Smallholder Farmers’ Resiliency and Rural-Institutional Responses to Climate Change in Peatland Areas of Indonesia

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Abstract

The size of rural smallholders’ socio-economic resilience capacity is mostly determined by a set of assets that is readily in control of the smallholders. Smallholder farmers’ resilience capacity is also influenced by the external environment that exerts destroying impact on the surviving capacity of the farmers. Under whatever circumstances, rural smallholder farmers resist to survive from any devastating threat as well as changing environment that could potentially devastate their existence. In addition, global climate change has made the situation of the farm become more dramatic. Under global climate change, season period of rain-fed agricultural practices becomes uncertain. The inability of cultivating the farm brings the smallholder farmers in a critical situation where income is not available. Where income is in absence, the livelihood is under threat of fail to survive. This paper tries to present facts as drawn from a set of empirical research carried out in two villages of South Sumatera and Riau Provinces Indonesia in 2011-2012. The studies found interesting adaptive livelihood mechanisms as undertaken by transmigration farmers that reflect the way the rural people adapt to the changing environment as well as create capacity of resilience. There exist three ways of enlarging capacity to survive. These are: (1) mobilizing social organization and collective action of farming operation; (2) making agrarian structural change – land encroachment, that is considered to be non-peaceful means of survival ; (3) escaping from traditional farm economy. The study used qualitative and quantitative approaches of social research. The study proposes the conceptualization of agrarian smallholders’ adaptive mechanisms to respond climate change in Indonesia.

Keywords: Smallholder farmer resiliency, uncertainty, climate change, collective action, rural livelihood

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