

DAVAO CITY — South Korean investors have started surveying areas for tree farms in Mindanao, a regional official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said.

Hardinado V. Patnugot, regional technical director for forestry management services, said a Korean group is expected to visit the Davao Region next year after an initial team visited the Caraga Region recently to assess the potentials of tree farming in that region.

S. Koreans eye tree plantations

“We are looking at 400,000 hectares in the Davao Region (for the project with the South Koreans),” said Mr. Patnugot, who was among the regional officials who visited South Korea last week. “We have briefed them already on investing in tree plantations.”

Other than Caraga and Davao regions, he said, the group is also looking at the rest of Mindanao.

One of the options for Korean investors is to go into joint ventures with holders of community-based forest management and integrated forest management agreements since there are about 350,000 hectares under these arrangements in the Davao Region alone.

Another option, he said, is for the South Koreans to invest in denuded forests, which require ma-

JOR reforestation investments, he added.

Among the varieties that may be planted in the farms are falcata, bagras and acacia mangium. “The Koreans may introduce (other tree) varieties but these will be subject to the approval of our government, considering that these varieties must also pass our bio-security screening,” he said.

Mr. Patnugot said the investors may put up processing plants for wood by-products if the farms prove viable. — CQF