

Philippine growers are warning their banana plantations are at risk of being "wiped out" by the Sigatoka disease sparking an undersupply of the fruit abroad, website *Businessmirror.com.ph* reported. 

The Philipino Banana Growers and Exporters' Association (PBGEA) has warned the Department of Agriculture (DA) they might now be unable to supply interested markets which include Belgium, the Netherlands and Kurdistan.

PBGEA member Madel Dizon-Marfori, said the situation could affect the country's efforts to find potential buyers of Philippine bananas.

"By the time big volumes of bananas are needed to supply these new international market prospects, there may not be enough bananas to meet the demand," he was quoted as saying.

The PBGEA and the Mindanao Banana Farmers and Exporters' Association (MBFEA) formally sought additional support from the DA to control the Sigatoka disease as well as provide additional inputs like fertilizers.

But the PBGEA said it still had an oversupply of bananas, not because of excessive production, but due to the strict quarantine measures imposed by Beijing on all bananas entering Chinese ports.

This is why the Philippine government recently sent out a contingent to conduct an outbound trade mission, to look for potential buyers of Philippine bananas in Europe and the Middle East.

The delegation went to Dubai, Iraq, Rome and Brussels, which is the second biggest global buyer and major global seller of bananas.

Commercial attaché Jojie Dinsay, said the Philipines must keep its promises to supply new import destinations.

"Whether the China market crisis will be resolved or not, in the future, commitments made with the new international banana buyers must be honored, to maintain our good standing in the international market."

A U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study said Sigatoka, which is a fungal disease that destroys banana leaves, can reduce crop yields by 33-76%.

According to the Australian Department of Fisheries and Forestry the disease is "very

severe" in Cavendish bananas, Lady Fingers and several other dessert bananas.

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