

Catfish Farming, Residents of Merapi Need Assistance

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The procurement of 137 catfish ponds in Kuwang temporary housing in Cangkringan, Sleman regency, is intended to assist economic and social recovery of Merapi eruption victims. However, after five months the program has not shown encouraging results. It is because many catfish died before harvest time.

According to UGM students doing KKN PPM, Christopher Joutua, each day more than 50 kilograms of dead catfish are found. In some ponds various problems are encountered. In general, the problems are similar, including poor seed quality and disease. However, so far the causes of many dead catfish have not yet been discovered.

Based on the research results of the Socio-Economic Recovery Program team of UGM students, it is found that many catfish are infected with disease. "In the first harvest, there is only few catfish that can be harvested. According to some residents, many catfishes are dead. In fact since it is distributed, many catfish seeds are dead," said Joutua when met in the shelter on Friday (5/8).

In addition to facing the problem of dead catfish, the residents are also experiencing difficulties due to high prices of feed, the purchase of seeds that is not sufficient due to limited funds, lack of intensive counseling, and guide teams who are not expert.

Wafirudin, 52, chairman of the management group of 21 catfish ponds owned by residents of Bakalan who live in Kuwang temporary housing acknowledged there are many dead fish. "All sorts of drugs have been used, but none have succeeded," said the father of three children. He mentioned from the harvest result of 30 pools only produced 14 million rupiah in outcome. It means that in average, one pool can only produce less than one hundred pounds of catfish on the price of 10 thousand per kilogram.



The Kuwang temporary housing is inhabited by residents from 10 sub-villages. Most of them are residents of Bakalan sub-village. They receive provisions to manage 88 catfish ponds. The capital for catfish venture came from the Yogyakarta Department of Fisheries. Previously, the management is handed over to group administrators. The lack of assistance caused many residents to be reluctant to participate to manage it. They also appoint a member of community to take care of the pool. "Every month I was paid Rp450,000," said Wafirudin.

Head of student coordinators, Ardiansyah Jombat, said the case of catfish harvest failure had discouraged the residents who were previously excited to start the cultivation. "The lack of counseling and lack of harvests is feared to cause lack of effort and willpower of residents in continuing this program," he said. Jombat said his party has reported this condition to the Yogyakarta Department of Fisheries. To confirm the case of dead catfish, they brought in researchers from Universitas Gadjah Mada.

Contacted separately, an expert in animal pathology disease, Prof. drh. R. Wasito, M.Sc., Ph.D., said he could not determine the cause of the death in Kuwang before there is any laboratory data analysis. "We need to diagnose things, including the age of catfish that are exposed, and a complete picture of pathological lesions, so that the possibilities could be determined," he said.

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