

## Monoculture pulpwood plantations are not forest

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The idea of Indonesian monoculture pulpwood plantations, better known as Hutan Tanaman Industri (HTI), has actually been in place since the Dutch colonial era. In 1847, the Dutch government requested two German foresters, Mollier and Nemich, to design a forest-farming system for Java in a bid to address the rising demand of teak for the shipbuilding industry owned by Chinese and Dutch entrepreneurs, which was scattered along the northern coast of Java from Tegal to Pasuruan.

The Dutch rulers preferred the monoculture system proposed by Mollier to the multicultural system, (planting a variety of trees), proposed by Nemich because the former was economically more profitable and met the demands for timber at that time (Nurjaya, 2008; Wikipedia, 2008).

The industrial plantation initiative itself was first introduced by the government in a seminar in 1984 on timber estates as part of its efforts to rehabilitate critical and unproductive forest areas. The term HTI has been increasingly referred to since then.

The government formalized HTI into various regulating policies, including Government Regulation (PP) No. 7/1990 on the Rights of Industrial Plantation Forest Control; PP No. 34/2000 on Forest Governance and Forest Management Planning, Forest Utilization and the Use of Forest Areas; and the Forestry Minister's Decree No. 10.1/kpts-II/2000 on the Guidelines for Granting Permits for Timber Utilization. None of the three policies clearly define HTI or, consequently, define what can be called a forest.

The use of the term HTI in any government policy relating to the development of monoculture pulpwood plantations is clearly an act of obscuring a meaning that has political, economic and ecological consequences. When HTI is considered a forest, then the process of clearing the remaining natural forest is deemed legitimate, assuming that when the natural forests are exhausted, they will be replaced by HTI.

This is in line with the definition of deforestation by the World Bank (1990), which implies that deforestation is the loss of forest coverage that cannot produce timber. It is ironic that Indonesia's forests, with their high biodiversity value and function as a source of local inhabitants' livelihoods, are reduced to a mere source of timber by the government and the World Bank.

There are stark differences in the characteristics of forests and plantations. A forest's basic characteristics comprise a multistory canopy coupled with biodiversity, a continuous existence, a hydrologic function and a distinctive ecosystem. HTI, on the other hand, do not have these basic characteristics, and as timber plantations, they cannot be compared with other plantations such as rubber, tea, coffee and palm (Notoha diningrat, 2006).

Confusing, or merging, the meaning and definition of forests into plantations represents certain interests that are dominated by global interests, as evidenced by the increasingly large areas of forest coverage that are lost due to the mounting demand per capita of urban society and global demands for processed wood, pulp and paper.

Furthermore, the government categorizes HTI into three types. First, HTI pulp is a monoculture plantation designed primarily to supply materials for the pulp industry, with planted tree species like acacia. Second, HTI carpentry is a monoculture plantation designed primarily to supply materials for carpentry and other wood industries. Third, other HTI is a monoculture plantation designed to supply the timber industry and others.

However, HTI pulp is the one that has gained attention from the government for development. It is at least based on the development of the export value of the forestry industry, which during the period 1985 – 2004, started to slowly gain a sizable foreign exchange contribution from plywood products to pulp and paper (Suhermanto), and an increasing consumption of paper per capita in all countries, as well as high pulp prices in the international market, ranging between US\$750-930/ton for long fibers and \$810-865/ton for short fibers (BBPK, 2008).

Unfortunately, for 17 years (1989

– 2006) the government was only able to develop 3.03 million hectares of monoculture plantations from the 10.2 million hectares planned, although various facilities were also given to employers during that period. It can be understood that monoculture plantations are a serious threat to Indonesia's natural forests and the wrong answer for various issues in the forestry industry.

For example, to be able to produce one ton of pulp, 4.6 cubic meters of wood is required. Each single ton of pulp can produce 1.2 tons of paper, while a hectare of acacia monoculture pulpwood plantation is capable of producing 160 cubic meters of wood with a planting cycle and harvesting for 6 years (Syumanda, 2008). If the total production of Indonesian pulp currently reaches 6.4 tons per year, then 29.44 million cubic meters of wood are required per year (Sinar Harapan, 2006). Imagine how many million hectares of forest are needed for HTI, while currently there are 14 pulp and seven pulp and paper factories in operation.

History has revealed that issues in the forestry industry are not only concerned with raw materials, but also include issues of policy inconsistency, discrimination, legal uncertainty, labor regulations, business assurance and land certainty, which have never been thoroughly discussed to find a solution.

The government has overlooked the issues, thus providing various facilities to entrepreneurs that should not be given because this country will lose its bargaining position in business negotiations. Various social issues, environmental degradation and human rights violations implicating corporations have never been fully resolved by the government because, from the beginning, entrepreneurs were not treated the same as everybody else.

The government seems both reluctant to learn from past failures and also unable to appreciate the purpose of investment, namely that investment is needed for the prosperity and welfare of the people, not vice versa.

The government should review the engine capacity of each timber industry, and pulp and paper facility, and compare them with the availability of raw materials. They should also focus on the fulfillment of domestic needs, and allocate reforestation funds to the ecological restoration process of vital ecological areas that have been degraded.

The consumption model of urban residents should also be reformed so that the pressure on natural forests can be reduced.

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