

Learn how to brew a cup and more in coffee festival

A relatively new festival in a month of festivals, Coffee Break 2008 — a celebration of Philippine Coffee — runs until the end of the month, care of the private sector-led Philippine Coffee Board (PCB) and Kape Isla, a café established as a retail outlet for 100% Philippine coffee, at Serendra in Fort Bonifacio.

For Coffee Break, the PCB is holding an ongoing series of seminars and training sessions on coffee, including such topics as dessert coffee, specialty coffee at home, and coffee cupping, as well as organic coffee farming (Oct. 25), barista 101 with tips on how to "pull" an espresso and make espresso-based beverages (Oct. 28), coffee 101 covering the history of coffee hosted by Philippine Coffee Board co-chair Pacita U. Juan (Oct. 28), and how to put up a coffee shop (Oct. 30).

INCREASED CONSUMPTION

Rather than interest in coffee abating, consumption has been increasing annually by 20% when it comes to specialty and premium coffee, while ready-to-drink coffee goes up by 5% each year.

Ms. Juan told reporters that at least 65,000 metric tons (MT) of coffee are consumed yearly, double the production of 30,000 MT supplied by the local coffee industry of 22 coffee-growing provinces. The country therefore imports the remaining 35,000 MT, mainly from Vietnam and Indonesia, costing \$80 million at today's prices — coffee is at its highest trading price at P100 per kilo.

The top priority for the national coffee board is to increase coffee productivity to meet the internal demand and make coffee more accessible. In line with this objective, another activity for Coffee Break was the first National Coffee Summit held at AIM Conference Center in Makati on Oct. 21. It gathered coffee stakeholders (including the Lipa City Coffee Board, the Iloilo Coffee Growers Association and the Mindanao Coffee Board) to brainstorm a master plan on how much additional coffee hectares are needed to arrive at self-sufficiency.

The final draft of this action plan will be submitted to the Department of Agriculture.

"Right now, more than 50% of our supply is imported. So we would like to replace the imported coffee with domestically produced coffee. Initially we've come up with a plan to achieve self-sufficiency by 2015 starting from 2009. Our target is 75,000 metric tons domestic production by 2015. The mix would be 80% Robusta, 10% Arabica and 5% each of Liberica and Excelsa," said Glicerio Joel Y. Lumagbas, director of the Philippine Coffee Board, Inc. and head of the agricultural services department of Nestlé Philippines, Inc. in an interview with *BusinessWorld*.

For now, total Philippine coffee production is pegged at 60%-70% supplied by Mindanao (the bulk being from Sultan Kudarat), and give or take 10% coming from Visayas and 20% from Luzon. By 2015, the PCB hopes that 60,000 MT of coffee will be produced in Mindanao, with 15,000 MT coming from Visayas and Luzon.

"The demand for coffee is increasing a minimum of 2% a month... We're focusing on the area of increased productivity, because we're trying to minimize our dependence on imported coffee... But we'd also like to improve the quality of the coffee that is produced here, that's why we are looking at post-harvest facilities and innovative ways of processing coffee," said Mr. Lumagbas, mentioning such approved methods as using organic fertilizer and wet process harvest as added value.

BRANDING PINOY COFFEE

Kape Isla is actually the brand that represents the Mindanao Coffee Board and is now being used as the official seal of Philippine coffee which anyone can use so long as they're using coffee beans grown and processed locally. The Kape Isla model is being farmed out but eventually each coffee-making region will have its own regional brand.

The Philippine Coffee Board was established in May 2002 as the National Coffee Development Board. The goal of the Coffee Board is to develop and promote the Philippine coffee industry through technical assistance and credit programs for coffee farms, and through marketing and promotions of coffee for domestic and export markets.

"We need to achieve self-sufficiency through sustainable farming, to ensure that you and your children and grandchildren will have coffee when they do pick up the habit," Ms. Juan told reporters in a separate interview.

For inquiries regarding the coffee seminars, which have a registration fee of P900 each, call 468-0397 or e-mail philcoffeeboard@gmail.com. — **Johanna D. Poblete**

HARVESTING COFFEE
(left); freshly picked coffee beans (above)

