

Translations of Excerpts from the Organic SRI Harvest presided over by the Indonesian President on 30th July 2007

From Press Interview with the Minister of Agriculture:

... we are quite optimistic that we can reach the target we have set, especially knowing that our farming community is very enthusiastic in developing a technology which will increase the productivity of their rice farms, supported by people who are concerned like Mr. Arifin Panigoro, who is fully committed to this effort financially through the Medco Foundation, for promoting this SRI technology. We can see that if done in large scale, from just the cultivation of 400,000 hectares of land [with SRI methods], we can be sure of increasing the production by 2 million tons very easily.

From the Speech of the Minister of Agriculture:

Dear farmers, especially those who are actively engaged in SRI, and all of us who are gathered for this happy occasion. Praise be unto God the Almighty because of His mercy and grace which enable us to meet here in good health on such a beautiful day as we celebrate the harvesting of this SRI project together with our President and the happy family of farmers in this area.

Today is a very happy day, indeed, for every one of us. Especially for our fellow citizens, the community of farmers, all present here are happy to witness the success of an effort in increasing the productivity of rice using the SRI method, for our beloved country and people. This success achieved in increasing the productivity of rice through the SRI technology has directly increased the standard of life of our farming community and has in turn motivated our farmers to protect their land from conversion [to industrial or housing zones]. SRI technology is also the right answer for solving the problem of water scarcity for the irrigation of our rice fields.

The Honourable President, Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in the effort of supporting our farmers in decreasing their dependency on subsidized chemical fertilizer, our Agriculture Department has, in stages, taken the initiative of facilitating the supply of organic fertilizer. This facility will be in the form of training for implementation of SRI methodology of rice farming and working together closely with them [farmers] just as we have done this year in 2007, in 14 provinces and 39 regencies throughout the country.

The Agriculture Department will also facilitate the processing of organic waste materials and turning them into organic fertilizer to be utilized by the farming community. To reach the proposed target of sufficiency in organic fertilizer, we also plan to use industrial organic waste material which can be used as raw material for producing barn fertilizer (*pupuk kandang*).

Honourable Mr. President, we would like to congratulate the group of farmers who have successfully implemented SRI very dedicatedly and painstakingly using this innovative effort with such excellent results, increasing rice productivity and directly helping to accomplish the government program in our national goal for increased rice productivity and at the same time preserving the environment. For all this, we would

like to express our greatest appreciation and thank everyone who has faithfully participated.

The President's Speech:

... Good morning and peace be unto all of us. The honourable Minister of Agriculture and Ministers in the Indonesian Unity Cabinet. My beloved farmers who are from the local community as well as other areas of Indonesia, and all honourable audience gathered here. Allow me to begin by stating that good farmers and good methods of farming have a very great contribution to make in saving the world! Why did I say in saving the world? The population of this world continues increasing rapidly from day to day.

Presently we have a world population of 6.4 billion people which keeps on increasing every moment. Next year the number will be bigger still. All this human population of 6.5 billion needs food, and most of them depend on rice as their staple. So if our farmers can increase their rice productivity, they have directly contributed in saving the world, because they can provide more food to meet the needs of the world and of course, first of all, the needs of our own people in Indonesia.

The second reason why I said that good farmers and good farming methods contribute greatly in saving the world is because this world is getting old. As this world grows older, [the health of] our environment is getting more and more critical as the days go by. You have heard the expressions: climate change, and global warming. The world is getting warmer and warmer each day. Because of this, there are changes in weather and climate all over the world. Take, for example, the bush fires that happen more frequently. Just recently 500 people died in Hungary due to extremely hot weather conditions, a heat wave which happened above normal conditions. In other places, severe rainfall has caused calamity. Flash flooding has occurred in many places, and recently in our own country, one of them [flash floods] hit Morowali [in North Sulawesi] and has caused havoc and lost of lives.

The change in weather is usually caused by man's fault. There are also natural causes of disaster such as volcanic explosion, earthquakes, tsunamis. All these are actually events in which nature tries to balance itself. If these do not happen regularly, there could be worst calamities. For our religious leaders, and I acknowledge your presence here, this is considered to be the power and will of God. But there are also calamities such as the change of weather and global warming which are caused by man's wrong practices, our neglect or our greediness, including our incorrect treatment of our forests and wrong farming systems.

And so, with good farming and good technologies such as SRI, it is hoped that we will be able to preserve the environment, and thus we can be a part of saving the world, and not be a part of the destroying force towards the environment. I am saying this quite frankly and I hope that the journalists will emphasize this in their reports, that together with other efforts for preserving the ecosystem, among others, this SRI method of rice farming will really contribute towards saving our planet, our world, and our country.

Mr. Solihin mentioned how important it is to take proper care of our forest. Because without forests we will face a great problem for our future. No forest means no water. And no water means *no future for us*.

We cannot live without water, right? Food and water are two of the most basic need in our lives. Perhaps we can survive without wearing clothing for one week. Or perhaps we can live without a roof above our heads for two weeks. But if we do not eat or drink for just one week, not many of us can survive. For that reason, water is our greatest problem for survival, our greatest need for life sustenance. Without water, there won't be a future for us. If we do not preserve our forest, if we continue to burn it down, we cause pollution. Forest burning causes global warming, and that causes the increase of carbon dioxide [in the atmosphere] to a dangerous level, and finally there are calamities everywhere. We have to preserve our forest. We have to take good care of our forest, because it will provide us with the most important need of our life, which is water.

