



CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE EXPOSITIONS AND MISSIONS

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**PHILIPPINE SELLING MISSION TO MIDDLE EAST BOOST
FOOD EXPORTS BY US\$32M**

Leveraging on the viable trade opportunities in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, the Philippine Selling Mission to the Middle East generated over US\$32 Million food export sales from November 18 to December 2, 2011.

The success of the selling mission was due to the business deals established with big hotel, restaurant, catering companies, institutional buyers, and kingdom-wide distributors in Saudi Arabia; the emerging market for Philippine food and beverage in Qatar, and Kuwait's increased mass grocery retail sector.

During the trade mission, Philippine food companies were able to have one-on-one business meetings with Middle Eastern buyers and explore business opportunities with companies such as Qatar's Al Meera Consumer Goods Company and Carrefour Hypermarket, and Abu Dhabi's The Market, among others.

"We want to further establish the Philippines as a reliable source of high market value food products for the Middle Eastern market by showcasing our manufacturing and supply capabilities that can address huge market demands in the Middle East as well as in the neighboring African region and Europe. We are optimistic that through strengthened trade relations in the Middle East, we will be able to further access the Global Halal Market and explore more sustainable trade opportunities in the region," says Rosvi C. Gaetos, Executive Director of the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), an attached agency of the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry.

With over two billion consumers in the GCC states, the trade mission's goal was to further penetrate the region's market and establish the Philippines as a reliable supplier of fresh and processed food commodities. The UAE alone imports 90% of its food products overseas and is the world's third largest re-exporter with an average of US\$ 5.1 Billion worth of food products. It also has minimal trade barriers that make the UAE market worth exploring.

The Philippine Selling Mission also took advantage of the continuously increasing number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) in the Middle Eastern region and the fast growing demand for Philippine food products. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has the biggest market in the GCC Economic Bloc with over 1.5 Million OFWs, putting the demand for Filipino food in an upward trend.

Seeing the ripe opportunity to do business in the Middle East, more than 300 Filipino food companies have sought Halal certification and now offer over 10,000 Philippine products for export. Through the selling mission, these local manufacturers were given an opportunity to contribute to the global Halal market worth \$US 2.1 Trillion by engaging in the Halal Trade. The global Halal market is currently dominated by non-Muslim Halal importing countries like Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United States.

Aside from promoting and sustaining Philippine food exports to the region, CITEM and the commercial trade attaches and representatives in the Philippine Trade and Investments Offices in the Middle East are also working on boosting food product competitiveness by gathering trends and acquiring updates on trade barriers, safety issues, and import regulations and requirements in the Middle East.

The Philippine Selling Mission covered the key Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states of Qatar, Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, and the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia, and was held just in time for the post-holiday celebrations for the traditional Muslim holidays, the Ramadan, the Feast of Mt. Arafat, and Eid Al Adha.

Among the Philippine companies that offered a wide variety of food products during the selling mission were Fisherfarms, Inc. (www.fisherfarms.ph), Foodsphere, Inc. (www.cdo.com.ph), Herbanext, Inc. (www.herbanext.com), Monde Nissin Corporation (www.mondenissin.com), Nature's Tropical Delight, Philippine Grocers Food Exports, Inc. (www.philippinegrocers.com), Pixel Transglobal Foods Inc. (www.pinoysupermart.com.ph), Q-Phil Products International (www.qphil.com), Republic Biscuit Corporation (www.rebisco.com.ph), and Sagrex Food Incorporated (www.sagrexfoods.com).

Food offerings that the Philippine contingent showcased in the selling mission were fresh tropical fruits such as mangoes, pineapples (Queen variety), and Cavendish bananas, dried/dehydrated fruits, mixed nuts, and tropical fruit juices and purees.

Furthermore, the selling mission also offered high-value seafood products ranging from fresh frozen and value-added Yellowfin Tuna, Milkfish, Round Scad, Shrimp-based and Fish-based value-added seafood products, canned seafood, and fish meal.

Manufacturer-exhibitors participated in the selling mission through the assistance of CITEM, an attached agency of the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Agriculture-Agribusiness Marketing Assistance Service (DA-AMAS), the Philippine Embassies, Philippine Consulates, and Foreign Trade Service Corps (FTSC) in the Middle East.

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