

‘Bull’ versus ‘Tiger’: Can the ‘Bull’ and the ‘Tiger’ Work Collaboratively? A Reflection on Farmer First in Indonesia¹

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Abstract

As a reflection on the Farmer First Paradigm in Indonesia, this paper describes the struggles of farmers, in particular the Integrated Pest Management farmers, in sustaining their freedom to decide and control their own resources in the midst of ongoing Green Revolution paradigm. The Integrated Pest Management farmers, who have been empowered through the so-called IPM Farmer Field Schools and various other follow-up programs, have to face the reality that they have only been the ‘bulls’ vis-à-vis the ‘tigers’ in agricultural development in Indonesia. To place farmers as the first needs a thorough evaluation and reflection of the extent to which the two parties within the existing power relations can work collaboratively for the farmers’ dignity and prosperity. The path to reach this, however, is not easy.

An Introduction: Moving towards Farmer First in Indonesia?

Are we really moving towards Farmer First? I could hardly answer it. I get confused, though I know where I should stand. Why?

Sixteen years passed by at the time I returned to my field sites on the north coast of West Java in early 2006. I met a non-IPM farmer just finished spraying his rice field with ‘boiled carbofuran’ to ‘kill white rice stem borer’. Indeed, carbofuran was not only a poisonous granule insecticide, but it supposed not to be boiled at all. It was exactly the same practice the farmer did as what he used to do in early 1990s. At the time I walked along the street in the other village watching the advertisements of various kinds of insecticides placed on the trees, an old non-IPM farmer passed by. He asked me spontaneously: “Where are the new ‘medicines’, mam? What kinds of new ‘medicines’ do you bring?” Not only the term ‘medicines’ that is still being used by the farmer, but also the kind of question he posed to me—as if I were a company’s dealer—reflecting his curiosity of any new pesticide product (see Winarto 2006). On the other hand, I found a group of IPM farmers at the same locale who were very creative in pursuing their efforts in producing their own ‘ideal seeds’, organic fertilizers and non-chemical pesticides, and/or planting paddy on the basis of the so-called SRI (*System of Rice Intensification*).

I was struck by the reality that some farmers are still trapped in the conventional way of controlling pests/diseases. Their practices and queries reveal no changes in their minds and practices as if they had not been touched at all by the new paradigm of integrated pest management introduced in Indonesia in early 1990s. It further reflects the persisting place of farmers as the subjects and targets of various companies’ promotions. On the other hand, I was amazed by the creativity of a number of farmers who persistently carrying out various kinds of experimentations. They are striving of how to improve their farming strategies without relying on external-commercialized inputs. Those are farmers

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who were previously trained in the so-called Farmer Field Schools. A novel practice also emerged. Eleven groups in the regency of Indramayu, West Java, are developing the ability in producing 'ideal seeds' by cross-breeding seeds of either paddy or vegetables they themselves selected to be the parental seeds. They are very proud of their capability. "We can do it ourselves," that is their most recent discourse and motto voiced elsewhere. Such is the promising picture reflecting the Farmer First's paradigm.

The first portrait of the persisting practice and perspective in controlling pests/diseases is a proof that changing the paradigm of treating farmers is not a simple thing to achieve. As argued Scoones and Thompson (1994a, 1994b), a complex set of factors: cultural, economic, environmental, and socio-political ones are intersecting and influencing one another. Making farmers IPM experts through Farmer Field Schools in Indonesia under the National Integrated Pest Management Program was too simplistic without shifting the agricultural development paradigm itself. I argue that the 'culture' of agricultural development policies in Indonesia has not been altered significantly. The persisting paradigm of Green Revolution is still alive. As a consequence, farmers have been kept as the targets and subjects of agricultural development and hence, were kept being 'ignorance' (see Hobart 1993). Such a situation is reflecting the 'centripetal' dimension of culture (see Strauss and Quinn 1997; Winarto 2006). The question is: why does it persist despite the serious efforts to make a very significant change through the National Integrated Pest Management program introduced in early 1990s?

The answers to that question are not simple as well. The first part of this paper examines the two coins of agricultural development in Indonesia: the gloomy side yet persisting, and the brightness one yet sporadically 'in the making'. However, I argue that a kind of transformation does emerge. At both national and grass-root levels, various farmers' movements in gaining prosperity, improving dignity, and sustaining freedom to decide and govern their own strategies are underway. This is the bright side of the implications of the so-called 'school without walls' and the efforts of varied agencies in facilitating farmers to be self-empowered. To some extent, decentralization program in Indonesia also plays a part in creating new 'atmosphere' for farmers' movements to flourish (see Winarto 2002, 2005). An atmosphere for 'farmer first' is likely on the air. It is still a question, however, whether a serious attention and program has been developed to really put farmer first, or at least placing them as the state's 'partners' in developing agriculture.

Observing the emerging farmers' movement and other agencies' responses, I discover the diverse nature of farmers' creativity, its results and contextual factors. The transformative phenomenon itself also varies (see Barth 1994; Borofsky 1994; Vayda 1994 for the need to examine variation as a fundamental reality). This paper only presents some cases of such a 'centrifugal' dimension of the agricultural development in Indonesia in relation to putting Farmer First paradigm. To understand the extent to which current institutional and organizational framework for research, extension and agricultural education really does put 'farmer first', I prefer to examine the cases presented in this paper on the basis of the interaction between farmers on the one hand, and the agencies involved in those activities on the other hand (see Olivier de Sardan 2006 for the entangled social logic approach or methodological interactionism; Long 1993; Long and Villareal 1994. Also see Ahearn 2001 for the agency approach).

Changing yet Persisting, Enabling yet Constraining Circumstance: Where to Go?

