

Daimler-Chrysler to use Philippine abaca

Demand for natural fiber, especially those bound for automotive composites, is experiencing steady demand. Daimler-Chrysler plans to utilize locally available natural fibers such as Manila hemp, abaca (not to be confused with true cannabis sativa hemp) in the Philippines to meet demand. Daimler-Chrysler uses true cannabis sativa hemp in its Canadian and European production facilities.

Automaker Daimler-Chrysler has approved the use of Philippine abaca for the exterior lining of its class A cars, which include the Plymouth and the Mercedes-Benz, Daimler-Chrysler consultant Dr. Werner Muhlbauer told the Inquirer Tuesday.

Philippine abaca meets the standards of the firm and can substitute for the non-recyclable fiberglass used to line the cars' chassis, he said. "Daimler-Chrysler has decided to incorporate Philippine abaca for its composite materials for the exterior lining of its cars. It has the same strength as fiberglass, minus the weight," Muhlbauer said. Muhlbauer said he did the scientific testing of Philippine abaca with the help of the Leyte State University. They are still studying if Philippine abaca can also be used for the cars' interiors, he said.

"Daimler-Chrysler just wants an assurance that the quality and quantity of Philippine fiber could be sustained in the next five years," he said. "We hope there would not be too much price fluctuations."



Abaca fiber was the Philippines' first top agriculture export. It is used as raw material for cordage, rope, as well as tea bags.

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