

Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on Agricultural Development Project (2)

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As the third party evaluator, I will focus my opinions in three points, i.e., criteria on efficiency, impact and sustainability.

Efficiency

This project was implemented in changing political situation, a transformation from centralization to decentralization. In spite of that, the project could be implemented well, moreover, it could achieve more than the target, it's indicate a high efficiency. Management transition to the local government could run well. Yet, it should be acknowledged that many deviations of the planning and implementation indicates the weak planning, besides less maximum capacity to absorb the budget.

Impact

The project implemented on cash crop cultivation support program is reported "...to early to positively confirm what impact the project has had on regional economies and in improving the living standards of farmers". Yet, the results of opinion survey are (1) increased job opportunities (41%), (2) increased income (51%), and (3) stimulated the region's economy (39%).

Observing precisely on macro situation after the crisis, the increasing price of agriculture product is because of the intensifying export and devaluation of rupiah (IDR). As a result, agribusiness products are more revived. Therefore, the opinion survey may not necessarily be the impact of the project; rather it is pushed by macro situation. The project distribution is too wide (much wider than its plan, from 18 provinces to 24 provinces and from 48,600 hectare to 130,432 hectare), while the fund absorbed decrease. It can be depicted that at local level this project is small and the economic impact at regional level is also small.

Sustainability

There is a mutual effect of impact and sustainability. If the impact is so positive to the people, the project sustainability is more assured. Concretely, if the farmers feel that they get benefits of this project, they will sustain it. Based on this concept, a discourse to the farmers is required in order that they are aware of the significance of the project to their needs. In this case, the strengthening and functioning of farmers' association that is effective at local basis is urgently needed.

The project objective is "to provide support for the cultivation of cash crops ... and to execute a farm road development project as a means of facilitating the transportation of cash crops...", related to this, to promote local government's availability (in decentralization era) to continue the project is essential, as the recent political transformation, (local government undergoes changing attitude of fighting more on a project that is quickly yielding than empowering the farmers.

The program sustainability is so determined by the involvement of the stakeholders. Therefore the statement "...with the farm road development program, the roles of local government, the estate crop companies and the village cooperatives in undertaking maintenance work also need to be clarified" really needs to be realized.