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**EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Second Regular Session**

RECEIVED 

SENATE
S. B. No. 1978

INTRODUCED BY SENATOR CYNTHIA A. VILLAR

**AN ACT DECLARING THE PROVINCE OF CATANDUANES AS THE ABACA CAPITAL OF
THE PHILIPPINES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 1, Article XII of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines provides that the State shall promote industrialization and full employment based on sound agricultural development and agrarian reform, through industries that make full and efficient use of human and natural resources, and which are competitive in both domestic and foreign markets. Pursuant to such pronouncement, the State recognizes that one of the means by which socio-economic advancement can be attained is through agricultural development.

The Philippines is the top abaca producer in the world, producing at least 87.17% of global output, with exports being made to countries such as Germany, UK, France, Japan, and US. Reportedly, the local fiber harvested in the province of Catanduanes is even higher than the production of Ecuador, the second- biggest abaca producer in the world after the Philippines.

According to the Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PhilFIDA), the Philippines has produced a total of 496,069.10 bales (1 bale = 125 kilograms) of abaca in 2016. One bale is equivalent to 125 kilograms. Statistics from the Department of Agriculture (DA) show that from 2009 to 2013, the Bicol Region is the top producer of abaca fiber having produced 22,987 metric tons which comprise 39% of the national produce. The region contributes about 40 percent of the roughly \$130.3 million annual abaca exports to major global markets.

Bicol Region was still the top abaca fiber producer with 8.71 thousand metric tons or 43.7 percent of the total production from July to September 2020. Eastern Visayas and Davao Region came next with 16.5 percent and 13.4 percent shares, respectively. Abaca has been traditionally turned into twine, cordage, textiles, and handicrafts. Its more modern applications now include manufacturing various items such as automotive parts, paper and currency notes, ropes, textile and many fashion and lifestyle products and now handmade face masks. Aside from its economic contributions, fiber

production from abaca also has great environmental benefits. The plant, which is a species of banana native to the Philippines, is considered to be zero-waste.

In this regard this bill seeks to establish Catanduanes Province as the "Abaca Capital of the Philippines" considering that it is the top abaca producer of the country and the world, and it contributes 90% abaca production in the Bicol Region. The bill seeks to promote and support the abaca industry in the province, while safeguarding it from destruction caused by plant diseases and calamitous events. Likewise, it seeks for the province to garner additional government support and budget allocation not only to maintain, promote, and protect the country's abaca industry, but most importantly, to ensure its sustainability for the benefit of the farmers and other stakeholders.

Abaca is the main source of livelihood of most of the population living in Catanduanes which shall directly benefit about 12,679 farmers who are tending 33,097 hectares of land in 11 abaca-producing municipalities of the province. Also known as "Manila Hemp," abaca is superior over all fibers because of its great strength and resistance to water.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



CYNTHIA A. VILLAR



Office of the Secretary

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1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Republic of the Philippines in*
2 *Congress assembled:*

3
4 **SECTION. 1. Declaration of Policy.** Section 1, Article XII of the 1987 Constitution provides that the Senate
5 shall promote the industrialization and full employment based on sound agricultural development and
6 agrarian reform, through initiatives that make full and efficient use human and natural resources, which
7 are competitive in both domestic and foreign markets.

8
9 Towards this end, the State hereby recognized the importance of abaca industry and development as a
10 driver of rural development not only because of its singular potential as a raw material that can increase
11 the country's export earnings tremendously, and put the name of the country in the map in the world
12 for producing the biggest volume of abaca fiber, but for having provided livelihood to many small
13 farmers in the countryside.

14
15 **Sec. 2. Abaca Capital of the Philippines.** In recognition of the status of the country's biggest producer of
16 abaca and making the Philippines world renowned as "Manila Hemp" in the fiber industry, and in
17 support to agricultural development of the province, it is hereby declared that Catanduanes be the
18 Abaca Capital of the Philippines.

19
20 **SEC. 3. Effectively Clause.** Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official
21 Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

22
23 *Approved,*