

# Philippine Forest Reserves: The Wasted Treasure

by

VALERIO B. MENDOZA  
San Nicolas Reforestation Project

The Philippines is one of the few countries of the world which is endowed with vast natural resources. Within its 29,741,790 hectares of land area, the most vital source of wealth is its forest resources. Of the total land area, 46.70 per cent or 13,887,660 hectares comprises our forest resources. Furthermore, 31.37 per cent\* or 9,329,280 hectares are classified as commercial forest, non-commercial forest represents 12.92 per cent or 3,842,120 hectares, cultivated forest is 34.88 per cent or 10,373,540 hectares, cogon and open land is 18.42 per cent or 5,480,090 hectares, and swamp forest is 2.41 per cent or 716,260 hectares. The trees on the forest when properly managed yield the greatest profits continually in terms of monetary value not considering protective, aesthetics, and other values.

## VOLUME OF STANDING TIMBER

Our standing timber is classified into three distinct classifications which are as follows:

1. Commercial forest which can provide us approximately 979,703,280 cubic meters of timber is further classified into two sub-classifications:

a. accessible forest with 707,482,680 cubic meters of timber or 65.40 per cent of the total volume.

b. inaccessible forest with 272,220,600 cubic meters of timber or 25.17 per cent of the total standing timber.

2. Non-commercial forest, accessible with a total volume of 95,021,913 cubic meters of timber or 8.78 per cent of the total volume.

\*Bureau of Forestry 1957 figures.

3. Mangrove forest with 7,052,720 cubic meters of timber or 0.65 per cent of the total volume.

## MINOR FOREST PRODUCTS

The above figures are pertinent only to timber which is considered a primary or major forest product. Within the forest there are other products which contribute a huge amount to the bulk of our forest products exports but are being taken for granted. Rattan for example is a minor forest product. These minor forest products need the same amount of protection as timber. Rattan which is next to timber ranks among all the minor forest products illegally gathered need the most protection.

## APPROXIMATE VOLUMES

- |                                    |                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1) Firewood (upland species) ----- | 11,259,000 cu.m. |
| 2) Firewood (mangrove species) ..  | 2,831,000 "      |
| 3) Rattan canes (round form) ...   | 777,111,000 "    |
| 4) Rattan split -----              | 114,250,000 kg.  |
| 5) Manila copal -----              | 24,577,000 "     |
| 6) Manila elimy -----              | 327,000 "        |

## EMPLOYMENT IN FOREST INDUSTRIES

As of 1959, there are 304 sawmills in operation. Forest industries have absorbed ₱118,000,000 in capital investments and ₱63,000,000 invested for sawmills alone. The private lumber industries have given a livelihood to 100,000 heads of families and granting there are six dependents of each head of families we have 600,000 people

dependent on the forest industry. We add to this government forestry employees, sash manufacturers, wooden shoes manufacturers, the furniture makers and their dependents.

#### LUMBER PRODUCTION AND OTHER EXPORTS

In the year 1962,\* as shown in the table the Philippines exported the following forest products both raw and finished products.

<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Total production</u>		<u>Total exports</u>		<u>Value of exports in pesos</u>
1. Lumber	406,093,045	bd. ft.	39,196,411	bd. ft.	₱ 15,718,571.20
2. Logs	2,871,120.50	bd. ft.	1,706,792.22	bd. ft.	325,525,561.99
3. Veneer	398,927,987	sq. ft.	251,800,367	sq. ft.	8,475,943.55
4. Plywood	316,734,629	sq. ft.	144,714,819	sq. ft.	₱ 16,140,362.00
					₱365,860,438.74

#### PRESENT MARKETS FOR OUR FOREST PRODUCTS

##### LUMBER MARKETS

The United States having a strong political ties with the Philippines is the number one market for our lumber products as well as veneer and plywood products followed by Africa, Hongkong, Okinawa, Hawaii, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, England, Vancouver and West Germany. The question is: how long could we maintain our role as lumber and log vendor to these countries? With the circumstances prevailing in our forests it is very doubtful that any sensible Filipino can answer the question definitely unless he takes a very close look at present reports of the rapid and ruthless destruction of our forests.

