IFA INDONESIA SEMINAR ON SUSTAINABLE FERTILIZER MANAGEMENT Jakarta, 23April 2014

IFA, jointly with Pupuk Indonesia Holding Company and the Indonesia Fertilizer Manufacturers Association (APPI) organized a seminar on sustainable fertilizer management, featuring Indonesian and foreign fertilizer experts and attended by over 130 representatives of the Indonesian industry, government agencies, academia and farmers' organizations. This was the second in a series of IFA seminars on this theme, following a first one held in September 2013 in Beijing, China.

KEY FINDINGS

Agricultural Production

- Environment and sustainability, agricultural productivity and food and nutrition security are top priorities for Indonesia. There should be no trade-off between those.
- 73% of the Indonesian agricultural soils have less than 2% organic matter, which is a major threat to long-term productivity of Indonesian soils.
- The yield gap is important, in both smallholder farming and in large plantations.

Nutrient Management

- Fertilizers should be used as efficiently as possible to reduce losses to the environment, and optimize the use of resources, productivity and profitability.
- Situations of excess, unbalanced and under-use are widespread in Indonesia, and should all be addressed and receive similar attention.
- Whereas nitrogen (N) use efficiency in Indonesia appears to no longer be declining, average N application rates in Indonesia are high, leading to low N use efficiency. This is the result of inefficient management practices and may also be partly influenced by the fertilizer subsidy policy.

- There is a tendency to unbalanced fertilization; low use of phosphorus (P), potassium (K), magnesium (Mg), sulphur (S) and micronutrients on staple food crops leads to low N use efficiency.

- Magnesium is a neglected nutrient, while it helps overcome a number of stresses under Indonesian conditions: aluminium toxicity, high radiation, high temperature.

Outreach to Farmers

- Farmers are keen to be “moving up the ladder”. Industry should consider farmers as agri-entrepreneurs, whatever the size of their holding.

- Influencing farming practices is a long-time effort. It requires building long-term relationship with farmers, and developing partnerships.

- Farmers will adopt new practices provided they are profitable to them.

- New technologies/practices should be communicated in a simple, understandable way to facilitate their actual adoption.

- Finding progressive farmer leaders is essential to facilitate adoption as they will help training the other farmers.

- Innovation and mutual benefits are essential for profitable business.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is urgent to increase the organic matter content of Indonesian soils to maintain or improve soil health over the long term.

- It would be useful to review the Indonesian fertilizer subsidy policy; compare it to schemes in other Asian countries; and suggest recommendations to achieve the multiple goal of optimizing financial resources, enhancing food security, and improving nutrient use performance.

- Improving nutrient use efficiency is not only about using the right rate. Choice of the right source of nutrient, right time of application and right placement are equally important. These four areas of nutrient management should receive similar attention.

- To be adopted, fertilizer best management practices shall positively impact farmer’s income. Fertilizer subsidies could be used to encourage their adoption.

- It is desirable to increase supply of complex fertilizers in order to facilitate balanced fertilization. Where needed, complexes should also contain secondary and/or micronutrients.

- Transferring knowledge to smallholder farmers is a huge task, which requires multi-stakeholder partnership to achieve a meaningful impact.

- A biannual meeting to review progress would be useful.