A leading national scientist, an entomologist, who was part of the think-tank in drafting the National Integrated Pest Management program confessed his failure to change the paradigm of agricultural research and development while having a position within the bureaucratic system. He felt disappointed with the state's handling of what is known as Farmer Field School on a 'project-based', not as a means for long term farmers' learning process. His feeling reveals the complicated problem within the body of the Ministry of Agriculture in Indonesia that hinders rather than supports the 'Farmer First'. This is the dark side of the coin. However, observing farmers' struggles to keep moving forward returned his spirit to pursue his efforts in facilitating farmers. These conflicting feelings mirror the real situation in Indonesia agricultural development nowadays of both persisting and constraining, as well as changing and enabling atmospheres for putting 'farmer first' seriously.

Changing and enabling

In the post Beyond Farmer First's workshop (which was held in 1992), there were significant changes toward empowering farmers in Indonesia. First, there was a transfer of the National Integrated Pest Management program from the National Planning and Development Agency into the Ministry of Agriculture in 1993. The bureaucratic system and procedures in handling administrative matters in agricultural development were put into works in implementing a program aiming to change farmers' perspectives, knowledge, and skills. The same ministry that first implemented the Green Revolution with its entire institutions and facilities was now being responsible for the paradigm shift to empower farmers in growing healthy crops. I argue against any successful results of placing such a responsibility within a complex bureaucratic system. Indeed that was the reality. On the basis of my observation at the grass-root level of implementing the Farmer Field School in Central Lampung (southern province of Sumatera island), it was hard to find the 'spirit' of farmers' empowerment and adult learning process. The government officials of plant protection and extension services managed the school as a project with already designed curriculum without farmers' consents in advance accompanied with frequent late financial disbursement. A group of IPM farmers—facilitated by an international NGO and experienced a different quality of learning process through Farmer Field School—named that kind of program as a 'fiesta' (*pesta* in Indonesian term). This term means that nothing followed as soon as the feast was over. *Pesta* is also an acronym of *tipis-tipis tapi merata* (shallow but widely spread), a cynical term referring to the emphasis of having a large number of 'schools' without any depth quality of learning process. To counter such a weak management, the international NGO in collaboration with farmers did try to improve the learning process and sustain the activities following any Farmer Field School (FFS). As a result, a strong self-governed farmers' organization was formed. Farmers themselves were able to plan and carry out the schools for other non-IPM farmers (see Winarto *et al.* 2000; Winarto 2002). This was not the case with the IPM farmers trained in a 'one-off fiesta project' (see Persisting and Constraining)

The lessons-learned of Farmer Field School by an international NGO and group of farmers was indeed a positive unintended consequence of the program. The Farmer Field School soon became one 'model' of training and empowering farmers. As the 'school' was spread all over Indonesia through the national program, the idea of such a training and its advantages also being dispersed through various kinds of media and collaborative networks. The 'school' was gradually become part of the external structures of not only farmers, but also various non-profit organizations within Indonesia and abroad and hence, became their point of reference in seeking appropriate means of facilitating farmers. In the past decade I discovered various names for Farmer Field Schools following the content of the training. Examples of these are: FFS for chili, soybean, organic farming, integrated farming, participatory plant-breeding, local food system, as well as climatic change. The latter is the most recent one carried out by the government apparatus responding to the current climatic changes. The aim was facilitating farmers to be able to understand and respond well to those unexpected changes. It was also interesting to find out that in the course of imitating and implementing FFS, various kinds of modification were also done by some NGOs. Examples are the absence of agro-ecosystem analysis and farmers' own presentation as found in two places in Yogyakarta region. Despite some modifications which sometimes move away from a 'discovery-experiential-learning process, farmers did express their gratefulness of having such a learning experience

The works by many NGOs in adopting the FFS methods means that financial supports to carry out those activities were made available through the involvement of various donor institutions both from within Indonesia and foreign institutions though the World Bank terminated its support in late 1990s. FFS on participatory-plant-breeding is one example in which the Agricultural Wageningen University in collaboration with local NGOs in several Southeast Asian countries (The Philippines, Cambodia and Indonesia) designed and implemented what they called as 'FFS on participatory plant-breeding'. Another one was the FFS on local food system. Such was the second significant change I observed in the past decade in which FFS was gradually established as the 'appropriate method' to change farmers' knowledge and practices.

The third change was the closure of the IPM national program towards the end of 1990s along with the termination of the World Bank's financial support. Though it failed to sustain as a national program, unintentionally this failure provided an opportunity for the IPM farmers themselves to stand up and move forward. Responding to the program's termination, representatives of IPM farmers from several

provinces in Indonesia agreed to form a farmers' federation or alliance. This alliance was formed with the objectives of: strengthening farmer's organization at the group level (grass-root); improving farmers through education; and providing advocacy. The association has its visions to empower farmers and balance the ecosystem, and to strive for farmers' rights as its mission (Hidayat and Adinata 2001; *Media Jaringan Petani Indonesia* 2002b). In the first national assembly, they declared their alliance and named it as: the Indonesian Integrated Pest Management Farmers' Alliance (*IPPHTI* stands for *Ikatan Petani Pengendalian Hama Terpadu Indonesia*). They selected a network instead of a hierarchical organization and created a logo representing the spider's web with some Indonesian islands in its center.³

At the same period of time, there was a significant decentralization program or 'regional autonomy' in Indonesia following the down-fall of the New Regime of Indonesian government under Soeharto's authoritative ruling. The regency's authority of the executive and legislative ones has greater powerful decisions and policies instead of the central state bureaucracy, including financial procurement and disbursement. In my earlier writings I argue that a closer relationship could be built between farmers and the regency's authority, though the ability of the two parties to communicate varies from one locale to another (see Winarto 2002, 2005b). How the regency authority interprets the way of handling the agricultural research, extension and development does vary, including the management of extension staff and office. Several cases from the regencies in West Java and Yogyakarta (south central Java) reveal the regencies' decisions to disburse some funds directly to the farmers to assist them improving their activities and capabilities.⁴

I argue therefore that a diverse yet promising climate for farmers to move forward is 'in the making'. The seeds have been planted here and there. The movements are on the way. Yet, the underlying paradigm of agricultural development in Indonesia on the basis of the Green Revolution still persists.

