

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Batasan Hills, Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 3250



Introduced by Abang Lingkod Party-list Representative
Manuel "Manman" O. Ko

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines, as one of the world's leading producers of fish and aquatic products, has a vital stake in ensuring that its fisheries sector is sustainable, competitive, and compliant with international standards. However, challenges such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, supply chain opacity, and weak enforcement mechanisms continue to undermine the integrity and long-term viability of the sector.

In recent years, the global demand for traceable and responsibly sourced seafood has significantly increased. Major export markets such as the European Union, the United States, and Japan have imposed stringent traceability and sustainability requirements on imported seafood products. Compliance with these standards is not merely a matter of trade access—it is a strategic imperative for protecting marine ecosystems, ensuring consumer safety, and preserving the livelihoods of millions of Filipino fisherfolk.

To address these urgent challenges, the proposed measure seeks to institutionalize a National Seafood Traceability System (NSTS)—a comprehensive, government-led framework for tracking the movement of seafood and aquatic products from point of harvest to end consumer. It will support real-time data collection, supply chain documentation, product verification, and the use of digital traceability tools to ensure transparency and accountability at every stage of the supply chain.

The NSTS will cover both wild-caught and aquaculture products and will be implemented in coordination with key government agencies such as the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Department of Science and Technology (DOST), in partnership with private sector stakeholders and fisherfolk communities. Its core function is to support the detection and prevention of IUU fishing, reduce seafood mislabeling and fraud, and reinforce the Philippines' compliance with key global agreements and market standards.

This measure builds upon existing frameworks such as BFAR Administrative Circular No. 251-1, Series of 2019, which introduced enhanced traceability procedures for seafood products, especially for exports. However, that circular remains administrative in nature and limited in scope. The proposed legislation seeks to elevate these mechanisms into permanent, enforceable law, backed by penalties and inter-agency coordination, and ensure full alignment with the traceability systems of major trade partners like the EU IUU Regulation, U.S. Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP), and ASEAN Harmonized Traceability Guidelines.

The traceability system also empowers consumers—both domestic and international—to make informed choices, while giving producers and exporters incentives to comply with sustainability requirements and improve product quality. The system will enhance data integrity, digital monitoring, verification, and audit processes across the supply chain—from the fishing boat or aquafarm, to processing plants, cold storage, ports, exporters, and distributors.

Furthermore, it will help the Philippines fulfill its obligations under international instruments such as the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and the country's National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (NPOA-IUU).

In sum, the passage of this bill is critical to securing the Philippines' competitiveness in global seafood trade, protecting its marine resources, and safeguarding the livelihood of its coastal and fishing communities. It will also serve as a future-proofing strategy against the growing complexity of regulatory and consumer demands in global seafood markets.

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


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**AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING A NATIONAL SEAFOOD
TRACEABILITY SYSTEM TO COMBAT ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND
UNREGULATED FISHING, PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES, AND
STRENGTHEN PHILIPPINE SEAFOOD EXPORTS, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES**

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

SECTION 1. Title - This Act shall be known as the "**Seafood
Traceability Act of 2025.**"

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote responsible and sustainable fisheries management, protect marine biodiversity, ensure food safety, and strengthen the competitiveness of Philippine seafood products in both domestic and international markets. In pursuit of these objectives, the State recognizes the urgent need for a comprehensive, reliable, and transparent system to trace the origin, movement, and handling of fish and aquatic products across the entire supply chain.

The State shall institutionalize a National Seafood Traceability System to prevent illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, improve compliance with international trade requirements, enhance consumer protection, and support the livelihoods of fisherfolk and aquaculture producers. This system shall integrate digital technologies, inter-agency coordination, and stakeholder participation to ensure the integrity, sustainability, and global marketability of the country's fisheries and aquaculture industries.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms.- For purposes of this Act:

a) Traceability – The ability to systematically identify, track, and trace the movement of seafood products through all stages of production, processing, and distribution.

b) Catch Documentation – Official records providing details of species, volume, harvest date, gear used, and vessel/farm of origin.

c) IUU Fishing – Activities defined as illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing under RA 10654 and international agreements.

d) Seafood – All fishery and aquaculture products intended for human consumption, including fresh, frozen, processed, and value-added products.

