

Exporters shift to Asian market amid global crisis

Local exporters are shifting focus to the vibrant Southeast Asian region market to sell their products as US, Japan and Europe were hit by the global financial crisis, an official of the Philippine Exporters Confederation (Philexport) said.

"With recession hitting three of our top markets, US, Japan and Europe, we shifted marketing promotions to fast-growing Asia, particularly India and China," Aniano G. Bagabaldo, Philexim's executive vice-president told participants of the FEDEX Junior Achievement International Trade Challenge Conference and Competition.

Bagabaldo said local exporters tapping the opportunities opened by the country's free trade agreements with China, Japan and Korea in expanding trade with neighbors.

"We are particularly focused on the Japan-Philippines Economic Cooperation Agreement (JPEPA) in starting to sell new products, particularly food that was opened in October 2008 when the treaty was ratified," he said.

Bagabaldo added that exporters also intend to open the Indian market particularly for food this year.

"We are strongly going back to Asia and the nearby regions as the main market for Philippine goods. Right now, about 70 percent of all our exports find their way to the rest of East Asia," the official of the Philexport said.

Bagabaldo said economies in neighboring Asian countries have become the Philippines major trading partner.

"This trend will further intensify in the very near future. The garments quota system in the United States and Europe has ended, closing the regime of sur-

markets for garment manufactures. Trading-wise, the Philippines is back to where it belongs, the East," Bagabaldo said.

He said over 3,000 individual enterprises and small, medium and large exporters are fighting for survival.

"The general mood is to try to keep their noses above water and avoid getting drowned by the economic storm," Bagabaldo said.

To further improve the competitiveness of the country's export industry, Bagabaldo said Philexport will be concentrating for the development of food, handicrafts, furniture and holiday decor.

Bagabaldo added that Philexports' trustees are now evaluating project proposals from industry associations to be supported by the P1-billion Export Support Fund or ESF. Of the amount, he said 70 percent will be plowed into projects of exporting groups composed mainly of SMEs.

The remaining 30 percent will be used by the big groups, particularly the electronics, BPO and IT industries for a high-profile international investment promotions campaign for new locators in those segments of the export sector.

"So far, the P1 billion facility has become the source of funds for 13 approved projects worth about P145 million," he added.

Currently, the first tranche of P200 million has been released to the Department of Trade and Industry and must be spent soonest to support the export industry.

Source: *balita-dot-ph* (The Balita Organization/Philippine News Agency)



PBGEA joined by two more giant banana exporters

The Pilipino Banana Growers Exporters Association (PBGEA) welcomed two more banana exporting companies to their group. Aztropex Inc. and Unifrutti Services Inc. is the latest addition to the banana umbrella group according to PBGEA President Stephen Antig.

The multi-billion dollar banana industry in Mindanao is experiencing an unstoppable growth since Stanfilco Philippines (top exporter of export cavendish bananas) shipped out a total of 129,400 metric tons early this year.

Despite the global economic free fall, the international demand for tropical fruits remained stable as PBGEA members' total export reached 473,301 metric tons, with tremendous growth in demand in Japan and Middle East, said Antig.

The export volume for the same period last year stood at 418,654 metric tons.

Cavendish bananas mostly grown in the Davao Region are exported to Japan, the Middle East, Korea, China, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, Russia, Brunei, Malaysia, and Egypt.

Antig said the industry is also sustained by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's repeal of a government policy limiting areas for banana plantations.

He said other present members of PBGEA include the AMS Group of Companies, Alip River Development and Export Corporation, the Anflo Group of Companies, Del Monte Fresh Produce Philippines Inc., Diamond Farms Inc., Dizon Group, Hijo Resources Corporation, La Frutera Incorporated, Lapanday Foods Corporation, Marsman-Drysdale Group of Companies, Nader & Ebrahim Sons of Hassan Philippines, Incorporated, Nove Vista Management & Development Corporation, Sarangani Agricultural Co Inc., Stanfilco, Sumifru Philippines Inc. and Tristar Group of Companies.

Source: *balita-dot-ph* (The Balita Organization)

