Smallholder Farmers’ Resiliency under Rural-Ecological Crises: Livelihood Adapted Strategies in Indonesia

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Abstract

The size of rural smallholders’ socio-economic resilience capacity is mostly determined very much by a set of assets that is readily in control of the smallholders. Under whatever circumstances, rural smallholder farmers resist to survive from any devastating threat as well as changing environment that could potentially destroy their existence. Using natural-physical-asset as well as social-asset, the smallholder farmers develop a complex adapted livelihood strategies for survival. Resisting to the changing environment is done by manipulating assets for survival including building up social-networking of the community to enlarge capacity of survival.

How effective is the resilience-defense mechanism system that is built and enables the smallholders to survive is strongly determined by how strong of the ecological disturbances that comes to the smallholders and how complex is the livelihood security mechanism is built within the household and community. How strong, smallholder farmers control and grasp the available assets to be manipulated could also determine resilience-capacity to survive. These factors determine how far smallholder farmers are able to adapt to the dramatic changing circumstances.

Dynamic changes of global-climate situation as well as local ecological crises that happen locally, may lead to situation where the smallholders are likely to terminate their survival. However, it is seldom to find a smallholder that could not resist to survive under a changing environment. Rural smallholders always manage to survive by transforming one type of survival strategy to another type of survival. Livelihood capacity is enlarged via mixing a number of sources of livelihood as well as building new innovative social organization or institution for survival. Thus, livelihood resilience is developed by using complex adaptive mechanism.

This paper tries to present facts as drawn from a set of empirical research carried out in rural Indonesia. The studies found interesting adaptive livelihood mechanisms that reflect the way the rural people adapt to the changing environment as well as create capacity of resilience. There exist four ways of enlarging capacity to survive. These are: (1) creating collective action via utilizing a readily presence traditional social-networking; (2) making land-use change and agrarian structural change; (3) developing strategic complementarities

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among gainful economic opportunities; (4) Income diversification and household resource re-organization. The study used qualitative and quantitative approaches of social research. The study proposes the conceptualization of dynamics responses of livelihood strategies as a reflection of rural social resilience in responding multiple crises in rural Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Livelihood adapted mechanism, rural resiliency, rural crises, resilience capacity, Indonesia