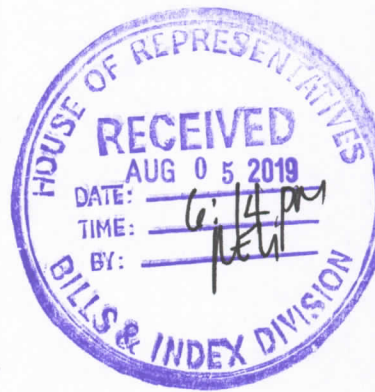


EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

H.B. No. 3448

Introduced by Rep. Vilma Santos-Recto
6th District of Batangas

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL MARICULTURE PROGRAM, PROVIDING
FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill aims to strengthen the Philippine fisheries sector through the formulation of a National Mariculture Program adopting the ecosystem-based approach. It seeks to expand and strengthen Mariculture Parks and Zones and proposes the creation of the Maritime Zone Advisory Council consisting of representatives from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources-Department of Agriculture (BFAR-DA), the Local Government Unit (LGU) Agriculturist, the LGU Planning and Development Coordinator, fisherfolk cooperatives/organizations and business with direct involvement in mariculture.

The bill sets a P500-Million initial fund for implementation of the program and mandates the Land Bank of the Philippines to extend financial assistance to fisherfolk at easy terms, low interest rates and low amortizations. The BFAR and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center shall extend technical assistance and recommend culture structures and procedures, among others, to ensure effective implementation. This bill provides for the establishment of physical, and socio-economic support infrastructures to ensure the viability of investments and the equitable share of fisherfolk and LGUs from sustainable mariculture.

The Philippines is endowed with vast marine and coastal resources. Of the 2.2 million square kilometers of territorial waters, including the Exclusive Economic Zone, around 266,000 sq. kms. are under the jurisdiction of around 900 coastal cities and towns along the whole length of the country's 36,289 km. coastline. Our archipelago lies at the Earth's center

of marine biodiversity, the Coral Triangle, which hosts thousands of endemic and migratory species. We also lie in the Western Central Pacific (Food and Agriculture Office Statistical Area 71), deemed to be one of the highly diverse marine areas and covered by the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.¹

Fish is a major source of protein, constituting 11.9 percent of the Filipino diet, at 37 kilograms annual per capita.² In fine weather, coastal folk can depend on the sea for food and livelihood. The map of coastal areas largely reflects the most densely-populated areas, inhabited by poor Filipinos migrating to where they can get *libreng ulam*. Likewise, coastal folk cut mangrove trees for fuel, charcoal production and house construction materials.

This situation of use and misuse in the light of abundant marine resources is best illustrated in the Verde Island Passage (VIP). An estimated seven (7) million people live in cities and towns along the VIP, which lies in the apex of the Coral Triangle, while 830,000 live right along the coastlines. Degradation of the VIP's coastlines has come from the destruction of mangrove forests, logging, various coastal developments and aquaculture.

Nationwide, our mangrove forests have whittled down to 248,000 hectares from the 450,000 hectares surveyed a hundred years ago. In addition, mangrove destruction has led to the loss of habitat of many species due to monoculture, or single-species aquaculture, such as prawn farming.

Decades of practicing unsustainable system of aquaculture has led to diminishing variety and volume of harvests with increasing numbers of abandoned, unutilized and underutilized aquaculture areas that had become less productive due to environmental degradation. In addition, Mariculture Parks and Zones are vulnerable to the pollution and contamination coming from farms, construction and other activities in inland waterways.

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization – Major Fishing Areas in the Pacific Ocean
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/w1310e/w1310E04.htm>

² Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources – Philippine Fisheries Profile 2017: Food Consumption

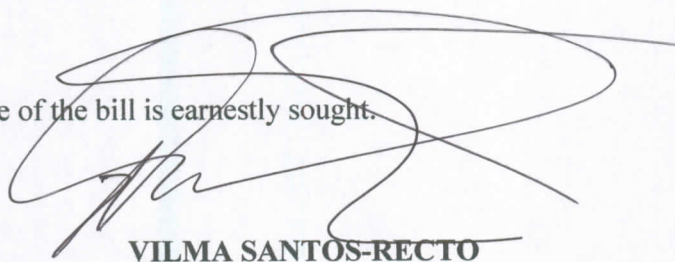
The latest BFAR data show total mariculture production in 2017 of 117,790.2 metric tons (mt) with the biggest production at 86,005 mt coming from Region I. However, reported figures are often not reliable because of the absence of a standard system for reporting yields and landings as well as collection and transmission of fees and earnings due the LGUs.

