

Hita La'mon: Hasso Independence

Maga'taotao



“Pedro Pangelinan Martinez (1892-1967), also known as “Don Pedro,” was the founder of Pedro’s, a company that at one time included an ice plant, a cold storage, a mini-supermarket, a wholesale and retail business, a construction company, an automobile agency, and two large farms that provided beef and vegetables to the island. He was one of the island’s wealthiest and most respected businessmen on Guam during the U.S. Naval period on Guam (1898-1941).”

-Guampedia



Water as a Natural Economic Resource

- Over the past 15 years, Guam has received an average of 100 inches of rain annually, which creates a potential water harvest of 63 gallons per square foot. According to a report from the Water and Environmental Research Institute of the Western Pacific, our aquifer receives 103 billion gallons of water a year, while another 195 billion gallons are either evaporated from heat, taken up by plants, or lost through river runoff. In total, our island receives up to 298-316 billion gallons of water from rainfall. Only 35% is used for local running water, while 65% is lost.
- If Guåhan were to harvest this water through water catchment systems, we could create an ecologically sustainable bottled-water industry that benefits the people of Guam. By catching and harvesting even just 1% of the annual rainfall that isn't used to recharge our aquifer, Guåhan could make \$14.6 billion! In 2015, Guam's entire economy only made \$5.7 billion. This industry could more than double that.
- Guam spent approximately \$3.3 million for imported bottled water in 2015, approximately \$5.6 million in 2017, and the number continues to rise. Imagine if the island were able to supply this water locally. There is clearly a need for this industry. [Estimates based on data provided by the Guam Bureau of Statistics and Plans: http://bsp.guam.gov/business-and-economics-statistics-program/#tabs_desc_5718_3]
- Through policies that prioritize the local production of goods like bottled water and that provide incentives to local businesses for purchasing and selling locally bottled water, an independent Guåhan would ensure that local goods are maximized and sold instead of heavily relying on imports. This would be especially effective in the case of bottled water, because it is such an abundant natural resource here.
- Guåhan would also be able to export water, which would be incredibly profitable. The fact that we have about 1.5 million international visitors a year means we have opportunities for international exposure to our bottled water.
- In 2012, the world consumed 76 billion gallons of water, which likely rose to about 103.3 billion gallons by 2017. According to a *Business Insider* article about US bottled water consumption, buying small bottles of water equates in cost to about \$7.50 per gallon. Small bottled water consumption amounts to 2/3 of total bottled water consumption. This means that the world bought over 50 billion gallons of water in small bottles for a total of \$380 billion in 2012, and this amount continues to rise. If Guåhan entered this market and sold 2 billion gallons of water in small containers at \$7.50/ gallon, it could generate \$15 billion annually for our water bottle company and retail partners. This industry alone has the potential to make more than our entire economy by simply catching less than 1% of our annual rainfall, bottling it safely in ecofriendly small bamboo bottles, and selling it to the world. [Sources: Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/387255/global-bottled-water-consumption/> AND *Business Insider*, <http://www.businessinsider.com/bottled-water-costs-2000x-more-than-tap-2013-7>]
- The most feasible way of creating this industry as soon as possible would be by collectively using the current roof area of our homes and businesses to catch water. With that, our infrastructure is already halfway there for harvesting rainwater. We would just have to plan and strategically build water reservoirs to hold the water, which will be picked up and delivered to the water bottle factory throughout the year. Residents who participate could receive additional tax refunds dependent on how much water the industry sells each year. This can be done similarly to the Alaska Permanent Fund, through which all eligible residents of Alaska receive an annual refund check from 25% of the revenue made from Alaskan oil.
- There is new technology that is on the cusp of making “paper” or “bamboo” water bottles a global norm. This can become a secondary benefit to Guam. In working with the innovators who have come up with this technology, we could create a factory here in the Marianas. We could build an ecofriendly bottle-making factory while also building a bamboo farming industry to create a secondary source of income within our water industry endeavor. Not only would we have the capability to make bottles for our company, but for other companies that are interested in bamboo bottles as well.

Learning from an Independent Model Nation: Fiji



Positives:

- FIJI water is the 3rd largest economic resource in Fiji after tourism and sugar.
- It provides a large amount of jobs for locals.
- The company donates about \$100,000 a year for local projects.
- It has an annual revenue of \$100-\$500 million.

Negatives:

- Conservation projects they tout have not started.
- The profits of owners and stakeholders are of utmost importance.
- Local philanthropic projects are just .02-0.1% of total revenue.
- Locals basically do not have any access to the water pulled from the aquifer that makes FIJI water.
- Their PET plastic bottles leach of antimony, phthalates, and acetaldehyde, which all have their own damaging effects on the body from consumption. This is especially true when bottled water is stored at higher temperatures, which can certainly be true for tropical islands.

“Fiji Water, one of the world’s most well-promoted brands of bottled water, is also one of the most secretive and private. Owned by Lynda and Stewart Resnick, the increasingly controversial Southern California billionaires, Fiji Water is a symbol of both the bad and the good in the world of bottled water. ‘Bad’ because of the massive energy cost and plastic waste produced by shipping bottled water thousands of miles from the island of Fiji to markets in the United States and around the world ... ‘Good’ because of the benefits the company claims to offer in the way of jobs and other economic returns to local communities in Fiji, and because of their much publicized claims to be ‘carbon negative’ - a claim, by the way, that cannot be independently verified with information provided publicly by the company ... Fiji Water has enjoyed a huge corporate tax holiday for over a decade, paying less than a million dollars in total corporate tax over ... two years, despite earning hundreds of millions in revenue from sales of product. The government of Fiji also accuses the company of manipulating the way the value of water exports is computed to minimize their tax payments.”

-Peter H. Gleick, Chief Scientist, President-Emeritus, Pacific Institute

In developing a bottled water industry, an independent Guåhan would learn from Fiji’s experiences and turn the negatives into positives. We would ensure that the industry is locally owned and that the primary beneficiaries of the industry would be the people of Guam. We would also work to ensure genuine sustainable practices that do not harm our environment or lead to more waste.

Nihi ta Hassuyi Este (Questions to Consider)

1. How will independence allow us to better protect our natural resources, especially our precious water?
2. What industries can an independent Guåhan explore to enhance our economic growth?



Independent Guåhan empowers the Chamoru people to reclaim our sovereignty as a nation. Inspired by the strength of our ancestors and with love for future generations, we educate and unify all who call our island home to build a sustainable and prosperous independent future. Contact us at independentguahan@gmail.com.