

Agriculture Policy Come to a Halt, Prof. Maksum Launches Book "Rakyat Tani Miskin" (Poor Farmer Community)

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YOGYAKARTA - Professor of UGM Faculty of Agricultural Technology, Professor. Dr. Moch. Maksum Machfoedz launches a book entitled *Rakyat Tani Miskin* (Poor Farmer Community): The Victims of National Development's Terrorism. The 190 pages book is published by UGM Center for Rural and Regional Studies (PSPK) summarizes the thought of Prof Maksum about the condition of the farmers who do not get the support of government policy since the New Order era up to the Reform.

Although 56.8% citizens of Indonesia are farmers, the facts show that agricultural market has been flooded with imported products. Not only are fruits and vegetables, even soybean as raw materials of tempeh is still imported. Even the self-sufficiency in rice status does not reduce the amount of imported rice every year.

"It looks like there was no place for the farmers of this country to become the owner of the agricultural market. There is no attention, protection, nor support to them," said Maksum during the discussion of his book in the Center on Thursday afternoon (7/4).

In his opinion, at present farmers are increasingly pressured not because of the natural situation with unpredictable seasons due to climate change but because of the soaring prices of fertilizers, seeds, pesticides and other agricultural tools. These often become scarce if the planting season arrives. "Strangely, when farmers are confused to determine the planting season, the government does not help find effective and productive solutions, and instead imports agricultural products, including the prime ones," he said.

In addition, farmers also face the high production costs and the low selling price of agricultural products. They are also required to compete with imported products that are protected by their



country. "This book is 'a witness' of how poor our farmers are and always lose due to the existing policy while the direction of agricultural development is also unclear," he said.

UGM economist, Rimawan Pradipto, Ph.D., who reviews the book conveys that the book more extensively covered various development strategies taken by the government since the New Order until now. "In this book Prof. Maksum straightforwardly proves that basically the economic policy since the New Order up until now tends to come to a halt," said Rimawan.

The policy affects the slump of agricultural sector that occurs continuously. Rimawan assesses that Prof. Maksum is very observant in seeing inconsistencies in government policy, 'import in the morning and export in the afternoon', or policy on behalf of farmers, but not the farmers who receive the greatest benefits. "Another thing that is highlighted in this book is the unsupportive nature of the policies to the farmers and the weak bargaining position of governments towards foreign donors," he explained.

Rimawan added, Prof Maksum's analysis confirms that farmers are rational economic actors; a fact often forgotten by policy makers. Rimawan admitted that the analysis is highly relevant to the conditions of economic policy taken by the government today. The policy-making base often lacks in strong theoretical base which is adapted to Indonesian conditions. "There are a lot of policies that tend to adopt other policy and economic system that is different from economic conditions and structure of Indonesian society," he concluded.

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