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15 Million Hectares Of Forests Destroyed From 2000 To 2009: FWI

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Indonesia lost 15 million hectares of forests from 2000 to 2009, a study conducted by Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI) says.

"In 2000, Indonesia had 103 million hectares of forest, but only 88 million hectares left in 2009. Therefore, the speed of deforestation during those years was 1.5 million hectares per year," said FWI executive director Wirendro Sumargo on Wednesday.

"That is the fastest tropical deforestation in the world," he added.

He explained that among the 15 million hectares of forest destroyed, 5.5 million hectares were in Kalimantan. "The worst condition was in Central Kalimantan, which lost 2 million hectares," he said.

The study was conducted by analyzing Forestry Ministry data on the condition of Indonesia's forests in 2000 and then comparing it to data from satellite photos (landsat) in 2009. "There were 200 scenes of landsat of Indonesian forests we analyzed. Each scene covered around 185 square kilometers," said Wirendro.

According to the study, deforestation was mainly caused by oil palm plantations and pulp companies.

"The root was our corrupt political and economic system. Government policy is often inconsistent and less strict, and it is therefore very easy for many parties (palm oil and pulp companies) to cause deforestation," he said.

According to the Forestry Ministry, from 1997 to 2000, the speed of deforestation in Indonesia was 2.8 million hectares per year because of massive forest fires occurring mostly in 1997-1998.

A previous study conducted by FWI showed that from 1985 to 1997, Indonesia lost 21.6 million hectares of forest, with the speed of deforestation at 1.8 million hectares per year. (aaa)