

# Ironic, Indonesia Still Imports Salt

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Indonesia is one of the salt producing countries in the world. Unfortunately, although it has considerable potential for salt production, Indonesia still has to import this commodity to meet domestic needs. "Indonesia is an archipelago that has a coastal length of nearly 90,000 km which is quite potential to produce raw salt material. However, it is quite unfortunate that we still have to import about 70% of table salt or equivalent with 1.63 million tons to meet domestic needs," Professor of Agro Socio-Economic Faculty of Agricultural Technology, Prof. Mochammad Maksum Machfoedz, said on Monday (17/10), in Multimedia Room UGM Main Office in Food Security Seminar.

Data from Ministry of Industry and Trade of 2003 noted that the national salt need is 855,000-950,000 tons of salt for consumption and 1,150,000-1,345,000 tons for industry. Production of salt can only reach 307,000 tons/year, whereas the salt people's industry is only about 1,022 million tons.

Maksum said that Indonesia is currently mired in the trap of importing food. In addition to salt, Indonesia also has to import some food needs, among others are 100% demand of day old chicken/DOC, 35% frozen and raw meat, 90% garlic and 60% soy. "Actually, many economists expressed no problem with this import. However, again, as with regard to strategic commodities and the livelihood of 240 million people, exports and imports policy should be based not only on financial and trade system. This matter should be viewed as matter of political economy, human rights and social justice because its political implication is very broad," the researcher of Center for Rural and Regional Studies (PSPK) UGM said.

Meanwhile, Professor of Faculty of Animal Science, Prof. Ali Agus, said that Indonesia needs to fight to be free from food dependence on other countries. Fields that should be worked with cover national food politics (rice vs non-rice; local vs imported), agricultural politics with land tenure by farmers and politics which is 'pro-producers vs. pro-consumers'. Furthermore, self-reliance in agriculture includes seeds independence vs seed suppliers monopoly, fertilizer independence (chemical vs organic) and production facility independence including irrigation and transportation. The last is the area of consumers by providing education for consumers (nationalism) and taking side (local vs. imported).

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