there is the possibility the price of farmer's rice will drop because the provision is reduced. Hence, the *Welfare Rice* cannot be separated from the farmer's welfare.

"*Rice for the Poor* programme is one of social security forms, but it cannot be separated from the effort to increase the farmer's welfare," said Dr. Jamhari.

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