

Ten Million People of Coastal Communities Still Poor

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YOGYAKARTA - Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Dr. Fadel Muhammad, said the ministry would carry out marine and fisheries development which is oriented on poverty alleviation in rural communities and small islands. The reason is that of 10 639 coastal villages, there are at least 7.8 million poor people while 2.2 million inhabitants are very poor. This was delivered by Fadel Muhammad as a keynote speaker in National Seminar on Environmental Profile and Strategic Environmental Assessment, taking place in the Merapi Auditorium of Faculty of Geography, Friday (23/9).

According to Fadel, the line of marine and fisheries development focuses on poverty alleviation, regional development, and centers of growth. The goal is to produce a layer of resilient entrepreneurs in marine and fisheries sectors as well as centers of maritime affairs and fisheries-based economy. "Accelerating the development of fisheries potential's regions needs to be done because fishermen get difficulty when it's not fishing season and they do not have collaterals to obtain capital," Fadel said.

He added that the current entrepreneurship programs in marine and fisheries sector continue to grow. Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries has developed 505 Fish Processing Units which have implemented a quality assurance and food safety. Equitable distribution of the units is expected to create economic multiplier effect of marine and fisheries, particularly in creating job opportunities.

Meanwhile, to increase fish production, the ministry will learn from China's successful experience to build the fisheries sector, which is currently the largest in the world. "China only needs five years to become the largest fish producer in the world," he said.

Some of China's policies are perfecting a technique of fish cultivation that successfully increased fish production by 40 times more in 2004 than in 1978. In addition, the 42% growth in fish cultivation contributed to the advancement of fisheries sciences, such as aquafeeds, breeding, and disease control. "China also diversifies poly-culture fish farming, integrated farming, and intensive cultivation system," he added.

On that occasion, Fadel also informed that his office was carrying out the development of Morotai Island, North Maluku, as fishing industry and marine tourism region. The development of Morotai is in cooperation with Taiwan. Realization of cooperation between Indonesia and Taiwan has signed Minute of Meeting by the Head of Indonesian Economic and Trade Office (IETO) and the Taipei Economy and Trade Office (Teto). "We encourage regional governments to accelerate the proposed establishment of Morotai as a special economic zone," he said.

Fadel Muhammad further gave assistance of 100,000 catfish seeds to three farmer groups in Kuwang shelter. The handover was done symbolically by the Minister to two representatives of the farmers groups, witnessed by Head of UGM Master of Environmental Management Program, Prof. Dr. Totok Gunawan, M.S.

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