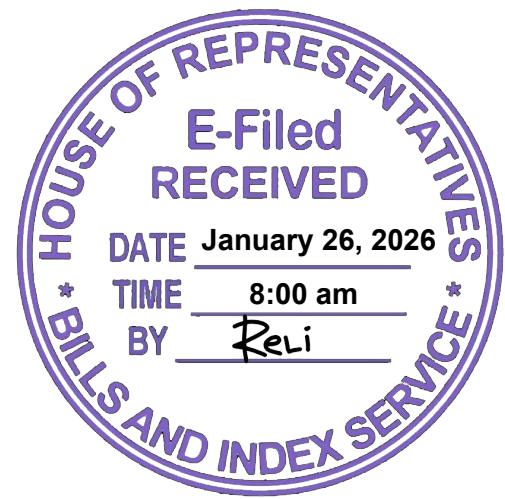


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **7289**



Introduced by Representative LEILA M. DE LIMA

AN ACT
PROVIDING FUEL SUBSIDY FOR MUNICIPAL FISHERFOLK, APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The fisheries sector of the Philippines plays a significant role in the country's economy, providing food, income, and employment to millions of Filipinos. According to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), the fisheries sector employed over 2.29 million Filipinos in 2023, with 50.9% engaged in capture fishing and the rest in aquaculture, gleaning, fish vending, fish processing, packaging, and transportation.¹ Moreover, in that same year, the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing (AFF) sector contributed P2.29 trillion in total Gross Value Added (GVA), with fishing and aquaculture activities recording a value of P274 billion or a 12% share.² This performance enabled the Philippines to maintain a favorable trade surplus in the fisheries sector with a balance trade of USD282.55 million or P16.30 billion.³

While the production volume of the fisheries sector declined by 1.8% from 2022 to 2023 at 4.26 million metric tons, the total production value increased by 0.6% at P328.74 billion.⁴ Of this, the inland and marine municipal fisheries sub-sectors contributed 1.05 million metric tons, while commercial fisheries contributed 822,427 metric tons in total volume production.⁵ These numbers highlight the value of municipal fisherfolk in the country's fisheries sector.

¹ Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR). (October 2024). 2023 Philippine Fisheries Profile. Retrieved from <https://www.bfar.da.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2023-Philippine-Fisheries-Profile.pdf>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

However, despite the fisheries sector's invaluable contribution to the country's economy and food security, the sector remains to be among the poorest, with the poverty incidence among farmers and fisherfolk being consistently higher than the rest of the general population. In 2021, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that the poverty rate among fisherfolk was the highest among the basic sectors at 30.6%.⁶ From 2018 to 2023, the number of impoverished fisherfolk rose from 287,070 to 353,190, with many reaching the threshold to be considered food-poor.⁷

Thus, there is a need to identify and address the root causes behind the alarming and continued poverty and even food-poverty incidences in a sector that keeps the economy thriving and puts food on the table of millions of Filipinos. Among the causes identified are habitat degradation, climate change and pollution, illegal and unregulated fishing, the recent legalization of commercial fishing within municipal waters, and the lack of government support – particularly the often inaccessible, unavailable, and/or unsatisfactory government services in the communities where fisherfolk reside.

In recent years, the livelihood of subsistence fisherfolk in the country has been worsened by the global rise in oil prices, which makes up “80% of a fisherfolk's production costs”, according to fishers' group *Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya)*.⁸

Article XIII, Section 7 of the 1987 Constitution provides that, “[t]he State shall protect the rights of subsistence fishermen, especially of local communities, to the preferential use of local marine and fishing resources, both inland and offshore. It shall provide support to such fishermen through appropriate technology and research, adequate financial, production, and marketing assistance, and other services.”

In response to the global phenomena causing steep rises in oil prices, thus threatening the lives and livelihoods of the fisheries sector and endangering the country's food security, the State shall provide the necessary support to the country's subsistence fishermen in the form of fuel subsidies. The Department of Agriculture (DA) has taken the initiative in recent years to provide fuel subsidies to subsistence fisherfolk, such as the one-time allowance of P3,000.00 to five (5) million eligible beneficiaries in 2024, and the P75 million allocation for Fuel Assistance to Fisherfolk in the 2025 General Appropriations Act. However, fisherfolk groups report the inaccessibility and unequal implementation of these fuel subsidy programs.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ De Vera, P. (18 October 2025). *Helping the 'invisible' poorest of the poor*. PhilStar. Retrieved from <https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2025/10/18/2480611/helping-invisible-poorest-poor>.

⁸ Argosino, F. (31 December 2023). *Fisher group: Fuel subsidy not enough, seeks more fund to boost production*. Inquirer.net. Retrieved from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1881876/fisher-group-fuel-subsidy-not-enough-seeks-more-fund-to-boost-production>.

