

## Indonesia told to produce more 'green' products

By applying principles of sustainability in manufacturing processes, Indonesia may gain a larger share of the European market as its consumers are becoming increasingly environmentally conscious. Peter Maher, head of the development cooperation section at the European Union delegation to Indonesia, said more and more European consumers wanted to feel that the products they purchase from other countries were produced in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.

"If you look at batik, for example, it has a very special status after it was officially acknowledged by UNESCO as a world heritage item from Indonesia. I think as European consumers become aware about whether these products are being produced in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way, you can expect increased demand for batik by applying sustainable principles in their manufacturing process," Maher told a press conference on the sidelines of a three-day networking meeting of SWITCH Southeast Asia that ended on Thursday. Clean Batik Initiative (CBI) is one of 47 sustainable consumption and production projects being developed under the European Commission-funded SWITCH-Asia, a program on sustainable consumption and production. This program is set to receive about €150 billion for the period between 2007-2013. There are currently 30 projects already running, while 17 projects are still in the contracting process. The projects include a wide variety of sectors, such as micro-electronic, construction, the rattan industry and biomass production. Maher said the lack of awareness on just how markets were changing in developed countries emerged as one of the great difficulties that had hampered Asia-European trade contacts.

"They depend more and more on sustainably produced products. Those who are first with sustainably produced products will find market share. Applying sustainability principles in manufacturing processes can create huge impacts on employment and exports," Maher said, adding that such sustainability principles could be applied not only on batik but also on a whole range of products that Indonesia could produce. Funding for the CBI program will be just over €2.1 million, of which 80 percent of total funds will be provided by the European Commission and the remainder from the European Business Chamber of Commerce in Indonesia (EKONID). In the four-year program that will end in January 2013, 500 small and medium-sized scale batik producers in Indonesia and 100 from Malaysia will have received assistance on developing sustainable production behavior and patterns. CBI project officer Adnan Tripradipta said that many hazards were associated with some of the traditional methods of producing batik, both in terms of health and waste. Citing an example, he said that 90 percent of traditional batik manufacturers in Indonesia still used naphthol as a coloring agent for dyeing batik. "With naphthol, they can produce batik with strong, beautiful colors. It is also cheaper than other coloring agents," Adnan told The Jakarta Post. Some of the components used in naphthol, however, are suspected to be carcinogenic, he added. Most fresh water in Pekalongan is not drinkable because it is allegedly polluted by naphthol. Some countries, such as the United States and European countries as well as India have banned the use of naphthol.

"We give technical assistance to traditional batik producers, such as chemical management and good housekeeping, enabling them to change their working processes, which will be better not only for their own health but also for the environment. Instead of chemical agents, we promote the use of dye extracted from natural sources which are more environmentally friendly," said Adnan. About 100 batik producers in Cirebon, West Java and another 100 in Pekalongan, Central Java, are participating in pilot projects for the CBI program this year. Results will be delivered to other batik producing centers in Madura, Kalimantan and South Sulawesi in 2012. European Union EuropeAid development and cooperation sector head Thomas Wiley said that sustainable production and consumption projects had been available since the beginning of 2009. They were all already delivering results that could be quantified in terms of reduced use of inputs, declining waste production and prevention of harmful side effects.

"They can save money and at the same time protect the environment. The most immediate lesson from the project is that they have produced successful results even without inventing anything new or without immediate policy changes," said Wiley. The major issue that needs to be discussed is how to translate specific examples of results achieved by the partnership into wider policies. "I think it is important to preserve the expertise and knowledge generated during the course of the project so other people can use it later," Wiley said.