

Food imports flood in, Gita Wiryawan protects U.S. and W.T.O. cartel

Jakarta, July 4, 2013. A series of mega scandals and losses throughout the country in the first half of 2013, have not been enough to make the Minister of Trade, Gita Wiryawan, repeal the facilitation of food imports. This indicates he is more afraid of facing a lawsuit against the United States and the WTO, rather than protecting farmers, fishermen, cultivators, and livestock herders of Indonesia, both men and women.

Earlier, in January 2013 the Government of the United States sued the Government of Indonesia with under the WTO's Dispute Settlement Mechanism because the Minister of Agriculture issued Regulation No. 60 Year 2012 on the recommendation of the Import and Trade of Horticultural Products Regulation No. 60 Year 2012, about the import of horticultural products which are considered overly protective regarding entry of horticultural products. In fact, this restriction on horticulture was issued after Indonesia was invaded by a variety of cheap agricultural commodities, mainly horticultural products like garlic and potatoes from America, Australia, Canada, and China through the full implementation of the Asean-China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA) which hit small farmers hard and affected the food security of the Indonesian people.

Similarly, the Indonesian government also faced allegations of subsidizing shrimp production from the Coalition of Gulf Shrimp Industries through the U.S. Department of Commerce. The petition titled "Petition for the Imposition of Countervailing Duties on Certain Frozen Freshwater Shrimp from the People's Republic of China, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam", dated December 28, 2012, accused the Government of Indonesia of providing a package of subsidies to small scale shrimp businesses in Indonesia, including outrageously accusing the government of providing subsidies to small-scale farmers. In fact, it had become imperative to ensure access to state protection and implement an empowerment program for small-scale producers like farmers, fishermen, gardeners, livestock herders and others, both men and women.

In response to the US law suit, Minister Gita, rather than hold out for the welfare of small farmers, instead revised the terms of the horticultural import restriction through Decree No. 16, 2013, to impose import licensing arrangements in order to facilitate the flow of entry of imported goods, reducing commodity and postal tariffs and quotas. This context is also to be promoted by the Ministry of Trade during the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference (WTO KTM), in Bali, in December.

This is also characterized by the reluctance of RI to support the proposal of G33 members in negotiating with the WTO. All 46 members of the G33 countries are currently urging the abolition of restrictions on subsidies for food stocks in their countries in order to protect small domestic farmers.

But the opposite happened with the Indonesian government in this case, as the Ministry of Commerce said it would try to bridge the polarization of the United States in a meeting with members of the G33 at the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali. This option reflects the attitude of the Indonesian government, showing that it is not acting in favour of its people.

On this occasion, GERAK LAWAN calls for:

1. All the Indonesian people, especially farmers, fishermen, and small scale traders, workers, including migrant workers, and women to be engaged actively in order to make corrections to various trade liberalization policies by providing an alternative based on the constitution of RI and resisting the implementation of the policies proposed for the 9th WTO KTM to be held in December 2013 in Bali.
2. Leadership of the entire House of Representatives and other State Agencies, to urge the

government to cancel the implementation of policies proposed by the WTO for the 9th KTM in Bali.

3. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Minister Gita Wiryawan to immediately shut the faucet of imports of food products, including horticulture, meat, and fish as a form of support to Indonesian farmers, fishermen, planters and livestock herders by extending provisions and adding new types of commodity tariffs to Regulation No. 60 Year 2012 on the Import of Horticultural Products.
4. President Susio Bambang Yudhoyono and Minister Gita Wiryawan to ensure the stabilization of food prices ahead of Ramadan, and Eid al-Fitr.
5. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's government to carry out agrarian reform and adopt an agro-ecological farming model to support the realization of food sovereignty and environmental sustainability.

People's Movement against Neo-colonialism and Imperialism (GERAK LAWAN)

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