

MESSAGE

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Forum on the Productivity and Supply of *Jatropha* in the Philippines: Potentials and Challenges

Traders' Hotel, Manila - August 27, 2008

My apologies for not being physically present today in this forum due to other commitments which I have to prioritize....but at the same time I would like to extend my appreciation to the organizers, especially Dean Victor Cruz of the College of Forestry, UPLB and Balik-Scientist Guillermo Mendoza of the University of Illinois, for inviting us to provide you some insights on the current initiatives undertaken by the National Biofuels Board (NBB).

My appointment as Vice-Chair of the National Biofuels Board (NBB) is a new challenge which I have to face.... to get things done and act as an agent in the implementation of the provisions of the Biofuels Act (R.A. 9367). The NBB is mandated to monitor the implementation of the National Biofuels Program (NBP) as well as to review and recommend to DOE the adjustment in the minimum mandated biofuel blends subject to the availability of locally-sourced biofuels. Take note that the minimum blend of 5% for bioethanol and 2 % for biodiesel , according to the law, may be decreased only within the first four (4) years from the effectivity of the law or until February 5, 2011.

We hope to put in place the National Biofuels Program before the year ends and right now, the members of the Technical Working Group (TWG) of the NBB-member agencies and departments including other concerned government entities are working "double-time" in order to finalize the NBP. The NBP will serve as framework and guide in the attainment of the objectives set forth by the Biofuels Act. Without a clear program, everything would be in disarray and we don't want this to happen since we want to attain the objectives of the law, i.e., a) reduce dependence on imported fuels by utilizing and developing indigenous renewable and sustainably-sourced clean energy sources, b) mitigate toxic and greenhouse gas emissions, c) increase rural employment and income, and d) ensure the availability of alternative and renewable clean energy without detriment to the natural ecosystem, biodiversity and food reserves of the country.

In order to increase rural employment and income and to empower the small farmers and rural communities, the NBP will also focus on "village-based, own-

use “ type of operations. The program should not be only for the “big players” who may end up displacing local stakeholders. I hope that village-based technologies will be also part of your research agenda.

Through the concerted efforts of the office of Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri, the NBB-member agencies and departments and other concerned government entities such as the DAR, DENR and NCIP, we are currently formulating the omnibus guidelines governing biofuel feedstocks production, biofuels and biofuel blends production, distribution and sale to facilitate investments in the biofuels industry which will be presented for approval by the NBB in its 3rd quarter meeting. The proposed guidelines will serve as “bible” of biofuel investors as well as a “guide” for government regulatory entities to avoid overlapping of functions and requirements. Please be aware that we are not regulating to make things difficult but to put things in order and make it easier for both biofuel feedstock producers and biofuel producers and distributors.

I commend the initiators of today’s undertaking which is very supportive of the goals of the biofuels law. Jatropha is a very promising feedstock for biodiesel and I, and many others, have been doing research and validation work on jatropha production. During our discussions with the biofuels TWG, we have identified certain limitations on jatropha which you as a group should tackle as one of the challenges and priorities in the skeletal research agenda for jatropha.

I suggest that you coordinate and work closely with the DOE which is mandated to establish the technical fuel quality standards for biofuels, the PCIERD, DOST which is mandated to develop a network of academic and research institutions for the sustainable improvement in biofuel production and development technology and the DA and its attached agencies (SRA and PCA) which is mandated to identify and develop viable and quality feedstock for biofuels. In the omnibus guidelines we have drafted, the DA is given the authority as the primary regulatory agency for jatropha and other biofuel feedstocks.

In behalf of the National Biofuels Board, my deepest gratitude for making us a part of your undertaking and we hope that you will keep us posted of further developments on your R & D Agenda for Jatropha production and processing systems.

Thank you.