Despite the economic services derived from marine resources, the sector has one of the most insecure labor conditions. The 2018 Labor Force Survey has reported that 1.1 million employed in Fishing and Aquaculture received an Average Daily Basic Pay of P267.84, which is P174.94 less or 49% smaller than the all-industry daily basic pay of P442.78, as of 2018.³ If a fisherman would work for 30 days in a month, he would earn P8,035.2, which is P4,541.8 lower than the 2018 first-half poverty threshold of P12,577 and P768.8 lower than the food threshold of P8,804 a month. It is a basket case of food producers under the shadow of hunger. Municipal fisherfolk are one of the lowest-paid and most insecure workers in the country.

The proposed bill will address the issues of food safety and security; low wages and insecure livelihood; declining yields due to many factors such as habitat destruction or imprecise reporting systems; and degradation of coastal ecosystems from anthropomorphic activities that affect the mariculture industry. The Mariculture Zone Advisory Council to be created is tasked with the over-all management and supervision of Mariculture Parks and Zones as well as revenue collection and transmission of the same to local governments.

Food security and employment for millions of Filipinos are immediate direct benefits to be gained with the implementation of a sustainable ecosystem-based National Mariculture Program proposed herein.

In the light of the foregoing, immediate passage of the bill is earnestly sought.



VILMA SANTOS-RECTO

³ 2018 Labor Force Survey

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL MARICULTURE PROGRAM, PROVIDING
FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

1 Section 1. *Title.* – This Act shall be known as “The National Mariculture Program”.

2 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State shall ensure food security to everyone,
3 utilizing and developing the country’s natural wealth, and shall protect the aquatic resources
4 as valuable food reserve. Toward this end, the State shall ensure the utmost protection of the
5 country’s marine environment while optimizing the potential contribution to food security.

6 Likewise, the State shall uphold the rights and interests of the Filipino fisherfolk and
7 they shall be given preferential use of the marine and fishing resources in the country.

8 To this end, there shall be a comprehensive program on marine technology and
9 research, financial and marketing assistance, and other services for the benefit of the
10 fisherfolk and the local communities.

11 Sec. 3. *National Mariculture Program.* – The National Government, through the
12 Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), shall undertake a National Mariculture
13 Program (NMP), guided by the following objectives:

- 14 1. To promote mariculture as a major source of livelihood for fisherfolk;
15 2. To identify and establish mariculture parks in suitable areas adopting the
16 ecosystem-based approach;
17 3. To ensure food security and enhance socio-economic growth through a sustainable
18 mariculture industry;

4. To conserve, protect and manage the aquatic environment conducive to fisheries, species management and mariculture investment;
5. To develop procedures in order to minimize the adverse effects from mariculture in view of the multiple uses of marine and coastal areas where mariculture parks may be established;
6. To develop the technical skills of fisherfolk throughout the production, harvesting, processing, storage and transport stages in the value chain;
7. To provide appropriate infrastructure and equipment for post-harvest technology;
8. To provide stakeholders easy access to financial institutions; and
9. To enable stakeholders to implement activities for climate change resiliency and disaster risk reduction and management capability.

Sec. 4. *Definition of Terms.* – As used in this Code, the following terms shall mean as follows:

1. *Mariculture* shall refer to an integrated branch of aquaculture designed to produce fish through sea cages, long lines and other culture structures in marine and coastal areas to grow high value species, such as but not limited to *bangus*, *siganid*, seaweeds, oysters, mussels, red snappers, groupers and other related species;
2. *Mariculture Park or Zone* shall refer to duly designated fishery areas where mariculture is undertaken; and
3. *Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC)* shall refer to an intergovernmental organization established for the purpose of sustaining fishery development in Southeast Asia.

Sec. 5. *Mariculture Development Parks and Zones.* – Subject to the limitations set forth under Sections 20 and 22 of Republic Act No. 8550, otherwise known as the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1988, and Section 149 of Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code, the officials of the local government unit concerned shall supervise the establishment of mariculture parks and zones in duly designated areas located within the municipal waters. In case of waters located outside of municipal waters, the Department of Agriculture (DA) shall designate and supervise the respective mariculture area.

