

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **6556**



Introduced by **REP. NATHANIEL “Atty. Nat” M. ODUCCADO**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The fisheries sector continues to play a central role in national food security, employment, and rural development. Recent data from the Philippine Statistics Authority show that total fisheries production in the first quarter of 2025 reached 1.01 million metric tons, reflecting a 1.5 percent increase from the previous year. This growth was driven by inland municipal fisheries and aquaculture, even as marine municipal production declined to 196.12 thousand metric tons, or 6.5 percent lower than the 209.83 thousand metric tons recorded in the same period last year. Marine municipal fisheries accounted for 19.56 percent of the total sectoral output.

These production trends are shaped by a sector that remains large and diverse. Based on the BFAR Fisherfolk Registration System, 2,302,648 Filipinos were engaged in fisheries and aquaculture livelihoods in 2022, representing a 5.12 percent increase from the previous year. Capture fishing accounted for 50.96 percent of all registered livelihoods, followed by agriculture, gleaning, fish vending, and fish processing. The sector is predominantly male at 70 percent, while 30 percent are female. A significant number of fisherfolk also fall within older age groups, with more than 70 percent aged 41 and above. Despite their contributions, fisherfolk continue to experience the highest poverty incidence among all basic sectors at 30.6 percent, highlighting the persistent socio-economic challenges in coastal communities.

The scale of municipal fisheries activity underscores the need for updated and responsive management. In 2022, BFAR and LGUs registered 375,995 municipal fishing vessels with a capacity of three gross tons or below, operating within municipal waters nationwide. The highest concentrations were recorded in Region VIII, Region VII, MIMAROPA, Region V, and Region VI. This volume of activity, combined with declining catch in certain areas, indicates the need to strengthen management tools, improve monitoring systems, and clarify regulatory obligations for both state agencies and vessel operators.

While Republic Act No. 8550, as amended by RA 10654, provides the primary framework for the conservation, management, and sustainable use of fisheries and aquatic resources, implementation over the years has revealed gaps in clarity, consistency, and

enforceability. Furthermore, ecological conditions have also changed, and socio-economic pressures continue to evolve. These realities call for targeted amendments that strengthen coordination between the national agencies and LGUs, improve regulatory compliance, and support the long-term viability of the sector.

This bill introduces amendments to key provisions of the Fisheries Code to address these challenges. First, it clarifies the scope of municipal fisheries, strengthens fisherfolk registration, and aligns municipal fisherfolk status with LGU-maintained registries to improve the accuracy of data that underpin management decisions. Second, the bill updates the rules governing the use and management of municipal waters, including conditions for authorizing specific fishing activities where appropriate, while ensuring consistency with ecological safeguards and national standards. Third, it provides clearer regulations on the use of certain fishing gears and activities through science-based criteria, balancing resource protection with socio-economic needs of fishing communities. Finally, the bill mandates DA-BFAR, together with relevant agencies, to issue updated implementing guidelines, identify overfished areas, and, where necessary, impose moratoria on new fishing licenses to allow stock recovery and protect vulnerable ecosystems.

Overall, the proposed amendments aim to strengthen national and local government coordination, improve enforcement, and promote ecologically sustainable fisheries while supporting food security and the welfare of millions of Filipino fisherfolk.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Oducado', with a blue circular stamp or mark at the end of the signature.

REP. NATHANIEL “ATTY. NAT” M. ODOCADO
1Tahanan Party List

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AN ACT AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NUMBER 8550, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NUMBER 10654, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE FISHERIES CODE OF 1998

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

SECTION 1. *Amendment to Section 4 of Republic Act No. 8550, as amended to read:*

- a. Municipal fisherfolk – persons who are directly or indirectly engaged in municipal fishing and other related fishing activities AND ARE REGISTERED AS SUCH BY THE CORRESPONDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS WHERE THEY RESIDE.
- b. Municipal fishing – refers to fishing within municipal waters using fishing vessels of THIRTY-FIVE (35) gross tons or less, or fishing not requiring the use of fishing vessels BY REGISTERED MUNICIPAL FISHERFOLK.
- c. Commercial fishing – refers to fishing operations conducted for trade, business, or profit using fishing vessels of more than THIRTY-FIVE (35) gross tons.
- d. Fisheries - refers to all activities relating to the act of business of fishing, culturing, preserving, processing, marketing, developing, conserving and managing aquatic resources and the fishery areas, including the privilege to fish or take aquatic resource thereof

SEC. 2. *Section 18 of Republic Act Number 8550, as amended by Republic Act 10654 is hereby amended to read as follows:*

SEC. 18. Users of Municipal Waters. – All fishery activities in municipal waters, as defined in this Code, shall be utilized by municipal fisherfolk and their cooperatives/organizations who are listed as such in the registry of municipal fisherfolk.

The municipal or city government, however, may, through its local chief executive and acting pursuant to an appropriate ordinance, authorize or permit commercial fishing vessels to operate within the ten point one (10.1) to fifteen (15) kilometer area from the shoreline in municipal waters, PROVIDED, THAT ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS ARE MET:

1. No commercial fishing in municipal waters with depth less than twenty (20) fathoms, as certified by the appropriate agency;
 2. Fishing activities must use methods and gears consistent with national policies set by the Department;
 3. Prior consultation, through public hearing, with the M/CFARMC has been conducted;
 4. The vessel, shipowner, employer, captain, and crew have been certified by the appropriate agency as not having violated this Code, environmental laws and related laws;
 5. The target species have been identified by the Department;
- a. For considerations of sea safety due to wave action or sea characteristics, the municipal or city government may authorize, through an appropriate local government ordinance, the use of fishing vessels not greater than three hundred forty-nine (349) gross tons that can target species have been identified by the Department subject to harvest control rules also determined by the Department.
 - b. For purposes of ensuring food security and safety concerns, the national government shall identify, through the grant of specific licenses to commercial fishing vessels to operate within municipal waters.

“In no case shall the authorization or permit be granted for fishing in bays that the Department has determined to be in an environmentally critical condition, or during closed seasons as provided for in Section 9 of this Code.”

SEC. 3. *Section 95 of Republic Act Number 8550, as amended by Republic Act 10654* is hereby amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 95. Use of Active Gear in Municipal Waters, Bays and Other Fishery Management Areas. – It shall be unlawful to engage in fishing in municipal waters, bays, and other fishery management areas using active fishing gears, EXCEPT WHEN AUTHORIZED BY THE MUNICIPAL OR CITY GOVERNMENT THROUGH AN APPROPRIATE ORDINANCE, THAT ALLOWS IDENTIFIED FISHING GEARS TARGETING IDENTIFIED SPECIES, SUBJECT TO HARVEST CONTROL RULES DETERMINED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

SEC. 4. *Implementing Guidelines.* -- The Department of Agriculture, through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, shall coordinate with the Department of Interior and Local Government and other concerned agencies to issue the implementing rules and regulations of this Act. These guidelines shall include identification of areas in Philippine waters that are overfished

and the declaration of a moratorium on the issuance of licenses for fishing vessels operating in such areas.

SEC. 5. *Repealing Clause.* -- All provisions of laws that are inconsistent with these amendments are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 6. *Separability Clause.* -- If any portion or provision of these amendments is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other portions or provisions hereof, which are not affected thereby, shall continue in full force and effect.

SEC. 7. *Effectivity* -- This Code shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general publication.

Approved.