SECTION 4. Creation of the National Seafood Traceability System.-

There is hereby created a National Seafood Traceability System (NSTS) under the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

The NSTS shall serve as a centralized digital platform to systematically track the movement of seafood products—both wild-caught and aquaculture—from the point of harvest or production to the final point of sale or export.

SECTION 5. Mandatory Participation.-The following entities shall be required to participate in the NSTS:

- a) All commercial fishing vessels;
- b) Aquaculture farms and operators;
- c) Fish landing centers and ports;
- d) Processing plants, consolidators, and cold storage operators;
- e) Exporters, wholesalers, and distributors.

Municipal fisherfolk cooperatives or associations shall be gradually included and provided support to comply with the system.

SECTION 6. Core Components of the NSTS.-The NSTS shall consist of:

a) Digital Catch Documentation System – E-logbooks and QR tagging of seafood from harvest;

b) Chain-of-Custody Protocols – Secure records of handling, processing, transport, and storage;

c) Real-time Data Integration – Interconnection with vessel monitoring systems (VMS), port-inspection records, and export certifications;

d) Verification and Audit Mechanism – Periodic auditing to detect misreporting, fraud, or data gaps;

e) Consumer-Facing Labeling Option – Optional traceable labels for public information and marketing.

SECTION 7. Export Compliance and Certification.- The NSTS shall be designed to comply with the traceability requirements of major importing countries, including but not limited to:

- The European Union (EU) IUU Regulation
- The United States Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP)
- ASEAN harmonized traceability guidelines

BFAR shall issue traceability certifications for exports based on NSTS data integrity.

SECTION 8. Capacity Building and Support.- BFAR, in coordination with LGUs and relevant agencies, shall:

- a) Provide training, equipment, and digital tools to fisherfolk and aquaculture operators;
- b) Support fisherfolk cooperatives in adapting to traceability requirements;
- c) Create public-private partnerships for traceability implementation.

A Seafood Traceability Support Fund shall be established for this purpose.

SECTION 9. Penalties and Sanctions.- Any person or entity found to:

- a. **Willful Misreporting of Data**
 - The intentional submission of false, inaccurate, misleading, or manipulated information in catch documentation, production records, processing logs, transport documents, or export declarations required under the National Seafood Traceability System (NSTS). This includes misreporting of species, volume, harvest dates, vessel or farm origin, fishing ground, or handling and processing details.
- b. **Falsification of Catch Documentation**
 - The unauthorized alteration, creation, or use of fraudulent or tampered catch certificates, health certificates, e-logbooks, log sheets, labels, lot numbers, QR codes, or any other official traceability records required under the NSTS. This includes counterfeiting of official BFAR-issued forms or digital certifications.
- c. **Refusal or Willful Failure to Comply with Traceability Requirements**
 - The deliberate non-registration with the NSTS by entities required under this Act; refusal to submit required traceability data; non-cooperation with BFAR inspectors or control officers; denial of

access to records, facilities, or traceability systems; or failure to implement internal traceability mechanisms as mandated by law and its implementing rules.

- d. **Facilitation of Trade in Non-Traceable or IUU-Derived Products**
– The act of knowingly engaging in the purchase, sale, processing, transport, export, import, storage, or distribution of seafood products that:
- are not covered by traceability documentation;
 - originate from unregistered or unverified sources;
 - are identified as having been harvested through IUU fishing practices; or
 - are mixed with traceable products to conceal their unlawful origin.

Any person who commits any of the prohibited acts stated herein shall be penalized, upon due process, with:

1. A fine of ₱100,000.00 to ₱5,000,000.00 depending on the scale of violation;
2. Suspension or revocation of license or permit;
3. Forfeiture of products or proceeds of sale.

SECTION 10. Interagency Coordination.- BFAR shall coordinate with:

- The Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA)
- Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Bureau of Customs
- Philippine Ports Authority (PPA)
- Local Government Units (LGUs)

for the effective implementation and enforcement of the NSTS.

SECTION 11. Appropriations.- The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of BFAR. Thereafter, such sums shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SECTION 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, BFAR, in consultation with concerned agencies and stakeholders, shall promulgate the IRR.

SECTION 12. Separability Clause. — If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 13. Repealing Clause. — All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 14. Effectivity. — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,