

Lack of Areas and Productivity Cause Low National Sugar Production


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National sugar production has not been able to meet the national demands with just a total of 2.1 million tonnes per year for the need of 6.8 million tonnes. The decreasing national production is caused by low productivity of 48 government owned sugar factories and 17 private companies as well as the decreasing areas of national sugar cane plantations. Government and private sector are urged to revitalise the sugar factories, increasing the plantation areas, and increasing partnership programme with farmer groups.

This emerged in a national seminar themed *Comprehensive Study on Sugar System towards Resilience and Independence of National Sugar Industry* on Thursday (26/4) at Auditorium of MM UGM. The seminar hosted by UGM's Centre for Asia Pacific Studies invited speakers Deputy Head of Food and Agriculture in the office of Co-ordinating Minister of the Economy, Ir. Musdalifah Machmud, MT, Director General of Foreign Trade in Ministry of Trade, Oke Nurwan Dipl.Ing, and Director of Seasonal Crops and Spices in Agriculture Ministry, Dr. Agus Wahyudi.

Musdalifah Machmud said currently most or 78.7 percent of sugar industry were in Java where they were old Dutch factories. "Average age of sugar factories is more than 100 years," she said.



Currently, government is revitalising and increasing the number of new factories to increase the national sugar production. “Four new factories will start operations by 2022 with a capacity of 12 thousand To cane Per Day (TCD),” she said.

Meanwhile, Oke Nurwan said of 63 factories, 48 are government factories and the rest is private factories. But this figure has not been able to meet the increasing need of sugar nationally. “The need of sugar reaches 6.8 million tonnes,” he said.

He viewed that if no improvement is made in terms of productivity and areas, Indonesia will always depend on imported sugar raw materials. “If we don’t improve it, sugar production will always depend on imported raw materials,” he said.

Director Agus Wahyudi said presently national sugar production was just 2.14 million tonnes from a size of 423 thousand hectares of sugar cane plantations. Each hectare produces 5 tonnes of sugar. “The ideal figure is 600 thousand hectares with a production of 10 tonnes per hectare. So, there is a gap here between the areas and productivity,” he said.

One of the ways to bridge the gap is to link sugar factory management and farmer groups. “Currently, there is a problem between sugar factories and farmers, both seem to walk on their own. For example, when a pest problem strikes, or there is a problem with distribution of seed and fertilisers, or loans problems, these all seem to get disconnected between the factory, farmers, and government,” he said.

A farmer from Mojokerto, H. Mubin, complained the rare supply of subsidised fertilisers and seeds for them, which can actually minimise their production costs. “We get the impression that subsidised fertilisers are just for crops. For us very little is provided, especially seeds. Then, to whom can we report this problem?” lamented Mubin.

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