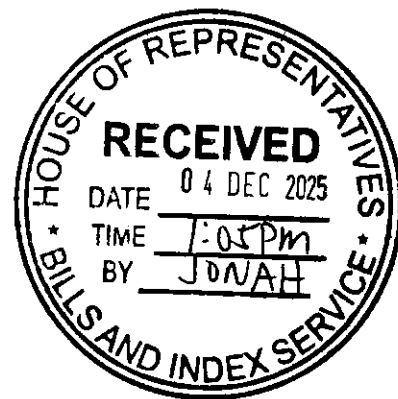




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
QUEZON CITY

20th Congress
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **6627**



Introduced by: REP. ROSALIE "MOMMY ROSE" ANG SALVAME

AN ACT GRANTING EXCLUSIVE FISHING RIGHTS TO SMALL-SCALE AND SUBSISTENCE FISHERFOLK WITHIN THE FIFTEEN (15) KILOMETER MUNICIPAL WATERS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8550 AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "PHILIPPINE FISHERIES CODE OF 1998," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This proposed bill seeks to amend Republic Act No. 8550, otherwise known as the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, to grant exclusive fishing rights to small-scale and subsistence fisherfolk within the fifteen (15) kilometer municipal waters. This measure recognizes the indispensable role of municipal fishers in ensuring food security, sustaining rural economies, and preserving marine ecosystems. Rising encroachment by commercial fishing vessels has threatened their livelihoods and undermined sustainable practices. By restoring and institutionalizing their exclusive rights, the bill affirms the government's commitment to social justice, environmental stewardship, and the protection of traditional fishing grounds for present and future generations.

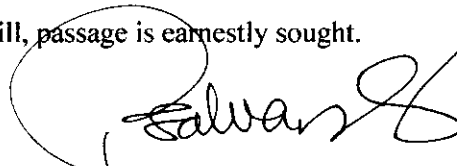
- This House Bill was filed to ensure that municipal waters—defined as the 15-kilometer zone from the shoreline—are reserved solely for small-scale and subsistence fishers.
- The bill responds to concerns that commercial fishing operations have encroached upon municipal waters, undermining the rights and survival of local fisherfolk.
- It amends Section 17 of R.A. 8550, which currently allows local governments to grant access to commercial fishers under certain conditions.

Importance of Exclusive Rights

- **Livelihood Protection:** Small-scale fishers depend almost entirely on municipal waters. Exclusive rights prevent displacement by large commercial fleets.

- **Food Security:** Ensuring access for subsistence fishers strengthens the local supply of affordable fish, a staple protein for millions of Filipinos.
- **Sustainability:** The bill emphasizes *sustainable fishing practices* and seeks to curb destructive methods often associated with commercial operations.
- **Social Justice:** It addresses inequities by prioritizing marginalized fisherfolk who have historically been neglected despite their vital role in food production.
- **Legal Clarity:** The measure resolves ambiguities in the Fisheries Code and recent court rulings that weakened fisherfolk's preferential rights.
- **Empowerment of Coastal Communities:** By securing exclusive rights, fisherfolk gain stronger bargaining power in local governance and resource management.
- **Environmental Protection:** Limiting commercial intrusion reduces overfishing and habitat destruction in nearshore ecosystems.
- **National Development:** Fisheries contribute significantly to employment and GDP. Protecting municipal waters ensures long-term viability of this sector.

Given the importance of this bill, passage is earnestly sought.



REP. ROSALIE "MOMMY ROSE" ANG SALVAME
Representative, 1st District of Palawan



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

SECTION 1. Short Title. - This Act shall be known as the "Karagatan at Katarungan Para Sa Maliliit na Mangangisda Act "

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. "The State affirms its commitment to guaranteeing food security, safeguarding the rights of small-scale and subsistence fisherfolk, and advancing the sustainable management of fisheries and aquatic resources within municipal waters."

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

(a) "Small-scale fisherfolk" are individuals or groups who personally and physically engage in fishing or fishery-related activities, using boats of three (3) gross tons or less, or fishing gear that does not require boats. Their catch is primarily intended for local consumption or subsistence.

(b) "Subsistence fisherfolk" refers to individuals or families who rely primarily on fishing for their daily food needs and whose catch is not intended for commercial sale.

(c) Municipal waters" encompass streams, lakes, inland bodies of water, and marine areas bounded by two lines drawn perpendicular to the general coastline from points where municipal or city boundaries meet the sea at low tide, and by a third line parallel to the coastline, fifteen (15) kilometers offshore. This includes surrounding islands, as provided by law and jurisprudence.

SECTION 4. Exclusive Fishing Rights. The exclusive right to fish, gather, and undertake fishery-related activities within the fifteen (15)-kilometer municipal waters, as defined under Section 4(58) of Republic Act No. 8550, is reserved for registered small-scale and subsistence fisherfolk residing in the municipality or city concerned, together with their duly registered organizations and cooperatives.

SECTION 5. Role of Local Government Units. - The municipal or city government, in coordination with the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (FARMC), shall oversee the management, conservation, development, protection, utilization, and disposition of all fish and aquatic resources within their respective municipal waters. Local government units (LGUs) shall enact the necessary ordinances and implement this Act in alignment with the national fisheries policy.

SECTION 6. Prohibition of Commercial Fishing and Other Acts in Municipal Waters- Notwithstanding Section 18 of Republic Act No. 8550, as amended by Republic Act No. 10654, the following rules shall govern the entire fifteen (15)-kilometer municipal waters as defined under Section 4(58) of Republic Act No. 8550:

(a) No commercial fishing vessel, regardless of size or tonnage, shall be allowed to operate within municipal waters. Any exception to this prohibition must be expressly authorized by law, subject to strict regulation and prior consultation with affected fisherfolk.

(b) It is unlawful for any person, corporation, organization, or entity to engage in commercial fishing or other extractive activities within municipal waters.

(c) It is unlawful for any non-resident to fish, gather, or otherwise extract aquatic resources within municipal waters, and for any person, corporation, organization, or entity to authorize, permit, allow, or cause such activities.

(d) It is unlawful to violate any ordinance, regulation, or implementing rule issued pursuant to this Act. Any authorization or permit issued or relied upon in violation of this Section shall be deemed null and void.

SECTION 7. Registration and Support. - All small-scale and subsistence fisherfolk shall be registered with the local government unit and duly recorded in the official registry

of municipal fisherfolk. The Department of Agriculture, in coordination with the appropriate local government units, shall provide technical, financial, and capacity-building support to registered fisherfolk.

SECTION 8. Penalties. - Any person, association, or entity found violating the provisions of this Act shall be subject to penalties as provided under Republic Act No. 8550, as amended, and other applicable laws.

SECTION 9. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - The Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Department of the Interior and Local Government, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, and representatives of small-scale and subsistence fisherfolk, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement this Act within ninety (90) days from its effectivity.

SECTION 10. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 11. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 12. Effectivity. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,