

Private sector urged to develop sustainably

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the Indonesia Forest and Climate Support (IFACS) program, has urged the private sector to engage in sustainable economic development in West Kalimantan by implementing Best Management Practices (BMP) and Low Emission Strategies (LEDS).

The commitment was put across in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between USAID IFACS and oil palm plantation company PT Pasifik Agro Sentosa (PAS) in Pontianak on Thursday. PAS has also signed an MoU with Tanjungpura University (Untan).

IFACS chief-of-party Reed Merrill said that adopting BMP and LEDS would raise the industry's responsibility for environmental issues, as well as improve marketing. In implementing the BMP, assistance will be provided in conservation management and supervisory planning.

"Improvement in sustainable economic development in the oil palm plantation sector by adopting BMP and LEDS includes biomass utilization to produce electricity for the local community," Merrill said.

Collaboration with the private sector is part of IFACS' strategy to provide support to the government to reduce gas emissions and the greenhouse effect by up to 41 percent.

"The island of Kalimantan, as well as Papua and Sumatra, are the home of eight targeted areas to promote low emission development strategies, designed to provide options for economic growth, while preserving natural resources," Merrill said.

The cooperation is the 12th of such between IFACS and private partners, including five in West Kalimantan. It is expected to result in partnerships with 15 private companies, six in West Kalimantan, five in Central Kalimantan, three in West Papua and one in Papua.

PAS president director Hasjim Oemar said that of a total of 60,000 hectares in the company's concession area in West Kalimantan, 9,000 hectares have been allocated for conservation programs, which the firm has spearheaded with Fauna Flora International (FFI) since 2010.

"In line with our motto — 'Go sustainable forever' — the conservation program is necessary for the sake of reducing gas emissions and deriving revenue from the carbon trade. We must also meet international standards and the principles of transparency," Hasjim said.

PAS is also working together with Untan in research, mapping training and apprenticeship or on-the-job training programs and other academic activities.

Untan rector Thamrin Usman said the "Go sustainable forever" motto was very lofty and needed hard work, such as the plantation's commitment to no longer engage in burning when clearing land.

"Our hard work includes making efforts to maintain the nature rich in biodiversity. We must say to the world that we are on the right track," Thamrin said.

West Kalimantan Investment Board's Integrated Service head Sri Jumiadatin, who represented the West Kalimantan governor at the MoU signing said the plantation must pay attention to the local community.

She added 313 plantations, run by private, national, foreign and state enterprises, were registered as concession holders in the province.