

MEDIA STATEMENT

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Agricultural research cooperation with Indonesia reflects global nature of marketplace

Enhanced opportunities for research cooperation have been secured between the University of Tasmania and Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

UTAS Vice-Chancellor, Professor Daryl Le Grew said this agreement reflects an awareness of the global nature of the agricultural industry, which has become one of the issues of modern time.

It also reflects the international position that UTAS has in raising awareness and adding to the preparation of students for the global marketplace.

“It has become increasingly apparent that if a person is to be considered educated in agriculture, they must be cognisant of the inter-relationships of various agricultural systems and the governments, cultures and societies in which they function,” he said.

“It is no longer sufficient to know how to produce food and fibre and conduct the many tasks in today’s agricultural industry.

“It is excellent that UTAS can partner with Indonesia, and in particular the Gadjah Mada University, to achieve such a positive relationship and this relationship will broaden the scope of the respective academic curriculums of both Universities.”

Associate Professor Caroline Mohammed, from the UTAS School of Agricultural Science (SAS) and the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR), said the Memorandum of Understanding is the result of the excellent working relationship that has been established with the Indonesian University over the past decade by both the School and TIAR.

Its objectives include:

- The promotion of a growing relationship between Australia and Indonesia through contact in the agricultural sector.
- The nurturing in Indonesia of a nucleus of future opinion leaders with expertise in Australian culture and affairs, especially Australian agriculture.
- The creation within Australia of a wider range of people with knowledge about Indonesia and Indonesian agricultural issues.

The agreement allows for candidates in doctoral research degrees to enrol in both institutions and receive conjoint Doctoral Degrees. To be eligible, prospective students must satisfy the normal requirements applicable at each institution.

“It will also provide a significantly improved research training environment and a unique learning experience for the candidates,” she said.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Agriculture in Australia and Indonesia faces challenging times - not just from market and cost pressures, but also from changing international policies, the incorporation of technology developments, and the pursuit of new opportunities.

Agriculture supports the livelihood of millions in Indonesia; more than 45% of the population are engaged in some form of agriculture activity. Historically, Indonesian agriculture has performed well, and contributed significantly to Indonesia’s growth, bringing with it significant increases in employment and a remarkable reduction of poverty. This it did by focusing on the staple food crops such as rice, corn, sugar and soybeans. However, with productivity gains of most food crops slowing down significantly, and with the majority of farmers operating less than one-half hectare, such crops provide less potential for generating additional employment and income growth. Indonesian agriculture needs to rapidly reinvigorate productivity gains among rural producers.

Agriculture in Australia has been changing dramatically over the past 15 years to increase its productivity, although production agriculture as a percentage of GDP continues to decline.

Both Australia and Indonesia are placing greater emphasis on product quality issues, vertical integration from production to consumer and diversification.

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