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rp extends aquaculture tech assistance to german university 18jan08

The Philippines has extended a technical aid to the University of Hohenheim in Germany with its expertise on aquaculture prawn raising through the South East Asian Fisheries Development Council-Aquaculture Department (Seafdec-AQD).

Seafdec-AQD has sent its representative, Dr. Ma. Lourdes Aralar, to the University of Hohenheim in Struttgart (UHS) in the last quarter of 2007. Dr. Aralar gave a lecture to master of science and doctorate students at UHS on aquaculture of freshwater prawns particularly on "bioenergetics."

A biochemistry field aligned with the law of thermodynamics, bioenergetics has been a popular area of biological research specially on cellular respiration and other metabolic processes. This has become important with its effect of maximizing production.

Prior to this two-month project, the UHS has already been sending its students to the Seafdec-AQD headquarters in Iloilo specially those who were working on aquaculture thesis.

UHS has its Hohenheim Institute for the Tropics and Subtropics.

While having given lectures to UHS students, Aralar, project leader of Seafdec-AQD Freshwater Station in Bingangonan, Rizal and apparently a former UHS scholar, also took advantage of taking cues from the way German agencies conducted their culture operations.

"Germany and other European countries put a high premium on organic products, including those from organic aquaculture operations," she said in a statement. "There are research activities focusing on organic aquaculture. Another research interest is on the utilization of detoxified Jatropha meal for animal feed, including aquaculture feeds."

While hosting SeafdecAQD, a regional research group among South Asian countries, the Philippines itself is in a struggle to raise its prawn export. The shipment of seafood products should be one of its strengths with the country's archipelagic nature.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has been targeting to raise its prawn shipment to close to 0 million as of 2007. This it believed is possible owing to expansion in Europe and the US due to the country's use of disease-free Pacific vannamei shrimp.

For some 10 years, the Philippines' prawn export growth has stagnated due to the ban of the propagation of the Pacific vannamei white shrimp. Prawn raisers were once only allowed to grow the specie monodon.

The Philippines exported a total of 18,101 metric tons (MT) of prawn in 2005 valued at .509 million. This consists of fresh/chilled/frozen prawn, 17,830 MT, \$ 91.597 million; prepared and preserved, 28 MT, \$ 54,000; and other processed prawn, 243 MT, \$ 1.858 million.

Destination of this export were Japan, 9,447 MT, \$ 48.253 million. Other export destinations were Korea, 3,683 MT, \$ 17.533 million; US, 2,691 MT, \$ 14.031 million; Guam, 438 MT, \$ 2.743 million; Hongkong, 239 MT, \$ 1.276 million.

Due to government's technical assistance on aquaculture production, fisheries where prawn is part has emerged to be a major growth driver in the agricultural sector contributing as of 2005 to 2.1 percent at current price (P116 billion) to the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

Prawn is second highest export-earning sector in fisheries even as prawn export increased by 18 percent in volume in 2005.

Its top contribution is also in employment with 1.614 million fishing operations nationwide of which municipal fishers account for more than one million and commercial and aquaculture raisers consist of about 240,000 operators.

The Philippines is ranked eight among the world's top fish-producing countries (as of 2003) and is second largest aquatic plant (seaweed) producer at 989,000 MT.

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