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## Trade fight over mango's origins could get juicy

**The Manila mango originally came from the Philippines, but Mexican growers, who say they improved on it, want to restrict the name to those grown in Mexico.**

Associated Press

Get set for the next Manila thrilla -- but in this case, the fight is over mangoes.

The contenders: The Philippines, which is pitted, if you will, against Mexico.

It's a grudge match that goes way back. Roughly 200 years, to be imprecise.

It was then that ancient galleons brought seedlings of the Manila mango to Acapulco. Since then, it has become a Mexican staple.

So much so that Mexico wants to officially adopt the Manila mango. Growers there are seeking a so-called domain of origin for the Manila mango. The process involves various government bodies and the World Trade Organization.

What it would mean: Only Mexican-grown Manila mangoes would be considered the real thing. The variety is very popular domestically, although it is only rarely exported outside of the United States -- so far.

The Philippine government is firing back, however, in a fight that could get juicy.

"Mexico acknowledges that their Manila mango variety came from the Philippines," said Adrian S. Cristobal, director-general of the Philippine Intellectual Property Office, or IPO. "By using the name Manila mango, the public can be misled as to the true origin of the fruit . . . This is essentially unfair competition."

Indeed, the Philippines still produces mangoes, shipping \$31 million worth last year to Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and China, according to the country's trade department.

Cristobal said government officials may invoke the International Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, or TRIPS. The accord allows WTO nations to stop other members from obtaining a domain of origin if it misleads consumers as to a product's true origin.

Historically, domain of origin names reflect where a product is from. Tequila is one case. So is Champagne.

Mexico, however, contends that the fruit now known as the Manila mango is truly a homegrown product. Mexican hybridization and cultivation practices have improved the product since it first crossed the Pacific in the 1700s, Mexicans say.

"It shouldn't be confused with the original," said Hector Cabrera, of Mexico's National Institute of Forest, Agricultural and Livestock research.

In the end, said Mexico agricultural economist Yolanda Trapaga, the countries will have to talk over the problem.

During a recent Asia trade mission, Mexican Agriculture Secretary Javier Usabiaga said the issue could easily be resolved once his country exports the fruit more widely.

The quality of the fruit will speak for itself, he said, and ``there will be no need to give it any particular name."

*Herald business writer Gregg Fields contributed to this report.*