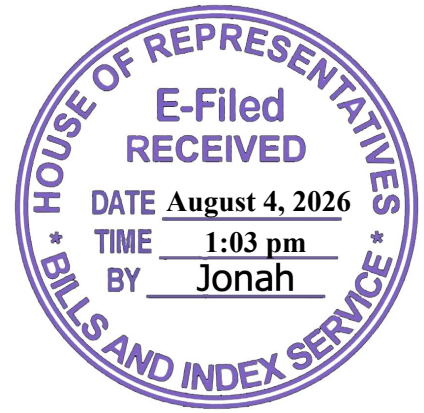


Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila
TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session
House Bill No. 10570



INTRODUCED BY REP. PATRICK MICHAEL “PM” D. VARGAS

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF COOPERATIVES FOR FRY
GATHERERS, SMALL SCALE FISHERMEN AND FISHFARMERS

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Recent developments have highlighted the continuing constraints of the local fisheries sector in meeting the growing demand of an increasing population. In 2024, fish and other seafood products remained among the key contributors to food inflation, reflecting persistent supply-side challenges.¹

On the production side, the sector continues to rely heavily on millions of small-scale fisherfolk dispersed across coastal communities. According to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), municipal or small-scale fisheries account for a significant share of total fisheries employment, yet these fisherfolk remain among the poorest sectors in the country. Recent data show that poverty incidence among fisherfolk remains among the highest across basic sectors, estimated at around 30% or more in recent years.²

Despite their vital role in ensuring food security, many small-scale fishermen, fry gatherers, and fish farmers continue to operate under constrained conditions. Limited access to modern fishing gear, reliance on non-motorized or aging bancas, and inadequate post-harvest facilities—such as cold storage and ice plants—restrict both the volume and value of their catch. Moreover, climate

¹ Philippine Statistics Authority. 2024

² Philippine Statistics Authority. 2023

variability and extreme weather events further exacerbate their vulnerability, often disrupting fishing activities and affecting household incomes.

At the same time, while the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) reports a growing number of registered cooperatives nationwide, participation of fisherfolk in well-organized, adequately supported cooperatives remains limited, particularly in remote coastal areas. This gap reduces their ability to pool resources, access financing, improve bargaining power, and establish stable market linkages.

Empowering these marginalized fisherfolk must therefore be a priority of the national government. This bill seeks to promote and support the organization and strengthening of cooperatives among fry gatherers, small-scale fishermen, and fish farmers. Through cooperative structures, members can consolidate resources, access credit and government support, and invest in essential assets such as motorized bancas, improved fishing gear, and post-harvest facilities.

By fostering stronger cooperatives, the State can help enhance productivity, reduce post-harvest losses, stabilize incomes, and improve the overall resilience of the fisheries sector. Ultimately, this measure aims to contribute to food security, inclusive economic growth, and poverty reduction in coastal communities.

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



REP. PATRICK MICHAEL “PM” D. VARGAS

Fifth District, Quezon City

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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 “*Small Scale Fishfarmers Cooperatives Act*”.

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy - It is the policy of the State to promote the growth of cooperatives among fry gatherers, small-scale fishermen, and small fish farmers to enable them to receive an equitable share in the benefits delivered from the fishing industry. Such cooperatives shall receive the support and assistance of the government.

SECTION 3. Definition – For purposes of the Act, the following definitions shall apply.

- a) **Fry gatherer**- shall refer to an individual, usually self-employed, who is engaged in the catching, gathering or collecting of fish, utilizing for the purpose fishing boats of three gross tons or less or using gear without the use of such boats.
- b) **Small scale fishermen** – shall refer to an individual, either self-employed or employed by others, who is engaged in fishing, utilizing for the purpose fishing boats of three gross tons or less or using gear without the use of such boats.
- c) **Small fish farmer** – shall refer to an individual who owns not more than one of fishpond or leases not more than three hectares of fishponds or owns not more than one-half hectare of fish pens.

- d) **Cooperative** – shall mean an association of fry gatherers, small farmers organized and registered pursuant to Presidential Decree Numbered One Hundred Seventy-Five, as amended.
- e) **Organization of Cooperative** – fry gatherers, small-scale fishermen and small farmers shall be organized as cooperatives and be registered under Republic Act No. 6939 under the supervision of the Cooperative Development Authority.

SECTION 4. Cooperative Development Programs. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Department of Agriculture and the Cooperative Development Authority under the Office of the President shall initiate and develop programs to promote, encourage, and assist the organization of such cooperatives.

SECTION 5. Privileges of Cooperatives – In addition to the privileges granted to cooperatives under Presidential Decree Numbered One Hundred Seventy-Five, as further amended by Republic Act Numbered Six Thousand Nine Hundred Thirty-Nine, fishery cooperatives organized under this Act shall have the following fishery privileges:

- a) Availment of the privilege of constructing and operating oyster culture beds; gathering fish fry in municipal waters; operating fish fry in municipal water operating fishing boats of three gross or less in municipal waters, or fishing in municipal waters with nets, traps or other fishing gear not prohibited by Republic Act No. 8500, as provided in Section Twenty-Nine of Presidential Decree Numbered Seven Hundred Four, subject to the conditions imposed thereof;
- b) Availment of training programs, measures and studies conducted by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and other government agencies and instructions; and
- c) Availment of technical assistance provided by government agencies and private institutions.

SECTION 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations – The Cooperative Development Authority shall, in coordination with the Bureau of Fisheries and Resources, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 7. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof contrary to, or inconsistent with, this Act are hereby modified or repealed accordingly.

SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions of this Act not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SECTION 9. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in any national newspaper of general circulation or in the Official Gazette.

Approved,