

Problems of Palm Oil Farmers in West Sumatra, Indonesia

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Abstract—There are many problems of palm oil business to solve by the government instead of the black campaign from numerous international NGO on palm oil issues as an environmental parasite. This article just focusses on farmer's problems, palm oil company problems, media of education, lexicons documentation, and palm oil museum in West Sumatra. The conflicts between palm companies and farmers or society around the plantation in West Sumatra are also explored. Data were collected through interviews, existing records, focus group on discussion, meetings and social networks. A thematic content analysis was used to investigate. The results proved there are still many issues that need to be resolved since from land clearing, seeding, planting, treatment, spraying, fertilizing, harvesting, and marketing.

Keywords—*palm oil; problems of farmers; palm oil lexicons; company; West Sumatra*

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is not only a producer, but also the largest contributor to world palm oil production. Recent research [1] indicates that Indonesia produced 31.5 million tons of palm oil to China, the Netherlands, India, America, Italy, Germany and other countries in 2015. It's around 48% of the total volume of world palm oil needs. Furthermore, the use of palm oil also develops from personal care products to cleaners, cosmetics, food, beverages, pharmaceuticals, the environment, agriculture, tires, metals, petroleum, automotive, and biodiesel [2,3].

II. PROBLEMS OF PALM OIL FARMERS

Even though 86% of the world market for palm oil is controlled by Indonesia and Malaysia, a number of issues still need to be resolved. This paper is only aimed at describing several issues concerning the social practice of oil palm in West Sumatra (one of the provinces in Indonesia). A number of these issues are as follows.

A. The Black Campaign and Conflict

Other than the black campaign from numerous international NGO on palm issues as an environmental parasite, the problems concerned with the conflicts between palm companies and the society around the plantation still happens. In essence, there are some trigger factors that mainly induce the conflicts. One of the crucial factors is the plasma land. It was also the main sources of conflicts between the society and PT

Wangi Alam dan Selva Inhu Tani in mesuji at the end of 2011 in Sungai Sodong Village, Ogan Komering Ilir District, South Sumatera [4,5].

B. Naughty Leaders

There are still some 'naughty' prominent figures in governmental system. Their attitude tends to be bias, two faces, and purely tactical, depends on the situation. If those leaders intend to promote themselves to be voted by the society, they depict an attitude as if they stand by the side and the interests of the society. After winning the campaign they expose the true face of politic which tends to enrich themselves and leave the society hopeless. This also happens in the problem and the cases of palm plantations.

C. Naughty Company

There are some palm companies that still play the ruse in several palm plantation regions. Such ruse is proven in some cases as follow: the companies do not allow any distribution of grade A palm seed for the society. The society believes that it is a kind of boycott of grade A palm seed' as the reflection of the company's fear of people's plantation. According to reliable informants, actually, the contract letter is totally owned and handled by the company, the people do not have it. This is obviously a breach the Acts of no 13, 2003 on contract regulation in Indonesia.

D. Conflict Inventory

The conflicts on palm plantation is never thoroughly learned. As of today, there is no particular inventory on conflicts that have happened between society and the companies, the causal factors of conflicts, and the possible solutions or the regulations which have been applied to solve the cases. This inventory is beneficial for designing the strategy of preventing the conflicts and promoting peace in good manners and paths. It also intended as the main reference to solve the possible conflicts in the future.

E. The Broker

The farmers outside the company are controlled by the broker, particularly in marketing the palm. As of today, the majorities of palm farmers in west Sumatra have weak bargaining position and power since the broker can easily manipulate the prices. Ironically, if the farmers intend to sell

their palm to the companies, their palms are also sold at the same prices as the brokers do. It seems there is a hidden agreement between the company and the brokers.

F. Media of Education

One of serious problems that obstruct the palm farmers in West Sumatra is the lack of knowledge on palm and its regulations. Therefore, the farmers do not grasp the aspects of palm land contract, export regulation, processing the palm, the fluctuation of palm prices, palm products, and the ways of promoting palm yields from their land. This makes the farmers do not have any strong bargaining position, hence, they depend on the broker. The majorities of farmers do not have any guiding books on palm farming and the books on legal contexts (law), linguistics, and economics related to palm.

G. Access

There is no reliable, adequate and innovative educational online media (not conventional form of training and seminars) to guide the farmers on the aspects on planting, treatment, and processing the yields in West Sumatra. The palm farmers do not have any kind of external links and access to distribute their palm directly. They do not have any adequate source of information to develop their economic condition through palm business.

H. Regulation

Wherever the empty land, the farmers will plant the palm. A research on structuring the farming space related to palm is needed. The conflicts of palm companies versus the society are also need a strategic solution. Actually the regulation on palm and its land for plantation are well developed in the form of land acts. Nevertheless, this act seems not to be able to prevent the palm conflicts. It means the policies on land of plantations are not based on profound problem and conflict analysis. Therefore, such regulations fail to eliminate the conflicts potentials in palm plantation in Indonesia. It is obvious that a model of strategy to anticipate the conflicts is urgently needed.

III. CONCLUSION

The palm oil farmers in West Sumatra still remain some problems. The farmers for example do not understand the ideal way how to plant the palm oil. In terms of the type of palm oil seeds obtained as well. The farmers have difficulties in finding the good palm seed. Besides no adequate transportation particularly in remote area, the farmers often use the unlabeled palm seed. The farmers not also have lack of human resources but also lack the knowledge on palm oil. The farmers mostly do not use the protector like the mask and the hand gloves in spraying the palm. Besides education for the farmers, documentation of palm oil lexicons and palm oil museum are needed.

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