The technical, social, economic viability and sustainability, as well as environmental protection, shall be taken into consideration in selecting an area for a mariculture park or zone.

1 For this purpose, the province, city or municipality shall enter into a Lease Agreement
2 with the registered fisherfolk cooperative as well as private investors, where the terms and
3 conditions, as well as profit-sharing terms, are specified therein.

4 However, the BFAR shall provide a ceiling for rental fees to locators, in consultation
5 with the *Sanggunian* concerned, taking into consideration its affordability to ordinary
6 fisherfolks and the viability for its continued operation. In granting lease agreements, local
7 government units shall give preference to local fisherfolk.

8 A development plan shall always be required of applicants to form part of the bases
9 for the grant of a license by the Mariculture Zone Advisory Council.

10 Considering the competing uses of seas and ocean space, the Philippine Coast Guard
11 (PCG), shall be required to determine if a proposed mariculture park or zone and its facilities
12 therein pose a significant navigational hazard or obstruct safe travel, and, to issue a
13 certification of its findings and recommendations and submit the same to the DA.

14 Sec. 6. *Ownership of Mariculture Parks.* – Unless the Mariculture Park is established
15 by a private individual or corporation, the ownership of the park shall belong to the
16 municipality or city which has jurisdiction over the area. If the park is established outside the
17 municipal waters or within the territorial jurisdiction of two or more cities or municipalities,
18 the ownership shall belong to the provincial government which has jurisdiction over the area.
19 If the area is within the territorial jurisdiction of two or more provinces, the provinces
20 concerned shall enter into a Joint Venture Agreement where the issue of ownership shall be
21 defined.

22 Sec. 7. *Mariculture Zone Advisory Council.* – The Mariculture Zone Advisory
23 Council is hereby created which shall be composed of the following:

- 24 1. Representative from the BFAR with a rank equivalent to a Director as
25 Chairperson;
- 26 2. The City or Municipal Agriculturist, or in the absence thereof, the Provincial
27 Agriculturist as Vice-Chairperson;
- 28 3. The City or Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator;
- 29 4. A representative from the registered fisherfolk organization or cooperative; and
- 30 5. A representative from the private business sector directly involved with the
31 Mariculture Zone.

32 All members of the Advisory Council, and not their respective proxies, shall be
33 required to attend all council meetings.

1 Sec. 8. *Functions of the Maritime Zone Advisory Council.* – The Mariculture Zone
2 Advisory Council shall have the following functions:

- 3 1. To operate, administer, manage and develop the Mariculture Zone according to
4 the principles set forth in this Act;
- 5 2. To register, regulate and supervise the enterprises in the Mariculture Zone in an
6 efficient and decentralized manner;
- 7 3. To exercise general supervision over the development, plans, activities and
8 operations of the Mariculture Zone; and
- 9 4. To ensure that all revenues of the Mariculture Zone are properly collected and
10 remitted to the local government unit/units.

11 Sec. 9. *Mooring Spaces.* – Grant of Mariculture Zone areas shall be based on mooring
12 spaces to ensure that usage of area for sea cages, long lines and other culture structures is
13 limited to the granted space as provided. Granted mooring spaces not developed/installed
14 with culture structures within six (6) months will be forfeited and awarded to other qualified
15 applicants. The BFAR shall prescribe the guidelines in the installation of sea cages, long lines
16 and other culture structures.

17 Sec. 10. *Support Infrastructures.* – To ensure reliable access, cost-effective distance
18 and economic feasibility of the Mariculture Park and Zone, the Advisory Council shall cause
19 the establishment of support infrastructures such as, but not limited to floating guardhouses,
20 onshore feed warehouse, net mending and drying shed, a pier, ice plant and cold storage
21 facility.

22 To ensure fish safety and control diseases, the Advisory Council shall provide for a
23 water quality monitoring system to determine the presence of marine litter, agricultural run-
24 off and pathogenic contaminants in the Mariculture Parks and Zones.

25 In addition to the physical infrastructure, socio-economic infrastructure shall likewise
26 be placed to ensure the success of the Mariculture Park and Zone such as the registration of
27 fisherfolk, fisheries cooperatives and organizations.

