

Covid-19 Pandemic Emerges Complexity of Food Problems

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Entering the third month since the discovery of the first case of Covid-19 in Indonesia, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant changes in several sectors in the country, including the food and agriculture sectors.

Obstacles with food availability and fluctuations in prices of staples occur in various regions, mainly as a result of the implementation of Covid-19 handling policies in the form of physical distancing to Large Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB).

"The impact of Covid-19 is not only from the disease but also from the policies were taken, there are PSBB, and so on that affects economic activities and agriculture," said Professor of the Faculty of Agriculture UGM, Prof. Dr. Ir. Masyhuri on Friday (8/5).

He conveyed this in a discussion entitled "Food Independence in the Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Period" held by the UGM Professor Council.

The impact of the pandemic on the agricultural sector, said Masyhuri, covers various aspects,



ranging from production, distribution, and consumption of food products. The price of food needs becomes uncertain.

Sugar and garlic are some of the commodities that have experienced price increases. In contrast, other commodities such as chili and the number of livestock products such as chicken meat and eggs have decreased in value.

"Prices are uncertain, some go up, but some go down. Partly this is because demand is falling while supplies remain, so prices are starting to fall," Masyhuri explained.

Besides, imports of agricultural products that have not been able to be fulfilled with domestic production have also experienced problems due to changes in policies from exporting countries that are trying to save production for local needs. This situation, Masyhuri argues, could be even worse if the Covid-19 pandemic occurs prolonged.

"The longer the pandemic lasts, the more complex the food problems become," he said.


Deputy for Food and Agriculture Coordination, Coordinator of Ministry for Economic Affairs, Ir. Musdhalifah Machmud, MT, said that in April 2020, foodstuffs experienced deflation of 0.13 percent, it indicates a decrease in public demand.

Food consumption also decreased by 20 percent. There is also a prediction of meat consumption to have reduced by more than 30 percent. Musdhalifah said this condition was anticipated with incentives to strengthen farmers and food supply policies for the community.

"The availability of basic food needs by the government is guaranteed by the government, especially the fulfillment of needs during the fasting month and Eid al-Fitr," said Musdhalifah.

The challenge of providing food this year, she explained, does not only come from the Covid-19 pandemic, which has the potential to disrupt the production and distribution of food and agricultural products to meet people's needs.

Challenges also come from the prediction of a drier dry season, which starts in June in areas of agricultural production centers, especially in parts of Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, and Bali.



"The FAO gave a warning about the potential food crisis as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the drought," she said.

The government explained that there had been several measures to provide food, including optimizing the absorption of paddy rice or rice by the State Logistics Agency (Bulog) for government reserves as an instrument of price stabilization and community social assistance programs.

"The Ministry of Agriculture and Food SOEs work together in the distribution and supply of food in areas of stock deficits, as well as absorption and distribution of horticulture," she explained.

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