And so, I want to express my full support for the various initiatives: the activities of the Forest Preservation Group, Medco Foundation, Aliksa Organik SRI Foundation, and all parties which have determined to develop good systems of farming. Sustainable agriculture, environmentally friendly programs, certainly, will bring great benefits to our farming communities and to our people as a whole. A moment ago I was informed about applying the SRI method, the System of Rice Intensification. Actually we can call it more than System of Rice Intensification. Although it does not have to be written down, according to what I have observed, we can call it System of Environmentally Friendly Rice Intensification.

There are many methods of increasing rice production. And certainly they increase the productivity of rice, but it is the intervention of too much chemical fertilizer that we are witnessing. The result is an increase in productivity, but then the environment is badly damaged. Perhaps for this year it is still alright, but the following year, it is damaged, and the following year after that, it is damaged much further. But this SRI method, according to my observation, fulfills both purposes. Productivity is increased, and at the same time the environment is saved.

I studied at the Institute of Agriculture in Bogor for three years. There are many here who also studied in that Institute in the past. I was invited once to Padang to the University of Andalas to make a presentation. I said that our development of farming should shift from the Green Revolution where although harvest production is increased there is also the introduction of damage in many sectors of the environment. So we should instead apply methods of increasing the productivity but at the same time they must be friendly to the environment, in other words, there should be a sustainable agricultural development. We have to use what are considered good methods, but we should discard whatever is not preserving the environment. And this SRI method is a proven example where the agriculture is sustained and as a correction to the Green Revolution, discarding the use of chemical fertilizer that damages the environment in the long run. And this SRI method, being a solution, instead of adding to the problem, by providing opportunities for agricultural development is also very suitable for Indonesia.

My brothers, do not think that the water supply in the Island of Java is still abundant. It is entering the amber light of danger level. We cannot afford to waste water any longer. By not taking proper care of our water supply, by neglecting and abusing our forest, the result is flooding or, at the other extreme, drought. So we have to know how to economize in the use of water in this island of Java. Now we have seen that this SRI method can increase the production of rice at least by the same quantity and even more than the other methods which use more water.

The second solution given by SRI, and thus making it so important, is that it saves us from the dangerous effects of chemical fertilizer as well as wasting too much water. The cost of chemical fertilizer is not cheap. A further problem is that the continuous use of chemical fertilizers will deplete our natural resources. As you know, most of the ingredients used in making chemical fertilizer comes from petroleum gas. Our petroleum stock, if we do not find new sources, will only last for 20 more years. Our supply of gas will only last for 60 years. Our supply of coal, if we do not economize in its use, will only last for 150 years. To avoid this lost of future supply of gas for other uses, the solution is to replace chemical fertilizer with organic fertilizer.

As I have observed in the display, by using organic waste materials, which are usually thrown away, when processed properly, not only are they very good, but also do not damage the environment. On the contrary, [organic matter] sustains it. Another advantage is the control of pollution and odor. Once as I entered the city of Bandung, I found the smell was unbearable. That's why I would like to urge everyone to cooperate in trying to control this pollution and odor problem, starting from our homes, to the streets and parks and beaches. Do not throw your rubbish any way you like; it will attract flies and will lead to disease. Again, this SRI method contributes in solving this problem because we use the waste material and process it in such a way so that it decreases pollution and is useful as ingredients for organic fertilizer.

... And so I want to urge everybody, starting with the Minister of Agriculture and everyone else, let us support this SRI method with our maximum capacity. We should try our best to increase our food production so that we can have an extra 2 million tons of rice. So all the governors, regents and mayors must work with all your might to reach this goal. And those of you who are not serious will be given the red card.

With the increase of rice production, we can improve everyone's living standard. It will help the farmers earn more money and also will keep the price of rice affordable for the rest of the population. Once again, I repeat why we should fully support this SRI method. Number one: it increases production and yet does not damage the environment. We should think about the future of our children, the lives of our next generation. If we attempt solutions by going back to basics, that is, to nature, then we have done the right thing. Because the Almighty God has created this world with all life [forms] in it supporting each other, in an ecosystem, [we have] a cycle of life which should be able to solve the problems of life -- and without exemption, we human beings must take the responsibility in sustaining this ecosystem. We should return to nature properly whatever waste material is left over after we have used the essential needs for our life.

And now to close my address I would like to urge all the farmers to realize that in any country in this world, you farmers are the pillars of society. In many countries in the

world, such as the United States of America, in Europe, farmers are regarded as a very important class of people in society. Agriculture is not only just one small part or sector in the development or building-up of the country; instead you must realize that it [agriculture] is the way of life, of civilization. So be proud of your profession as farmers, realizing how important you are as a way of life, of civilization, and try to live as a community with full responsibility, working together in developing a better farming-oriented life. It is a fact that many people in modern life, living in big cities, have started to long for the natural. They are longing for friendliness, for brotherhood, that is natural, free and lively and spontaneous, and not robotic. Many have found out that they need to return to the basic things of life, back to nature in order to seek happiness.

... So let us all with determination, concentrate our efforts in supporting this SRI method to create a life of peaceful coexistence with each other and with nature for a better future, a better life in a better country and world, by the help of God and may God be with us. May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you all.