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‘Cool and pleasing’ agriculture in Karo Highlands



‘Taman’ in Batak Karo language means park in English and ‘Simalem’ means cool and pleasing. For more than four years, Taman Simalem Resort has done just like that.

Taman Simalem Resort (TSR) started with orange and loquat farms in 2003 but still with use of chemicals. “From 2005 to 2011 we saw that the use of chemical had increased, but the productivity had not risen,” said Mr Eddy Tanoto Sukardi, Director of Taman Simalem Resort (TSR). “Also, we met a group of farmers nearby who grew tomatoes and potatoes who came to us for help in 2007 and they told us about their problems that the use of chemical had increased 10 per cent but their productivity had in fact decreased by 15 per cent.

“We decided to convert into organic with the encouragement from GIZ [Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.] team who also wanted to help us to get certified organic after one year. It took us four years from 2007 to 2011 to take courage to convert from the conventional farming practice to organic. We, initially, did not believe it. We were also very scared. But, our motivation to move into organic is really on the production aspect and also the soil fertility.”

Seventy small-holder farmers have adopted organic farming practices and received ‘Organik Indonesia’ certification while their incomes have increased by 180 per cent during three years of this private partnership cooperation from 2013 to 2015.

Taman Simalem Resort (TSR)

Country Indonesia



Partner

- Taman Simelem Resort (TSR)
- Islamic University of North Sumatra (UISU)
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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Approach

“GIZ had us work with the farmers. And, we have implemented the initiatives until today,” said Mr Eddy Tanoto Sukardi, Director of Taman Simalem Resort (TSR). We still go with farmers—we still supply them with seeds, fertilizer, organic fertilizer, liquid fertilizer, organic pesticide until we buy their products at higher prices than the market rate. This is how we convince the farmers to join us.

“It takes patience. In the beginning, farm productivity was low including instability of participating farmers. It is about a change of mentality and mindset. Organic farming requires more regular hard work such as applying organic liquid fertilizers twice a week, spraying plant extract three times a week to reduce pest and fungi, and clean the weeds. But, over years it has been proven by an increase of productivity. From around five types of crops we have increased the yield up to 55 crops with technical support of GIZ and all commodities are certified organic.”

Message from Taman Simalem Resort

“Organic leafy vegetables although do not last very long, they do not have a bitter-after-taste compared to the one with chemical spray, especially spinach. Our organic carrots are also sweeter compared to those with chemical spray. Our customers are aware of that. The demand for organic products has increased. We can see that the supermarkets are ordering more from us. One of our visions is that we plant something healthy and we should promote it to the people nearby first. That means we should encourage people in Medan, our own place, to eat organic vegetable before we spread them to Singapore, Malaysia, or any other countries. We have to make our own people healthier first,” said Mr Eddy Tanoto Sukardi, Director of Taman Simalem Resort (TSR).

Message from Farmers

“Taman Simalem Resort is like a foster father. The resort provides us all the materials and all the harvests are sold to the resort. And, because every week there are crops that can be harvested, these help with the daily living costs,” said Mr. Agustinus Girsang, 54.

“Before joining Taman Simalem, the agricultural activities we did we just followed climate conditions and the price of vegetables was erratic. With the resort, there are planting and harvesting every week, so the harvest is always there and the price is unchanged and we get settled of income. It feels good to have stable income,” said Mr. Jusen Munthe, 45.

“After joining, there is an increase in revenue. If we still did the conventional practice, the yield such as planting tomato could not cover the capital sometimes,” Mr. Demak Munthe, 40.



