

Papuans accuse Greenpeace of scaring off investors

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Indigenous communities from Airu Hulu village in Jayapura regency, Papua, have accused Greenpeace of “interfering” with the management of customary forests in the region and scaring off investor.

Airu youth figure Soleman Waibara said the locals had been facing difficulties in developing their forestry and farming business potential.

“We need schools, roads, electricity and proper housing. The government has been working here, but our lives have yet to change. We need investors to build our community,” Soleman told The Jakarta Post.

He said Airu villagers believed regulations on protected forest and conservation forest were preventing them from enjoying the benefits of infrastructure development.

“The decision to designate protected, conservation and production forest should be based on clear data and announced to locals, so we can develop the forest based on the regulations,” Soleman said.

Greenpeace Papua representative Carles Tawaru rebuffed the claim, saying the organization had never tried to deter investors from coming to Papua. He went on to say that the environmental group had been collaborating with locals in campaigning for the protection of Indonesian forests.

“For example, we participate in building indigenous community-based forest in Manggroholo-Sira, West Papua. We support community-based forest management and putting sovereignty in people’s hands,” Carles told The Jakarta Post.

Environmentalists say forests in Papua are threatened by the rapid expansion of agricultural plantations, such as for oil palm, which have been touted as a means to improve economic opportunities. (kuk/ahw)

Nethy Dharma Somba

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