This bill seeks to institutionalize the fuel subsidy program for municipal fisherfolk by creating the *Katig ng mga Mangingisda* Program that provides all eligible municipal fisherfolk with a monthly fuel voucher of P1,500. The *katig*, also known as an outrigger or lateral float, was invented by the Filipino's fisherfolk ancestors to better stabilize the *bangka*, or the boat or canoe they used for fishing, allowing the *bangka* to move forward.⁹ Through the *Katig ng mga Mangingisda* Program, the bill aims to provide the necessary support to provide a more stable and just livelihood to the fisherfolk in the country.

In the 20th Congress, similar bills have been filed by Senators Raffy Tulfo and Joel Villanueva, and Representatives Tsuyoshi Horibata, Vincenzo Luigi Villafuerte, Miguel Luis Villafuerte, Terry Ridon, Eduardo Villanueva, and Rosalie Ang in the House of Representatives. In consultation with various fisherfolk groups, this bill adopts several provisions from these bills.

Early approval of this measure is requested.



LEILA M. DE LIMA

⁹ Chua, X. (20 February 2013). *Xiao Time: Kabihasnang pandagat ng Pilipinas*. News@1. PTV Philippines. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXDTN8Ht1pQ>.

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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. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “*Katig ng mga*
2 *Mangingisda Act 2026.*”
3

4 SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State acknowledges the vital role of
5 municipal fisherfolk in securing the nation's food supply. It is hereby declared as State
6 policy to extend support to municipal fisherfolk, in recognition of their sacrifices and
7 contributions to national development, and in pursuit of the Constitutional mandate to
8 uphold social justice in all phases of development.
9

10 SEC. 3. *Katig ng mga Mangingisda Program.* – There is hereby created the
11 *Katig ng mga Mangingisda Program*, hereinafter referred to as the Program, which
12 shall grant a monthly fuel voucher valued at not less than One Thousand Five Hundred
13 Pesos (P1,500.00) to each eligible beneficiary under this Act: *Provided*, That the
14 amount shall be adjusted annually to account for inflation. The Program shall be
15 implemented by the Department of Agriculture (DA), through the Bureau of Fisheries
16 and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).
17

18 SEC. 4. *Beneficiaries.* – The beneficiaries of this Act shall be municipal
19 fisherfolk engaged in fishing within municipal waters, whether coastal or inland, who
20 operate motorized fishing vessels either individually or through a fisherfolk
21 organization, cooperative, or association: *Provided*, That such beneficiaries are duly
22 listed in the registry system of the Department of Agriculture (DA), particularly in the
23 Municipal Fisherfolk Registration System: *Provided*, further, That their fishing vessels

1 are properly registered in the integrated boat registry system in the Bureau of Fisheries
2 and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Boat Registration, or the boat registry system of the
3 concerned local government unit (LGU): *Provided, finally*, That municipal fisherfolk
4 and fishing vessels that are not yet registered under aforementioned registry systems
5 may still be beneficiaries provided they register in any of the aforementioned registry
6 systems within the periods to be set by the BFAR or LGU.

7
8 SEC. 5. *Convergence of Social Protection Programs.* – Beneficiaries of the
9 Program shall be automatically enrolled in, and covered under the National Health
10 Insurance Program of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth). The
11 Social Security System (SSS) shall likewise offer facilities for micro-insurance
12 coverage to all beneficiaries of the Program.

13
14 SEC. 6. *Non-Diminution of Benefits.* – Nothing in this Act shall be construed to
15 reduce existing benefits and subsidies granted under existing laws, decrees, executive
16 orders, local ordinances, policies, programs, or any contract, agreement, or policy
17 between the employer and employee.

18
19 SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation
20 of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the DA.
21 Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this
22 Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

23
24 SEC. 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within one hundred twenty
25 (120) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DA shall promulgate the implementing
26 rules and regulations (IRR) to carry out the provisions of this Act. The formulation and
27 promulgation of the IRR shall be done by DA, with recommendation from the BFAR,
28 and in consultation with other relevant government agencies, including the Department
29 of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of Energy (DOE), as well
30 as concerned stakeholders, especially associations of small fisherfolks, Failure of the
31 relevant government agencies to promulgate the IRR within the specified period shall
32 subject the heads of these government agencies to administrative penalties under
33 applicable civil service laws. Should the IRR contain provisions that are contrary to
34 this Act, the heads of the government agencies responsible for such provision, when
35 done in bad faith or with gross negligence, shall be held administratively liable.

36
37 SEC. 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or
38 unconstitutional, the provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force
39 and effect.

40
41 SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees,
42 presidential proclamations, letters of instruction, rules and regulations, or parts thereof
43 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended
44 accordingly.

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SEC. 11. *Effectivity*. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

Approved,