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Indonesia eyes agricultural transformation in Papua through new partnership with China

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The initiative, currently being explored by Indonesiaâ??s Ministry of Transmigration and the Chinese Embassy in Indonesia, centers on the development of an agricultural research and innovation hub within the Salor Transmigration Area in Merauke, one of the country's most ambitious food production zones.

Officials say the collaboration could serve as a catalyst for transforming the region into a modern agricultural growth corridor while creating new opportunities for local communities.

Minister of Transmigration M. Iftitah Sulaiman Suryanagara said the proposed partnership aligns with Indonesiaâ??s broader efforts to achieve food self-sufficiency and strengthen human capital development in Papua.

Under the plan, China is expected to provide grant support for the establishment of an agricultural research center and a vocational education facility focused on agricultural skills development.

The proposed institutions would support the development of a regional food hub while equipping local communities with technical expertise needed to participate in modern agricultural value chains.

Addressing Productivity Constraints

The initiative follows findings from the ministryâ??s 2025 Patriot Expedition Team, which identified several structural challenges limiting agricultural productivity in the Salor area.

Researchers highlighted issues including seed quality, pest management, irrigation infrastructure, and road connectivity as key constraints affecting production efficiency.

To address these bottlenecks, the government is seeking to build a more integrated agricultural ecosystem that combines research, technology transfer, infrastructure development, and workforce training.

Local authorities have also proposed the establishment of agricultural machinery workshops to support operations within the regionâ??s expanding food production zone, which currently encompasses more than 60,000 hectares of rice cultivation.

The Ministry of Transmigration plans to collaborate with academic institutions, including IPB University, to strengthen research capabilities and support innovation-driven agricultural development in the region.

Building a Modern Agricultural Corridor

Chinese Ambassador to Indonesia Wang Lutong described the Salor Transmigration Area as a location with significant potential for large-scale agricultural modernization.

Beyond food production, he highlighted opportunities for developing supporting industries, including agricultural machinery manufacturing and equipment services that could strengthen the broader rural economy.

The vision extends beyond agriculture alone, with policymakers increasingly viewing the region as a potential growth center capable of attracting investment, supporting industrial development, and evolving into a new satellite city in South Papua.

The proposed partnership reflects a growing emphasis on combining agricultural productivity, technology adoption, skills development, and infrastructure investment as governments across Asia seek to strengthen food security while driving regional economic development.

If implemented, the Salor initiative could become one of Indonesiaâ??s most significant examples of integrated agricultural transformation, linking research, education, mechanisation, and food production into a single development model designed to support long-term growth and resilience.