

Gov't Claims Drastic Reduction of Land Vulnerable to Forest Fires in 2016-17

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Jakarta. The government on Tuesday (19/12) claimed to have drastically reduced the number of forest and land fire hot spots across the country by 94 percent in 2016 from 2015 and by 37 percent in 2017 from 2016, a minister said.

The reduction of forest fire hotspots has affected government regulations, directed by President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya said.

The minister said that according to data obtained by NASA's Terra satellites, there were 70,900 forest fire hot spots detected across the country in 2015.

In 2016, the number dropped dramatically to 3,000 and continued to fall to 2,411 this year, she added.

"In percentage, from 2016 to 2017, the hot spots decreased by 37 percent. Meanwhile, from 2015 to 2016, it decreased by 94 percent. Lastly, the number of hot spots decreased by 97 percent over the two years," Siti said.

Jokowi's administration has started to place greater emphasis on the protection and management of peatlands after the country was condemned by the international community for forest fires in Sumatra and Kalimantan, which resulted in a transnational haze that choked several Southeast Asian countries in 2015.

"The presence of the concept of emergency alerts has saved us from the dangers of forest and land fires over the past two years," Siti said in Jakarta.

Wet, Dry Seasons Not the Only Factors

Siti said the declining fires in forests, on farms and on plantation areas this year has not only been affected by the climate.

Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) has reported that the country has experienced wet and dry seasons since the two years after the strongest El Nino weather phenomenon in 2015.

The minister said the drastic reduction has been achieved due to good coordination between central and local governments, as well as with the local community.

"In the past two years, we have seen the results of the efforts which we have conducted. I have also seen contributions from the community related to forest and land fire management," Siti concluded.

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