

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 666



Introduced by **REP. CESAR V. SARMIENTO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Abaca grows innately in Philippine soil. Known worldwide as Manila Hemp, abaca is superior over all fibers because of its great strength and its resistance to water. Thus, it is dubbed as the world's strongest natural fiber. The Philippines is the Abaca Capital of the World supplying 86% of the world's total fiber requirement. Such market dominance has made abaca one of the country's top dollar earners.

Even before the Spaniards came, the abaca industry already exists. The abaca fiber was woven as fabric and this was a significant industry in the Bicol region then. In 1920, an American Lieutenant brought samples of this indigenous material to the United States and since then the US Navy used abaca for cordage and said agency became the biggest abaca importer.

The abaca fiber is one of the longstanding export commodities of the Philippines. It is the world's premier material for cordages. It is also used for tea bags, meat and sausage casings and cigarette papers and filters. Over the years, it has been discovered to be useful in non-traditional uses such as the fiber composite of the automobile industry like Mercedes Benz and BMW. The demand for this fiber is also high in handicraft industries such as papers, furniture, lamps and even currency notes. Notable designers have started using abaca for making gowns, garments and shoes. It is also being manufactured as cosmetics and medicines.

Indeed, abaca has proven its versatility and the demand for it in the world market has increased over the years. However, it is undeniable that the abaca industry is in crisis. The prevalence of abaca pests and diseases has been plaguing the abaca plants resulting in the decrease of harvest for abaca farmers and the decline in the quality of abaca fibers produced.

The establishment of an Abaca Biotechnology Laboratory will address the issue of disease eradication in this industry. Through its state of the art facilities, experts can now control abaca pests and diseases through a sustained rehabilitation and disease eradication program. They can also increase the production of high quality fiber through the development of new abaca cultures which are high-yielding and resistant to viral diseases. Hence, the passage of this bill is highly sought.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cesar V. Sarmiento', with a stylized flourish at the end.

CESAR V. SARMIENTO

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**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ABACA
BIOTECHNOLOGY LABORATORY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR**

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

SECTION 1. The State recognizes the vital importance of the abaca industry to the integrated development of the national economy, particularly to the holistic development of the agricultural sector. It shall be the policy of the State to develop the abaca industry to enhance to the fullest its productive capability.

Toward this end, the State shall promote and support a strategic research and training development program in order to make a sustainable abaca industry.

SECTION 2. Pursuant to the above policy, there shall be established an Abaca Biotechnology Laboratory (Laboratory) under the supervision of the Fiber Industry Development Authority (FIDA) to be located inside the Bureau of Animal Industry Compound, Visayas Avenue, Quezon City.

SECTION 3. The Laboratory shall be established in compliance with the guidelines set by the National Bio-safety Commission of the Philippines (NBCP) for the construction of biotechnology buildings.

SECTION 4. The Department of Agriculture through FIDA in coordination with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) shall issue such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the purpose of this Act.

SECTION 5. The amount of sixty million pesos (P60,000,000.00) needed to carry out the provision of this Act shall be charged to the appropriations for the Department of Agriculture. Thereafter, such sum as may be necessary for the operation and maintenance of the laboratory shall be included in the Annual General Appropriations Act.

SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,