



‘Support Cordillera’s organic heirloom rice’



By SAMMY JULIAN *Manila News Bureau Chief*

MANILA - Filipinos in the United States have been urged to patronize the organic heirloom rice that the Cordillera region is exporting, and help preserve the world-famous Banaue Rice Terraces as a world heritage site.

Some 15 metric tons of organic heirloom rice from the Cordilleras worth close to P870,000 were recently exported to the US.

The rice shipment was made up of 10 tons of *mina-angan* variety from Banaue and *hungduan* from Ifugao, and five tons of *ulikan* from Pasil and Lubuagan in Kalinga,

The Department of Agriculture (DA) described the latest shipment of heirloom rice as “a milestone in the government’s effort to expand markets for premium varieties and promote the rich cultural heritage attached to it.”

Also, this year’s export shipment to the US aims to preserve heirloom rice and the culture of community rice production that surrounds it.

As part of its efforts to further assist upland farmers, the DA has launched a campaign to preserve farming practices in northern Philippines and expand overseas markets for indigenous rice varieties.

The campaign includes a P20-million grant that the Ifugao provincial government can tap to rebuild damaged portions of the Batad Rice Terraces as well as DNA fingerprinting by the Philippine Rice Research Institute to protect local heirloom rice varieties, notably Cordillera’s frequently exported varieties, from adverse claims.

“We call on our *kababayan* to help preserve the Philippine Rice Terraces by buying Cordillera heirloom rice that is available here in the US,” Philippine Ambassador to the US Jose L. Cuisia Jr. said in a statement.

“By supporting our own premium rice varieties, we are helping our own upland farmers derive viable income from knowledge and practices obtained from their ancestors while helping create a landscape of beauty,” he added.

The latest shipment of heirloom rice is part of the 27.6 metric tons that the Philippines will export to the US this year. It was sourced from 272 farmers from the three mountain provinces.

The remaining volume is undergoing organic fumigation at the Philippine Rice Research Institute in Nueva Ecija to comply with US sanitary and phytosanitary requirements.

Since 2005, the Philippines has exported 97 tons of heirloom varieties - such as Mt. Province's Mountain Violet variety, Kalinga's *unoy*, *jekot* and *ulikan* red grains and the Ifugao's *tinawon*, fancy rice and *diket*- valued at P1.3 million.

Aside from the US, other export destinations this year are the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Hong Kong, Germany, Macau, Canada and the Netherlands.

Additional shipments before the end of the year are projected for Russia, Italy and the Middle East. /PN

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