Persisting and constraining

The growth and development of National IPM Program in Indonesia which was managed within the body of the Ministry of Agriculture itself does not mean that its paradigm would replace the Green Revolution in agricultural development. Within the bureaucratic system, that strategy constitutes only one dimension of the entire agricultural research and development, namely under the responsibility of

³ The spider's web represents the kind of alliance this organization performs (see *Media Jaringan Petani Indonesia* (2002a:10 for the interpretations of the logo). Strengthening one another is one of the alliance's aims. Motivated by the condition of farmers at the bottom-rank of the hierarchy of power relations with pressures and challenges, critical education, learning from experience, empowering farmers, participatory, and adult learning process, those are the jargons the organizers used to symbolize the educational philosophy they undertook as the basic premises of all programs and activities. The education parts of this alliance are not only directed towards making farmers experts through Farmers' Science (*Sains Petani*) and facilitation skills, but also improving the capability of building organization and networks with various other parties. My observation on the ways farmers themselves planned, prepared, organized, and solved problems emerging in the second national conference in 2002 proved their organization ability, potential, and skills. *Media Jaringan Petani Indonesia* (2002a:9) says that this movement indicates a change from being dominated by non-government organizations to being existed as an organization by and for farmers themselves in collaboration with various other parties. Now, they are moving forward in organizing the third national assembly with the main theme of 'demonstrating their technological capability'. In my perspective, this is the true Farmer First's movement in Indonesia with the minimal influence by the government and other parties. In Indonesian terms this is commonly termed as: *dari, oleh, dan untuk petani* (from, by, and for farmers).

⁴ One regency in Yogyakarta (Sleman) decided to disburse equal funds to a number of farmer-groups on the basis of their qualified proposals in improving farming practices. Such a policy did indeed stimulate farmers at the grass-root level to actively initiate any activity along with their needs and interests. Another head of regency in Yogyakarta (Bantul) provides rewards to farmer-seed-selectors which for farmers in other places were very special in appreciating farmers' capability. The Indramayu regency in West Java at last decided to allocate funds on the basis of farmers' proposal in carrying out Farmer Field Schools in plant-breeding, organic farming, and System of Rice Intensification. This was achieved after a long struggle to get the authority's acknowledgment and support of their creativities and practices (see The 'fighting bull': striving against the 'tiger').

plant protection division for the management of damaging-organism (*organisme pengganggu tanaman*). As stated earlier, the management of that program was also based on a 'project-oriented' rather than a long-term program of empowering farmers. Once the intended project was carried out, that was it. The total number of farmers in Indonesia being trained becomes the indicator of success despite the reality that they left most of the trained-farmers without any further efforts to nurture and facilitate them.

Following farmers' activities after the 'school' was terminated, I found out that the IPM farmers—in my field sites in Subang in early 1990s and in Central Lampung (Batanghari regency) in late 1990s—were being left alone without any continued facilitative programs. The ideal objective of community IPM (see Pontius *et al.* 2002) in strengthening the IPM farmers' new knowledge and skills or in building up social institutions was absent. "We are like 'plants'. The government 'planted' us, but then they did not come to 'watering' us. How could the 'plants' grow well?" such was a simile voiced by an IPM farmer in Subang (see Winarto 2004). This statement reveals the different kind of 'plants' they were as IPM farmers in comparison to the other 'plants'. But, in a constraining situation of the persisting 'puzzles' of pests/disease outbreaks, they felt helpless. Without any nurturance from external agencies, they realized the difficulties of keeping the healthy growth of their own knowledge and practices in a situation where a continuous pests/diseases outbreak was common, as well as the promotion of various new brands of pesticides and alike. This is a portrait that without any social institution to support, the new interpretation schemas would be difficult to sustain (see Strauss and Quinn 1997; Winarto and Choesin 2002).

Such was the situation following the 'fiesta-project'.

On the other hand, the high productivity of food crops to fulfill the national target of food-stock for the need of more than 200 millions people is still high in the central state's agenda. 'Food security' rather than 'food sovereignty' as declared by farmers and their partners has been underlying state agricultural development agenda (see Winarto 2005a, 2007). Various programs were developed to boost up high productivity such as Revitalization in Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry (*Revitalisasi Pertanian, Perikanan, dan Kehutanan, RP2K*) as declared by the recent President of Indonesia (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono). For rice production, the central state defined the target amounts to 2 millions ton of rice in 2007. This target has to be fulfilled by various 'rice-bowl' regencies in Indonesia. As a consequence, there was also a thorough re-evaluation of the policy in agricultural development, including the institutions and roles of extension workers, which after the decentralization, was placed directly under the control of the regency authority.⁵ Various unpopular policies were also pursued by the central state despite protests from both farmers and provincial/regency authority, such as rice imports from neighbouring countries, rice technology import from China and the production of hybrid rice.⁶ Lately, the central state gave full authority and responsibility to *BULOG* (the government agency responsible for distributing and marketing the main staples, including rice as the prime commodity) to import rice as long as they could guarantee the stability of price for rice. Despite all these top-down programs, interestingly, in 28 March 2007, a project called FEATI (Farmers Empowerment through Agricultural Technology and Innovation) was launched to support the President's policy in revitalizing

