

Gaining Doctorate after Researching Natural Fiber Craft Industry of Yogyakarta

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Yogyakarta - Indonesia is rich in natural resources in the form of forests throughout the Archipelago. Up to now, non-timber renewable forest products derived from plants have not fully received the attention of stakeholders in the forestry sector. Nevertheless, non-timber plants contribute significantly in economy and employment.

Some of non-textile natural fiber craft products are woven *agel*, *pandanus* and bamboo. However, these woven craft products have not been well-managed and there are difficulties in obtaining raw materials. "In Yogyakarta, this time almost all weaving industry can no longer rely on materials from the local area," a researcher from Center for Crafts and Batik of Yogyakarta, Ir. Retno Widiastuti, M.M., said in doctoral promotion exam at Faculty of Forestry, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Friday (24/2).

In a dissertation *Reviewing Non-Textile Natural Fiber-based Craft Industry in Yogyakarta*, she said it was found that the weaving industrial business cannot afford sufficient raw materials and processing and marketing of products. This is caused by the absence of joint institutional strengthening efforts, lack of attention from the local government related with this non-textile natural fiber industry. "Institutional strengthening by the formation of joint associations or business groups is necessary to strengthen the bargaining position of the business," she said.

To maintain the availability of raw materials supplies continuously, Retno proposed that cultivation of non-textile natural fibers among farmers needs to be encouraged by utilizing non-productive land, village boundaries, yard borders and moors. "Incentives to farmers who grow craft raw materials should be given if necessary," she said.

According to Retno, business opportunities in non-textile natural fibers are actually capable to build

populist economy with the availability of raw materials, seeds, seedlings, cultivation and processing technology.

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