



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE EXPOSITIONS AND MISSIONS

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Negros Island targets a slice of US\$9 billion Arabica coffee market

Negros Island eyes a slice of the US\$9 billion global market for Arabica coffee as it joins the Philippine delegation for the first time in the upcoming 37th International Food and Beverage Exhibition or FOODEX Japan 2012 slated on 6 to 9 March at Makuhari Messe in Chiba, Japan.

Led by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) through the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), the Philippine presence in the fair affirms the country's long-term strategy to further deepen ties with Japan, historically one of the Philippines' strongest trade partners.

"Targeting Japan's emerging organic market is part of our aggressive exploration of new niche areas for our food products, even as we also aim to improve the competitiveness of our manufacturers by exposing them to international benchmarks," said Rosvi C. Gaetos, Executive Director of CITEM.

Representing Negros Island's participation is the Negros Island Sustainable Agriculture & Rural Development Foundation, Inc. (NISARD) under the leadership of Negros Occidental Governor Alfredo Maranon, Jr. NISARD's Arabica Coffee Expansion Program envisions to grow one million organic Arabica trees by 2013, in order to position the island as a major supplier of organic Arabica coffee in Asia.

The program establishes organic Arabica coffee nurseries in various assisted community organizations in Mt. Kanla-on Natural Park (MKNP) and in the Northern Negros Forest Reserve (NNFR) to protect the remaining forest cover in these areas. It also provides additional income to the coffee farmers and equips them to serve the needs of the local market and eventually export in the future.

"While Negros Island currently has more available Robusta coffee trees than Arabica, our goal is to capitalize on the internationally preferred Arabica variety and have a sustainable supply within three to four years," said Rommel T. Ledesma, General Manager of NISARD.

"FOODEX Japan is an excellent opportunity to generate buzz on our goal to becoming Asia's organic food bowl and to generate more awareness on the advantages of healthy, naturally grown food. Japan is the world's third largest importer of coffee and as a market has great potential for organic agro-based products. We look forward to building partnerships with Japanese investors to help us further these goals," he said.

Aside from organic coffee, Negros Island will highlight its other organic products including muscovado sugar, unpolished rice, herbal products, and essential oils.

"We believe we are ahead in the whole country in terms of organic farming - we have the land, the farmers, and the capacity to train the farmers and to expand what we have," said Ledesma. "The provincial government itself pushes for policies to promote organic farming as a vehicle for sustainable rural development and a means of alleviating poverty and increasing food security in the island."



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Ledesma cited organic farming as the solution to the regions' various socio-economic and environmental problems such as soil degradation, unabated deforestation, and the depletion of marine resources caused by overfishing. He said that these have all taken its toll on the small farmers who comprise the majority of Negros Island's population and who are highly dependent on agriculture as a source of livelihood.

"With organic farming, agriculture becomes sustainable because you maintain the environment by not using chemical inputs. It is tailor-made for small farmers because you don't need that much cost in inputs, and most of the economic activity is centered in the locality. Unlike conventional farming wherein your chemical fertilizers come from big companies, organic farming makes use of natural fertilizers that you usually make yourself in the farm or have a fellow farmer make for you," said Ledesma.

Founded in 2005, NISARD advocates organic farming through capability-trainings for farmers and community organizations. It also actively supports policies such as the anti-GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) policy for agriculture within Negros, and the establishment of the Negros Island Certification Services (NICERT), the first organic certification body accredited in the country in compliance with the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010.

The Philippine participation in FOODEX Japan 2012 is a joint project of CITEM and the Department of Agriculture-Agribusiness Marketing Assistance Service (DA-AMAS). A Philippine food selling mission, to be held in Osaka on 1 to 3 March, is also being organized by the Bureau of Export Trade Promotion (BETP) prior to the exhibition.

The participation also promotes the 9th edition of the CITEM-led IFEX Philippines: Asia's Ethnic Food and Ingredients Show, the country's premier promotional platform for ethnic Asian food and raw materials, happening on 17 to 20 May 2013 at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.

For more information on the Philippine participation, visit www.ifexphilippines.com/foodex2012 or email communication@citem.com.ph.

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