⁵ The extension service which was previously placed directly within the hierarchical structure from the center down to the village level experienced a deinstitutionalization under the decentralization system. The diverse interpretation and understanding of the works of extension services, as well as the management capability, professionalism, mobility and administrative system of each regency led to the disarray of the extension service system and works. For a period of time in the last five years or so, the close relationship between the extension workers and the farmers became gradually extinct. Only after the launch of the revitalization program in agriculture did the Ministry of Agriculture took action in revitalizing the extension office. It is still necessary to examine further the extent to which such a vacuum and now, the effort to revitalize extension services affect the farmers' empowerment capability and the Farmer First paradigm.

⁶ The Vice-President himself accompanied by the Minister of Agriculture and the Chair of the Indonesian Seeds Association (*Asosiasi Perbenihan Indonesia*) made a visit to China to work-out a collaboration for the formation of a center for developing integrated-rice-hybrid-seeds in Indonesia. The memorandum of understanding was signed between the Rice Research Station in West Java with a company named: Tuohao Penta Prima in Chengdu, Sichuan, China (*Kompas* 2007; also see *Kompas Cybermedia* <http://www.kompas.com/ver1/Ekonomi/0706/10/072432.htm>).

agriculture. Again, the World Bank financially supports this program that was implemented through the agricultural office at the regency level.⁷

It is also interesting to observe that within a short period of time following the declaration of 'Agricultural Revitalization' by the President, a number of national corporations took the opportunity to reap benefits of the new scheme.⁸ A group of national corporations that previously only produced pesticides and alike, are now producing hybrid rice. In a package with pesticides, they sold the hybrid rice to the farmers in an enforced way (H.Solichin, personal communication 2007). Another corporate built up collaboration with the local authority and farmers. They came to offer a package of agricultural inputs in a complete scheme (seeds, fertilizers and pesticides) for free. Farmers, who agree to take that package and later on produce yields equal to their conventional produce, could keep the yields for themselves. The company would take the yields on top of farmers' average yields. In the eyes of some farmers, including village leaders, such a scheme was perceived as very beneficial.⁹ For those who were trained in FFS and understood well the philosophy and objectives of the learning they had undergone perceived such a scheme as 'trapping them further to be wage-labourers' instead of 'freeing them as independent-creative farmers'. A group of IPM farmers in Yogyakarta (Sleman) decided to refuse that offer though the hamlet-leader himself persuaded them to accept the offer. The following are similar stories revealing the powerless position of farmers (the 'bulls') facing the powerful agencies (the 'tigers').

Several farmers in Kediri, East Java are now in jail. On the basis of their innovative ideas, they were trying to cross-breed corn seeds which, in the eyes of a company producing hybrid corn-seeds, were stealing the company's genetic material. The company sued them for illegal piracy and was successful in bringing them to jail (farmer's story; Pulungan, personal communication 2007).

After being successful in getting lands from farmers' rented-fields in a district in Indramayu, a group of corporations accompanied by those from the military ('generals' in farmers' eyes), did the planting of organic hybrid rice in non-irrigated rice fields in the dry season planting. Some young scholars were staying in the village. They provided farmers with a package of inputs for free and daily wages for farmers' labours. They also promised to give rewards to those who could get yields twice or three times the normal yields (around 4 tons/ha). Apparently, due to climatic and ecological condition in dry season planting, the harvest failed. Instead of producing 12 tons/ha yields as promised, they could only harvest 1.2 tons/ha. Since the company staff knew that there were a number of farmer-plant-breeders in that area, the staff forced one farmer-plant-breeder to sign a written declaration that the hybrid paddy producing only 1.2 tons/ha was the farmer's product from cross-breeding his own seeds. Such a move accompanied with terror and aggravated actions led to psychological breakdown of the farmer who left away from his home and family (farmer's story; Masroni, personal communication 2007).

Farmers are not only being the targets and subjects still, but also being the victims of the companies' power and play in the battle of not only gaining benefits, but also of avoiding lost in profits and dignity. In such a very constraining political play, how could the farmers, the 'bull', strive to survive against the "tiger"?

⁷From oral and slides presentation by the head of the provincial agricultural office of Yogyakarta in a seminar held at the Graduate School of Gadjah Mada University, November 8, 2007 about the recent challenges and the future of extension services.

⁸ Supported by the national legislation no.16/2006, the partnership supporting the new policy was formulated as between government (*pemerintah*), private (*swasta*), and self-supporting group (*swadaya*). The word 'farmer' was gone. Previously the partnership was explicitly stated between government and farmer (*pemerintah-petani*). Does the term farmers be merged with the term: self-supporting group?

⁹ 'Pak Harto Center' chaired by the ex-president Soeharto's step-brother has been organizing the organic farming for rice in Bantul (Yogyakarta) in which he delivered the package of seeds, organic fertilizers, wage-labours' fees accompanied with technical assistance. The 'organic farming of paddy "Simponi" (*Sistem Penanaman Padi Organik*) that is the name of his company's farming strategy. Farmers could gain the yields as much as they usually get prior to cultivating the organic rice. In the harvesting season in June 2007, the yields could reach up to 8.8 tons/ha. The cultivated land has now reached 112 ha (*Kedaulatan Rakyat* 2007).