##### LOG MARKETS

Japan ranks first among the countries which buy logs from our country. It absorbed around 88 per cent of our total log exports in 1962. Next to it is Korea, United States, Formosa, England and Okinawa.

Up to this time Japan is still buying huge quantities of our forest products both raw materials and finished products. Is it not strange that Japan with its vast forests and merchantable timber stands should import logs and lumber from the Philippines. Is Japan after the patronage of our products or is she after the conservation of her own forest resources?

##### PLYWOOD AND ALLIED INDUSTRIES

These wood using industries like veneer, plywood, wallboard, and particle board deserve the immediate attention of our government. Upon these industries lies the future of our people, our forests, our security and our country's sound economy. With these industries properly developed and supervised there are innumerable advantages, if not blessings, that could be derived by the nation. Among these are:

First— If the veneer, plywood, particle board, and pulping industry are fully developed the percentage of wood utilization could be increased from our present wasteful standard which is 45 per cent to a much higher percentage because sawdust wood-barks, trimmings, and edgings could be utilized profitably.

Second— With the increased percentage of wood utilization by volume, the amount of timber cut would also be reduced proportionately, thus minimizing forest denudation.

Third— With the increased percentage of wood utilization, proportionately, there is an increased demand for labor because there would be more industrial plants to accommodate another line of production.

In short, the Philippines should acquire the necessary equipment for the manufacture of these major products such as veneer, plywood, wallboard, particleboard, and simi-

*(Continued on page 40)*

PHILIPPINE FOREST . . .

(Continued from page 30)

lar products and be the sole source of these materials because our log exports to Japan and other countries are being processed with the best technological process. These finished products out of our logs are sold in the same market where we sell our finished products.

Therefore, instead of selling raw materials to foreign countries these logs must be processed here at home. As a chain reaction towards the elevation of the living standard in this country, with people being contented in their life they will be more aware of their obligations to the community and the government like paying tax for example. With the increased tax collection (not necessarily tax increase) the government can pay attention to other phases of its machinery with money to finance other projects.

To cite a country which depends greatly on her forests for its existence, Finland is the number one example. Scandinavian countries produce timber for building construction next only to wood for pulp and papermaking. Canada is another example. It supplied England its wood requirement for all purposes during World War II. The Philippine government must pause and ponder on these facts because they could be easily implemented with best results if politics would not interfere.

If the government would not do something practical now, to save our remain-

ing forest stands, a time would come when the Philippines instead of exporting logs to Japan, Korea, United States, and Formosa, these countries might be the ones exporting logs to us. We would be fortunate then if with our rapid increase of population and increased demand for wood, these countries would be willing to sell us logs. Perhaps they would be willing but the price would surely have increased greatly by then. Logically speaking, these countries are trying to keep their forests intact, willing to buy logs from us while it is still cheap and plentiful. But when our trees are gone we shall perhaps be go a-begging for logs.

The government up to this time is still reluctant in formulating the policy needed in order that the vast forest resources could be utilized to the maximum economic advantage and usefulness. Furthermore, the forest can serve the country perpetually if it is properly managed. To remind everyone, especially business minded people, there is no pulp manufacturing plant here in the Philippines which uses wood locally grown solely as raw materials. We still import pulp for our paper plants yet according to the Forest Products Research Institute, there are abundant species which are commercially suited for pulp and paper-making here in the Philippines. The truth is there are billions of pesos frozen in our forest within easy reach, but the government has not done something effective to make this money more liquid.

<p><i>Compliments of</i></p> <p><b>BAYUGAN DEVELOPMENT CORP.</b></p> <p>Manticao, Misamis Oriental</p> <p>Branch Office: Rm. 606 Pacific Bldg. Rosario St., Manila Phones, 4-66-22, 4-61-51</p> <p>Cable Address: "Redeswood" Manticao</p>	<p><i>Compliments of</i></p> <p><b>Mr. &amp; Mrs. TOMAS EBON</b> <i>Timber Licensee &amp; General Contractor</i></p> <p>Pandan-Libertad</p> <p>Pandan Antique</p>
--	---