28 Sec. 11. *Energy Supply.* – The Local Government Unit shall ensure 24-hour electric
29 power supply for the Mariculture Park and Zone cold storage facility through self-generation
30 or through a power supply agreement with an electric cooperative, distribution utility, sub-
31 transmission or transmission company serving the area nearest the Mariculture Park and
32 Zone: *Provided,* That the Advisory Council shall first determine the feasibility of installing a
33 self-generating renewable energy system for the exclusive use of the Mariculture Park and

1 Zone: *Provided, further*, That the Advisory Council shall utilize power from self-generation
2 if the price per kilowatt hour is lower than power from other entities.

3 Sec. 12. *Aquaculture Technical Assistance and Training to Local Government Units,*
4 *Fisherfolk Cooperatives and Associations, and, Non-Governmental Organizations.* – The
5 SEAFDEC, through its Aquaculture Department, shall provide technical assistance, training
6 and marketing support to local government units, coastal fishermen, fisherfolk
7 cooperatives/association, and non-government organizations with respect to the
8 establishment, utilization and management of mariculture systems in their respective
9 jurisdictions. The SEAFDEC shall closely coordinate with the stakeholders concerned for this
10 purpose.

11 Sec. 13. *Private Sector as Economic Partners.* – Private individual investors or
12 enterprises shall, as far as practicable, be encouraged to take an active role in the
13 establishment, utilization and management of mariculture systems. Qualified private
14 investors or entrepreneurs shall coordinate with the local government officials concerned,
15 local fishing community and appropriate government agencies, for this purpose.

16 Sec. 14. *Financing Scheme.* – The Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) shall provide
17 financial assistance to registered fisherfolk organizations/cooperatives for the construction of
18 the fish cage, long line and other culture structures and for the procurement of the initial
19 stocks and feeds. The LBP shall issue guidelines on the scheduled annual payments of the
20 loan. It shall reduce the interest rate and/or reduce the principal obligation to make the
21 repayment affordable for the fisher-folk. The LBP shall render quarterly reports on the
22 disbursement of funds for the National Mariculture Program.

23 Sec. 15. *Continuing Research and Development.* – The BFAR shall conduct
24 continuing research and development as well as application of technological advancements in
25 the mariculture industry. A one-hectare Research and Development area shall be designated
26 within a province, city or municipality for the conduct of research and demonstration
27 activities as well as a venue for the manpower capability trainings in the mariculture zone.
28 This area shall be jointly managed by the LGU and BFAR.

29 Sec. 16. *Monitoring and Evaluation.* – The DA shall monitor the implementation of
30 Research and Development programs and mariculture projects. The BFAR shall review all
31 existing mariculture parks and zones every four (4) years, to determine their viability or
32 effectiveness. The BFAR shall employ the services of independent evaluators to assess the

1 overall impact of the country's mariculture development. A quarterly Performance
2 Evaluation issued by independent evaluators shall be submitted to the BFAR for this purpose.

3 Sec. 17. *Identification of Mariculture Areas.* – Within six (6) months from the
4 effectivity of this Act, the BFAR shall identify the local government units which have
5 potential areas for the establishment of mariculture parks: *Provided,* That not later than one
6 (1) year from the effectivity of this Act, the BFAR, in coordination with the local government
7 units concerned, shall complete the blueprint of each mariculture park in the identified areas.

8 Sec. 18. *Annual Report.* – The DA, through the BFAR, shall render an annual report
9 to Congress on the accomplishment of the program. A review on the viability of the program
10 which includes a complete list suitable for the establishment of mariculture parks in the
11 country with their respective feasibility study shall be made by the agencies concerned after
12 three (3) years of its implementation.

13 Sec. 19. *Information Campaign.* – The BFAR shall undertake intensive public
14 information campaign within three (3) months from the effectivity of this Act.

15 Sec. 20. *Appropriations.* – The initial amount of Five Hundred Million Pesos
16 (P500,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated to effectively carry out the provisions of this Act
17 during the first year of implementation. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the
18 continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the succeeding General
19 Appropriations Act.

20 Sec. 21. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The DA, through the BFAR, together
21 with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the representatives of the
22 League of Provinces, League of Cities, and League of Municipalities, shall adopt rules and
23 regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this Act within ninety (90) days upon
24 the approval of this Act.

25 Sec. 22. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, acts, decrees, executive orders, issuances,
26 presidential proclamations and rules and regulations or parts thereof which are contrary to
27 and inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

28 Sec. 23. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its
29 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,