Farmers' Struggles in Sustaining Freedom and Improving Dignity

"The origin of the anxiety of bulls' younger generation" (*Kisah asal muasal kegundahan generasi penerus kerbau*), that is the title of a folklore retold by an agricultural scholar from Bogor Agricultural Institute representing the relationship between the 'bulls' (farmers) and the 'tigers' (other agencies). That story exactly portrays the current situation of farmers (the 'bulls') being exploited by various agencies such as World Bank, IMF, MNCs (Multi-national corporations), and TNCs (Trans-national corporations). The stories of farmers in East Java being thrown into the jail or a farmer in Indramayu being forced to forfeit a declaration about cross-bred seeds are examples of such a situation. The following is the short version of the folklore:

At the time of a severe famine following a forest-fire in Java, a couple of bull made a promise to surrender themselves to whoever came to help them. A tiger who listened to their promise was glad and came to offer his help with the interest to prey them. He directed the bulls to a place where they could eat and drink and thus, survived. But, instead of eating them while they were still tiny, the tiger kept waiting until the bulls became fatter and healthier. At last he thought of postponing his will to enable him getting a continuous supply of food generation to generation. He then made a contract with the bulls to surrender one bull in each generation for his meal. The contract went on and on for generations until one day the young generation critically asked why they had to surrender themselves to the tiger. The story ends with questions: Was the agreement fair enough? Should the young generation of the bull do something? How? Or do they have to accept such a situation? Just accept it like that? (see Triwidodo, *in preparation*).

The story ends without any decisions yet by the young generation of the 'bulls'. The same questions were directed by the agricultural scholar to the Indramayu farmers who were struggling to get their rights in producing seeds. The same question could also be raised to all farmers in Indonesia. My observation reveals that farmers are in fact questions all introduced policies and recommendations imposed on them. Yet, not all of them are critically argued against and do something to reach a better position of negotiation. Again, I observe a range of variation in the relationship between the 'bull' and the 'tiger'.

The ignorant 'bull': Keep being exploited by the 'tiger'?

When I visited an agricultural shop selling all kinds of products in January 2007 in Indramayu, an old farmer came to buy some pesticides. He was very determined telling the shop-owner of what to buy, as well as the price for each item consisting of insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides. The shop-owner agreed with the price mentioned by the farmer himself. The total amount of money the farmer had to incur was Rp140.000,00 (one hundred forty thousands rupiah, 1USD = Rp9.000,00). He told me further that: "If I sell rice, I get one million *rupiah*. I don't mind wearing worn-out clothes, as long as I can buy these 'medicines'" (see film *Bisa Dèwèk* 2007).

This is again another similar case with those who kept pursuing their conventional ways of controlling pests/diseases. For the old farmer, purchasing 'medicines' was his top priority, though for being able to do that he could not buy any new clothes. He was trapped in his ignorance of any risks in using 'medicines' and so do many other farmers who kept using pesticides injudiciously. The shop-owner was, of course, not in the position to loose any customers. The companies kept gaining profits from the high sales of their products. The agricultural officials such as extension workers were not only absence from their regular visits, but were also part of the agencies gaining profits through commissions received from the companies. The old farmer may only be one among hundreds of other farmers in his community who did not receive any learning of IPM strategy like the IPM farmers did. The transfer of IPM strategy from IPM farmers to non-IPM farmers had not been widely spread as well. All 'tigers' were playing the games to keep farmers their good permanent customers. Loosing the customers means loosing profits. The 'bull' could not do anything to alter the situation due to his ignorance. It is a reality that in such a power play and profit-making-game, the farmer would still be an obedient 'bull'. Hence, in that situation, how could a room for Farmer First emerge?

The ‘fighting bull’: Striving against the ‘tiger’

The spirit of a ‘fighting bull’ was the one I found among a number of farmer-plant-breeders spread in eleven districts in Indramayu regency.¹⁰ In the early 2006 when I revisited them, the ‘bull’ expressed their great interests to widely spread their capability in plant-breeding to other farmers, so as to open their mind of the heavy costs they have to bear. Another mission was how to convince the head of the regency agricultural office and their staff of their capability in plant breeding. They realized that such a skill does not usually belong to them, but to the scientists at the agricultural laboratory. The head of the regency agricultural office—who was in the office up to 2006—negated farmers’ ability in plant-breeding. Even worse, their practices were condemned as illegal and could cause great risks in boosting up the population of a prominent pest: brown plant hopper. At the time the head of the regency agricultural office came to threaten a farmer-plant-breeder, the farmer confirmedly voice that he knew the regulation of plant-breeding. He imitated his strong voice to the head of the regency agricultural office as follows:

The Head of the Regency Agricultural Office came to me and accused me ...of distributing seeds and brown plant hoppers... because I didn’t spray pesticides. In fact, I did not spray pesticides only on a small piece of rice field because I wanted to know which varieties of rice plant were resistant to pests. If all were infected by brown plant hopper and only that small part was not, it means that the variety was resistant to pests and diseases. That was what I mean. I was being threatened, being scared off ...to close down my farming activity. I said: "Please go ahead, Sir. I know that copyrights are protected through the laws passed by President Megawati, dated on this day, this month, this number...." He was then speechless. I told him to close my works down since he had the authority. But, I wanted to produce my own seeds to save the expenses. Why shouldn’t a Head of Agricultural Office be proud of having farmers being able to do a saving? (from the film of *Bisa Dèwèk* 2007).¹¹

He had the braveness to voice, but how about his other fellows? Indramayu IPM farmers realized that something should be done. By referring to television as a very powerful media, they looked at visual product as an option to spread their message.

