

# Food Production Does Not Mean Forest Destruction

(RADIO TALK)

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Food production has been and is being urged by the Government to promote self-sufficiency. Its ultimate objective, however, is to inculcate the habit of industry and the proper employment of our valuable time to fruitful and honest endeavors. Only in this way can we attain contentment and happiness.

In our effort and enthusiasm towards self-sufficiency, let us not forget that food production does not mean forest destruction. It means making all untilled and non-forested agricultural lands productive, leaving our dwindling forest to play its part in other phases of our economic and social welfare.

Through releases of public lands for agricultural purposes by the Bureau of Forestry, lands for permanent settlement under the Public Land Laws abound. Of the 29.7 million hectares of land area of the Philippines, approximately 10 million have been made available for agriculture or settlement. Of these, only about 5 million hectares are under cultivation. It is evident, therefore, that out of the releases from the public domain, there still remain several million hectares awaiting industrious hands. There appears no need of resorting to the primitive and destructive system of agriculture called "kaiñgin" in our forest—an evil practice, which is largely responsible in the conversion of our once extensive and valuable forest into open and denuded mountain ranges that now exist in many provinces. It is a question of proper and equitable land distribution and the determined effort and desire of the landless to

move, settle and work on released areas in less congested regions or provinces.

The remaining 19.7 million hectares under the jurisdiction and administration of the Bureau of Forestry consist of (1) fresh and mangrove swamps, a considerable portion of which is devoted to the fishpond industry; (2) open land, part of which is being used to bolster the livestock industry; and (3) commercial and non-commercial forest devoted for watershed protection, recreation and lumber production. The greater portion of these needs to be protected, conserved and managed for posterity. Our forest is a patrimony endowed by God Almighty to our country not to be squandered, but to be handed to the generations to come.

To perpetuate this endowment lest we may be accused by posterity for our prodigality, let us ponder on and take cognizance of the many direct and indirect benefits we derive from our forest. In some form or other, and from the cradle to the grave, wood and other forest products are found indispensable in our major and minor necessities. Forest is responsible for our present wholesome climate, constant and controlled flow of our streams for domestic and irrigation purposes, and controlled erosion and silting of our agricultural lands and rivers. Our forest supports the lumber and allied industries in which approximately 84 million pesos are invested. It gives an unusual revenue to the Government in the form of forest, reforestation and other charges amounting to 5.6 million pesos. These

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dal Forest Nursery, Baguio City and Bureau of Forestry Nursery in College, Laguna. Of greater interest to the public is the care of the plants after they are removed from the nurseries.

The subsequent care and manner of protection depends on a great deal on the size and conditions of the plants when purchased. Usually, the plants are sold out either in tin cans or in earthen pots and in some instances taller plants are given out in balled condition, that is, the plants are lifted with a ball of earth around the roots of the plants. The former is preferred by most buyers, however, because of the facility of handling and transportation. In this instance, the care of the potted plants is very much along the protection and care given in the nurseries, until they are big enough for setting in permanent places in the lawns or sidewalks. The plants are reset in bigger containers as gasoline, petroleum cans or water buckets. Plants as tall as two to 2½ meters can stay in such containers. At such heights they can easily be moved in the lawn or in the house as Christmas trees or for decorations along the sidewalks of the yard.

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industries give employment to about 100,000 of our people. With their families and dependents no less than half a million are exclusively dependent on the forest for their livelihood. Forest destruction will thus endanger our welfare and accelerate degeneration and misery of the people and of the nation. It will entail tremendous expenses in reforestation, which our government is not very well in the position to meet.

Knowing the many benefits derived from our forest and the evil effects of forest destruction, it may be reiterated that food production does not mean forest dissipation. The Government urges us to plow, plant and produce in agricultural lands. It does not autho-

In the case of balled plants they are either replanted in bigger pots as the potted plants are set permanently in places where desired. In planting, a hole sufficient to contain the ball of earth should be made. An additional top soil is added all around and below the root system to provide more plant nutrients necessary in the process of acclimatization and further growth. These plants are shaded for about a week to prevent sudden exposure to sunlight in the meantime that the plant is reconditioning itself to the new site. Observations in the nurseries and plantation show that the plant is fairly intolerant, that is, they do not thrive well under shade, so that once the plants are fully recovered, they must be set or placed in places where they receive full sunlight.

Care must be taken not to cut or injure the terminal bud as the plant may not be capable of producing another shoot. This plant do not reproduce by leaf cutting. Marcotting to reduce the size of grown-up seedlings is possible but results of experiments in the nursery are not fairly satisfactory.

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size nor sanction the destruction of our forest. To sacrifice our forest by illegal kaingin making is tantamount to gambling our future, or killing the goose that lays the golden egg. Let us endeavor, therefore, not to allow the sad history of forest destruction in other nations repeat itself in ours, lest we may repent when the forest is gone with all its benefits. It is a constitutional mandate to all public officials and civic duty of every conscientious citizen to help conserve our forest. Remember, as the late President Theodore Roosevelt had once wisely said, that "**A PEOPLE WITHOUT CHILDREN WILL FACE A HOPELESS FUTURE: A NATION WITHOUT TREES IS ALMOST AS HOPELESS.**" Let us, therefore, conserve and save our forest and our forest will surely save us and our nation.