DECLARING CASSAVA WITCHES BROOM (CWB) A DANGEROUS DISEASE OF CASSAVA, PROVIDING FOR ITS CONTROL AND PLACING UNDER QUARANTINE THE PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON WHERE THE DISEASE EXISTS

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WHEREAS, Cassava Witches Broom (CWB) is now causing heavy infection in the province of Bukidnon as per the official report of Crop Protection Division (CPD) and validation by a team from National Plant Quarantine Service Division (NPQSD) of the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI);

WHEREAS, the province of Bukidnon is a major source of cassava planting materials for distribution to other provinces and where cassava production for processing is a flourishing industry;

WHEREAS, CWB, caused by Phytoplasma candidatus asteris, is a systemic and major disease of cassava resulting to high yield loss accounting to 100% if symptoms are observed during the establishment while 40-60% if symptoms appeared five (5) months after planting until harvest;

WHEREAS, the major mode of spread of CWB is through the cuttings used as planting materials;

WHEREAS, cassava is one of the most important crops in the Philippines contributing to PHP 14.8 Billion in the Gross Value Added (GBA) for the agricultural sector;

WHEREAS, to control the spread of the disease, one of the recommendations of the experts is to restrict the movement of infected plants/planting materials (cuttings) to non-infected areas;

WHEREAS, official measures should be adopted to check, control and manage the increase and spread of this dangerous disease; and

WHEREAS, BPI is tasked to implement and enforce the necessary measures to control and prevent the spread of this disease to areas where the disease is not known to occur.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, PROCESO J. ALCALA, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, pursuant to provisions of Chapter IV, Title IV, Book IV of Executive Order (EO) No. 292; Presidential Decree (PD) No. 1433, as amended; and other pertinent laws, rules and regulations and relevant international agreements to which the Republic of the Philippines is a signatory, this Special Quarantine Order is hereby promulgated.

SECTION 1. For the purpose of this Special Quarantine Order, the province of Bukidnon shall be declared under quarantine due to reports of heavy infection of CWB on cassava plants/planting materials.

SECTION 2. The movement, transfer, or carrying of cassava plants/planting materials from Bukidnon and/or from any other areas that may be hereafter declared infected to any other provinces shall be prohibited.

SECTION 3. The movement, transfer and carrying of cassava plants and planting materials by any research facility of government from any areas of Bukidnon may be allowed upon approval by the BPI Director.

SECTION 4. In coordination with the DA Regional Field Office (DA-RFO) No. XI, a number of checkpoints shall be established which shall be manned by deputized inspectors from BPI, DA-RFO, Local Government Units (LGUs), including members of the police and military.

SECTION 5. All movement, transport or carrying of commodities without a valid BPI Permit shall not be allowed. Some of the phytosanitary measures to be employed are as follows: return to origin or disposal. All expenses incurred in the conduct of any of these measures shall be borne by the owner. Non-compliance by the owner to any of these measures shall constitute a violation which shall result to outright confiscation of the commodity. This does not preclude the filing of charges as provided by Section 10.

SECTION 6. For eradication measures, the BPI-CPD and the NPQSD in coordination with the DA-RFOs, LGUs and other stakeholders shall immediately devise a system and guidelines for implementation to control and/or manage the disease in the quarantine area.

SECTION 7. The Regional Directors shall provide a notification to the BPI that will serve as the basis for addition of other areas that may be hereafter declared as CWB “hot spot” areas.

SECTION 8. Cooperating Agencies. The BPI Director may, when necessary, call upon the support and assistance of other government agencies (military, civil, national or local) in the implementation of plant quarantine regulations and phytosanitary measures provided in this Order.

SECTION 9. Role of Transportation Companies. All transportation companies operating by land, air and/or water, government and private, shall cooperate with the BPI Director and/ or the Plant Quarantine Officer in the implementation of the provisions of this Order by not accepting or allowing shipments of cassava plants/planting materials with no accompanying plant quarantine domestic clearance/permit.

SECTION 10. Penalty Clause. Pursuant to Section 42 of Chapter 5, Title IV, Book IV of EO No. 292 and Section 23 of PD No. 1433, otherwise known as the Plant Quarantine Law of 1978, any person, company of corporation who violates the provisions of this Order shall be administratively fined after proper hearing of not more than Twenty Thousand Pesos (PHP20,000). The decision of the BPI Director shall be appealable to the Secretary of Agriculture whose decision shall be final.

SECTION 11. Separability Clause. If any of the provisions of this Special Quarantine Order shall be held invalid, the remainder shall be operative.

SECTION 12. Repealing Clause. Any orders, rules and regulations inconsistent with the provisions of this Order are hereby superseded and/or revoked accordingly.

SECTION 13. Effectivity. This Order shall take effect upon its approval and after appropriate publication.

(SGD) PROCESO J. ALCALA
Secretary

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