My first aim to document their activities and struggles as part of an ethnographic research was soon being transferred to a collaborative work with the farmers in film production and dissemination. In line with the main mission of the donor agency (the Embassy of the Republic of Finland in Jakarta) in community empowerment, the farmers themselves developed their strategies in disseminating the film. By using that film, they would like to obtain the authority’s support and recognition at the regency level. However, to reach that, they had to convince first the authority at the village and district levels. By having the support from a significant number low level bureaucracy (eleven districts), it was expected that the head of the regency would also give his consent and support. Surprisingly, their strategies did work after an intense work and schedule to screen the films in 13 districts. At last, the top level bureaucrat and decision maker at the regency acknowledged their creative works and promised to support farmers’ efforts and struggles. As a follow up, farmers were asked to submit a proposal of what kinds of programs they would like to promote in the following fiscal year. It was the first time in that area that a direct collaboration with the authority in equal partnership was in action. The authority provided funds with the full-support of the legislative body. The farmers will be the think-tank in planning and designing the program. The ‘bulls’ are no longer being obedient ‘bulls’ to whatever the ‘tiger’ wants to do. The ‘bad tiger’ turned into the ‘good one’ in front of farmers and other agencies.

¹⁰ From 2002 up to 2005, the Indonesian FIELD Alliance in collaboration with the Agricultural Wageningen University, the Netherlands, the scientist-plant-breeders from the Agricultural Research Station for Food Crops in Sukamandi, West Java, and the Indramayu agricultural staff carried out a Farmer Field School in Participatory Plant Breeding in eleven districts in the regency of Indramayu. They trained farmers to do cross-breeding of paddy and vegetables.

¹¹ When the film was about to be screened in a seminar held at a local university in Indramayu in front of the head of the regency and other staff, the new head of the regency agricultural office asked the farmers to cut and leave out the farmer’s story of being accused and threatened by his predecessor. The reason was to save their face in front of the head of the regency and that such a voice was insulting their institution. “Let it be the history and let’s face the future better,” that was the unintended but expected positive message sent to the farmers.

Moreover, the Indramayu case becomes a point of reference for the others—both the ‘bull’ and the ‘tiger’—to learn and follow. In my viewpoint, this case portrays the movement towards Farmer First.

Unexpectedly, another ‘tiger’ was unhappy with the collaborative work between the university scholars and the farmers. That was the staff of the NGO that trained and facilitated farmers to be plant-breeders. How could it be that the one provided help to the farmers turned, in farmers’ eyes, into a ‘tiger’? Up to the time my team entered into a more formal and intense collaboration with the farmers, the NGO was the only agency facilitating farmers. I found it later that their unfriendly attitude was due to their perspective that the farmers’ area was their ‘territory’ and that my team was encroaching theirs. It opened my eyes that other NGOs might also have the same perspective in treating farmers as their ‘subjects’ and the area as their ‘working-territory’. The scholars were thus perceived as their competitor rather than colleagues facilitating the same people. If so, what is behind the NGO’s motivation in facilitating farmers? The Indramayu farmers perceived them as ‘brokers’ (*calo*) who had the aim of gaining financial supports from foreign donor agencies by using farmers as their ‘vehicles’. They sought funds to enable themselves to stay alive. From their collaborative work with my team the farmers learned that they could design their own strategies according to their own needs and interests. This was missing in their collaboration with the NGO staff. The NGO used to come with already well-prepared program on the basis of their proposal to donor agencies. Farmers were invited to participate in that program without any ‘room to voice’. This was the unintentional lessons-learned from our collaborative work which provided freedom for farmers to design their own strategy. This experience assisted them to alter their position as the following case reveals.

In the course of their negotiations with the head of the regency agricultural office, the farmers were posed with a question: with what organization should the collaboration be carried out? This question strengthened their sense of identity and belongingness to their alliance: IPPHTI Indramayu which in the past, was ‘fell asleep’ without any prominent activities. On the basis of this reflection, the farmers reevaluated their collaboration with the NGO. In their perspective, the NGO came and selected by themselves the sites and groups to facilitate. They ignored the existence of the Indramayu IPPHTI organization, nor did they help farmers to strengthen it. It was again surprising when the ‘bull’ decided to say ‘no’ to the ‘tiger’ when, in a sudden without any information far in advance, the ‘tiger’ asked the farmers to come and join a training of trainers for ‘local food system’ program. After some negotiations, the NGO accepted the farmers’ request that their organization’s representatives should be allowed to monitor the program. For future activities, the NGO should not negate their organization.

I observed that gradual understanding among the farmers of their ‘weak position as the obedient bulls’ in the past is now on the way. On the basis of this, they move forward to place themselves as the ‘first’ agency in any collaboration, no longer the subjects and the targets.

The ‘free bull’: Sustaining freedom

A different feature of the collaborative work between farmers and their facilitators (an international NGO) was the one I observed in Terbanggi Besar, Central Lampung. The NGO had a blue-print to strengthen farmers’ organization and placed his staff to stay with the farmers for the first three years in a row. Once the organization was strong enough to run all activities by themselves, the NGO staff pulled himself out. At the time I frequently visited them in 1998—99, the farmers’ representatives were engaged in frequent lively discussions in drafting, planning, implementing, and evaluating various FFS programs in rice, soybean, chili and follow-up activities. They constituted the ‘core’ of the farmers’ movement in their regency in reaching prosperity and sustaining a healthy environment. *Wakak Jukok* (*akar rumput* [Ind.] or grass-root) was the name they themselves chose for their organization. Learning from the national IPM program’s weaknesses in running the FFS as a ‘fiesta’, they decided to organize three FFSs consecutively. They required the participants to follow all three FFSs before they could identify themselves as IPM farmers (*petani alumni PHT*). Changing farmers’ knowledge and perspectives could not be done in only one-time FFS, that was their belief. An in-depth understanding of the new schema of growing a healthy crop was what they would like to achieve to ensure any changes in practices. That they themselves could be the producer of soybean seeds and organic fertilizers, and improved their farming strategies were the pride they gained. Such is the feature of the ‘free bull’ in determining what they thought are the best for their own farming and life.

