

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 4214



Introduced by REP. CESAR V. SARMIENTO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Abaca grows innately in Philippine soil. Known worldwide as "Manila Hemp", abaca is superior over all fibers because of its great strength and its resistance to water. Thus, it is known to be the world's strongest natural fiber. The Philippines is likewise thus known to be the "Abaca Capital of the World" as it supplies eighty percent (80%) of the world's total fiber requirement. If the Philippines is the Abaca Capital of the World, then the province of Catanduanes is the Abaca Capital of the Philippines producing by far the largest amount of abaca with 30% of the national output as reported by the Catanduanes Tribune.

Unbeknownst to many, the abaca fiber is one of the longstanding export commodities of the Philippines. The abaca fiber was already a significant industry most especially in the Bicol region even before the Spaniards came to the Philippines. It is used in tea bags, meat and sausage casings, cigarette papers and filters among others. Throughout the years, abaca has been used in non-traditional uses ranging from being a fiber composite of automobiles manufactured by Mercedes Benz and BMW. Recently, designers have started using abaca for gowns, garments, shoes, furniture, lamps and special paper. Abaca is also used as a component of various cosmetic products and medicine.

The versatility of abaca, and that the demand for it in the world market has increased over the years. However, the abaca industry is currently in crisis. The prevalence of abaca pests and disease has been plaguing the abaca plants.

The establishment of an Abaca Biotechnology Laboratory will address the issue of disease eradication in this industry and advance the further development of abaca by increasing its quality and productivity. Through state of the art facilities, experts will be able to control abaca pests and diseases through a sustained rehabilitation and disease eradication program among others. Hence, the passage of this bill is highly sought.


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**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ABACA
BIOTECHNOLOGY LABORATORY
AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

Section 1. The State recognizes the vital importance of the abaca industry to the integrated development of the national economy, particularly to the holistic development of the agricultural sector. It shall be the policy of the State to develop the abaca industry to enhance to the fullest its productive capability. Toward this end, the State shall promote and support a strategic research and training development program in order to make a sustainable abaca industry.

Section 2. Pursuant to the above policy, there shall be established an Abaca Biotechnology Laboratory (Laboratory), under the supervision of the Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (FIDA), to be located inside the Bureau of Animal Industry Compound, Visayas Avenue, Quezon City.

There shall likewise be established a Catanduanes Abaca Biotechnology Laboratory, under the supervision of the FIDA, to be located in Catanduanes.

These laboratories shall provide diagnostic services, conduct research on improving abaca crops, and perform other duties as may be necessary to improve the fiber industry.

Section 3. The Laboratory shall be established in compliance with the guidelines set by the National Bio-safety Commission of the Philippines (NBCP) for the construction of biotechnology buildings.

Section 4. The Department of Agriculture through FIDA in coordination with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) shall issue such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the purpose of this Act.

Section 5. The amount of Sixty Million Pesos (P60,000,000.00) needed to carry out the provision of this Act shall be charged to the appropriations for the Department of Agriculture. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for the operation and maintenance of the laboratory shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations Act.

Section 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.