At the time the government raised the price of inorganic fertilizer in 1999, they voiced strongly against that ill-wise policy. Negotiating with the 'tigers', or being independent from them (except the donors for financial help) had become part of their daily struggles. Though they admired the role of government's extension workers, they knew that they could rely on their own knowledge and understanding. Farmer facilitators (*petani pemandu*) took the lead in facilitating their fellows in FFSs instead of the government's facilitators (see Winarto, Maldi, and Darmoyuwono 1999; Winarto *et al.* 2000). This is a promising case for Farmer First to flourish. If NGOs in Indonesia could take similar steps in strengthening farmers' organization in the first place while facilitating a 'core' of farmers to be qualified farmer facilitators, I argue that Farmer First movement could emerge in many more places in Indonesia as I also found in Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta..

I found an enlightening story among a group of women-farmers in a hilly rain-fed agro-ecosystem area in Yogyakarta which was known as one of the 'marginal poor' regions in Indonesia. The women in this region do not only work hard as the backbone of their families in multiple-crop farming, but also try their best to improve their life through collective action. They are very proud of their group: *Menur* (a flower's name, see the film: *Lelakoné Menur, in preparation*). Originally, this group was formed as a follow-up of the Farmer Field Schools in paddy, corn, and soybean on the basis of the participants' own initiative. At first it comprised of men and women IPM farmers as the members. Gradually, the men asked their wives to replace them. At last, the group members consisted of female farmers only. Not only rotating credit system and lending-borrowing money that they used to do in regular meetings, but also renting a piece of land to be cultivated together in a group. Several planting seasons had passed by. Each time they themselves decided what kind of crops and varieties they would like to plant. Planting, managing the soil, watering and weeding were carried out together. At each activity, they required all members to participate. Those who could not join had to replace their labour with money. Whether they would like to harvest the yields together in a group or sell it to the member or others were also decided in the group's meeting. They saved the cash they earned from the harvest and allowed the members to borrow.

"We welcome any help to increase our savings, so that we can purchase a piece of land. If we have the land, we can develop various kinds of experiments to improve our farming strategies. But we refuse any outsider's credit package, including government's scheme with some requirements and obligations to return the loan with interests. We don't want such kind of help which could damage our solidarity and togetherness. We are happy with our own freedom to decide," explained the group's leader firmly.

'Freedom' becomes one main objective to achieve and sustain. In fact, gaining 'true freedom' is something rare as several other cases reveal. Farmer groups in another village in the same regency experienced hardships in returning government's loans.¹² All segments of the regency authority seek places to deliver their programs and funds. Again, farmers become the subjects and targets, though with the slogan of empowering them. In another regency in Yogyakarta, farmers were arguing against government's policy in disbursing funds allocated to formal farmers-group specializing in a particular field of agriculture (e.g. food crop, fisheries, forestry). It is not allowed for a group of farmers to receive funds for all fields though the works of their members encompass all of them. That is the government regulation. Is this the consequence of decentralization program or agricultural revitalization in Indonesia? If yes, this is again, moving away from placing the 'bulls' at the first place. In such a situation, the persistent 'bulls' to stay independently from any 'help' that in fact could jeopardize their freedom becomes a prominent feature in the movement towards Farmer First paradigm.

¹² I remembered the time when I met a village leader in another district in the same region. He complained of various kinds of credit package schemes delivered by various government institutions. He felt pity of his farmers since the same groups of farmers had to receive those disbursements. It meant they had to bear the risks of using up the funds, sometimes in the form of loans with interests. Some could no longer bear the risks. "Please come with programs, and no more with funds," begged the village leader.

Facilitating the 'Bull': What could we do?

In a seminar held at the University of Indonesia at the end of October 2007, one participant from the Ministry of Agriculture raised a cynical question to the farmers who were presenting their film and activities: "In fact, what do you want with raising the issue of *Bisa Dèwèk* ("We can do it ourselves")?" In short, he told the audience that his ministry has done a lot to the farmers. He further refused accepting the critique of a top-down agricultural development paradigm by stating the fact that the government had disbursed a large amount of funds to help farmers. The government had also carried out a bottom-up approach by allowing farmers to decide their own needs and programs of how to use the disbursed funds. That was his standpoint. His voice was the only one cynically question the seminar's theme and farmers' presentations.¹³ Of course, farmers were very unhappy with that non-appreciative comment. This again proves the reality that such a perspective has still dominantly occupied the central state apparatus. How could the government put farmers first in a real sense then? If so, what could we do about it?

As stated earlier, despite the persisting and constraining agricultural development paradigm, the supporting atmosphere for Farmer First to flourish did emerge, though sporadically and is still 'in the making'. In a consecutive three seminars held at different universities with a similar theme towards putting Farmer First,¹⁴ a common understanding among the audience was reached that working collaboratively in lifting up farmers' dignity and prosperity is in great need. Among the audience were the representatives of various agencies (scholars, students, NGOs, independent persons, farmers, state-apparatus from both administrative and agricultural offices, and media). However, the scholars agreed that only 5% among those specializing in agricultural discipline are behind the farmers, or put farmers' needs and problems as their first agenda. Where are the other 95%? Triwidodo (*in preparation*) argues that those 95% scholars work for various other 'tigers' (state, MNCs, TNCs and others). So, what could the 5% scholars do?

"Farmers would be happy if scholars from various universities come to be 'scare-crows'," said Triwidodo in the seminar held at Gadjah Mada University (*in preparation*). "The scholars come, visit the farmers, and just sit there quietly without anything to say. No research, no examination, no genetic analysis, nothing. By only being a 'scare-crow', farmers' fields won't be visited by 'birds'. The local authorities would feel uneasy knowing that a scholar is there among the farmers," argued Triwidodo further (*in preparation*).

However, is it enough to only be a 'scare-crow'? I argue that the 5% scholars could do more than being a 'scare-crow' and build up closer collaboration with farmers and other agencies. Organizing academic events and discussing various issues in promoting Farmer First by inviting all parties to participate is one alternative path as what I initiated in 2007 in collaboration with the scholars in three different universities. Visiting farmers and closing the communication gap in knowledge acquisition is another alternative path as a group of scholars-pro-farmers from Bogor Agricultural Institute did in a tour visiting 26 places in Java in April—May 2007. Engaging with farmers closely in collaborative film production and dissemination while carrying out research as my team from the University of Indonesia and the Indramayu farmers did in 2006—2007 (see *Bisa Dèwèk*), is another effective example. Various other cases can be discerned that have positive implications in putting Farmer First (see the

¹³ The seminar at the University of Indonesia on October 30, 2007 was organized to commemorate the 'World-Food Day' and the 50th anniversary of Anthropology at the University of Indonesia with the theme on: "Food Sustainability and Food Sovereignty: The Role of Farmer-Scientist." Two groups of farmers presented their films and works, namely the Indramayu IPPHTI (Indonesian Integrated Pest Management Farmers' Alliance) group presenting the film *Bisa Dèwèk*, and the Menur women farmers-group presenting the film *Lelakoné Menur* (The Story of *Menur*). In that event, the scholars did the review and reflections of farmers' presentations.

¹⁴ The first seminar and workshop was held at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, on the 24th—25th May 2007 entitled: "Farmers' Science and Empowerment: An Alternative Path towards Sustainable Agriculture?" The second seminar was held at Wiralodra University in Indramayu, 30th August 2007 entitled: "*Bisa Dèwèk* and Farmers' Science: The Seeds of Sustainable Agriculture." The third one was organized at the University of Indonesia on October 30, 2007 entitled: "Food Sustainability and Food Sovereignty: The Role of Farmer-Scientist."

case of Terbanggi Besar, Central Lampung with their organization *Wakak Jukok*, Winarto *et al.* 2000; Winarto, Maldi and Darmowiyoto 1999).

Nevertheless, many more works need to be carried out by various parties. In my keynote paper in the seminar at the University of Indonesia (Winarto 2007), I propose three things to be considered seriously by the scholars:

- How to develop a more holistic and inter-disciplinary approach rather than a positivism, reductionism and determinism science in dealing with agricultural research and development?
- To what extent could we create a climate in the agricultural research, so as to give a place for farmers as the collaborator in the creation of agricultural technology? (also see Pimbert 2006 for his arguments on Food Sovereignty and the role of knowledge and ways of knowing).
- How to open up widely the access to information and knowledge to farmers while enriching their schema?

On the other hand, there are also three things need to be seriously considered by the farmers so as to enable them improving their positions in building up relationship with the other 'tigers'.

- How to be more seriously developing 'Farmers' Science' (*Sains Petani*)?
- How to develop their organizations so as to enable them collectively developing Farmers Science, strengthening their positions, and improving their potentials and talents?
- How to use discourse, not only to sustain their status, but also to change their position, role, and identity? (see the function of discourse in Fairclough 1992).

The question is: how to make these feasible within the existing constellation of power relations in agricultural research and development?

Can the 'Bull' and the 'Tiger' Work Collaboratively? A Conclusion

If farmers are still placed at the bottom-rank of the hierarchical power relations in agricultural research and development, to what extent a collaborative work could be formed between farmers and the other powerful agencies? I am in great doubt of its feasibility. A serious reflection and examination by all parties is in great need. However, a path towards putting Farmer First has been laid down by various agencies. Farmers themselves have initiated to strengthen their positions in collaboration with supporting agencies. Various NGOs have also been carrying out diverse kinds of facilitative programs. Some scholars—though only constituting 5% from all agricultural scholars—have initiated some works in direct relation with the farmers. It proves that a collaborative work between the two parties could be enhanced. Though a more serious collaborative step still need to be carried out, I argue to let all these diverse activities and programs to flourish in their own ways. The heterogeneity of facilitative works would enrich the atmosphere and be part of the external structures for all parties to observe, learn, and do something. I agree with some scholars and farmers of not trying to unite things out of differences. In differences, people can choose which one is the most effective one for lifting up farmers' dignity and prosperity. Evolutionary change rather than revolutionary one could thus follow towards putting Farmer First. However, I also agree that without any efforts to make those diverse strategies visible to many other agencies and wider audience, what the farmers and other parties have done would still be buried underneath the euphoria of reaching high productivity and sustaining food security. Seminars, workshops, publications, as well as film production and dissemination are necessary. The collaborative film production and dissemination as carried out between scholars and farmers proves that visual media is an effective means to reach wider audience, inspire many people, and motivate them to do something. It is still a long way though, but let the paths be built by those appreciating and admiring farmers' struggles.

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Ethnographic Film:

2007 *Bisa Dèwèk* (We Can Do it Ourselves), produced by the Undergraduate Program of Anthropology, University of Indonesia in collaboration with the Indonesian Integrated Pest Management Farmers' Alliance, the Regency of Indramayu, West Java. Producer: H. Masroni, Warsiyah, Yunita T. Winarto, Rhino Ariefiansyah. Video Director: Rhino Ariefiansyah.