

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE )  
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES )  
First Regular Session )

'04 AUG 31 P5:58

SENATE

S. B. No. 1743

RECEIVED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

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INTRODUCED BY THE HONORABLE MAR ROXAS

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EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to promote the development of the commercial handline fishing industry by recognizing the same under Philippine law, thereby complying with the new fishing regulations of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission of which the Philippines is a member.

Commercial handline fishing for large tuna is an important component of the Mindanao economy, particularly for General Santos City and Saranggani Province. The tuna handline fishing fleet consists of over 2,500 large *bancas* (pumpboats), employing over 3,000 fishermen, and producing over 30,000 metric tons of high-value tuna annually. The industry nets some P4.5 billion in returns while frozen sashimi processing accounts for over P2.5 billion worth of exported finished steaks and sashimi blocks annually.

Due to the increase in demand for large high-quality tuna abroad, the Mindanao tuna fishing fleet has increased in size throughout the years. Whereas in the past, boats were relatively small in size, fishing vessels today are in the 10-20 gross ton class allowing them to fish in international waters in the Pacific where large schools of tuna abound. However, fishing vessels remain to be of the simple traditional design with outriggers on either side of the hull. Moreover, handline fishery remains to be the predominant mode used by tuna fishermen. This method is environmentally safe and prudent in terms of resource management because it targets only large mature tuna.

The stricter fishing regulations adopted by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission may, however, prove to be detrimental to the development of the industry if Philippine law is not amended to accommodate the vessels used and practice of handline fishing. These regulations provide that it shall be the responsibility of the flag state to assure that each of its vessels are registered and licensed to fish outside of its waters. Otherwise, they shall be barred access to international fishing grounds. Under current Philippine Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) regulations, however, no handline fishing vessel will qualify for registration to fish outside our waters.

This bill, therefore, seeks to address this concern by amending pertinent provisions of the Fisheries Code of 1998 to include handline fishing in the definition of commercial fishing and allow the registration of handline fishing vessels. By so doing, we shall be in compliance with international fishing conventions and ensure that our handline fishing vessels will have continuous access to international waters for years to come.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate enactment of this measure is earnestly requested.

  
MAR Roxas

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AN ACT  
TO PROMOTE THE COMMERCIAL HANDLINE FISHING INDUSTRY  
BY DEFINING COMMERCIAL HANDLINE FISHING AND PROVIDING  
PERTINENT GOVERNMENT REGULATION, AMENDING FOR THE  
PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8550 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ~~THE~~ "THE  
PHILIPPINE FISHERIES CODE OF 1998" *✓*

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

**SECTION 1.** Section 4 of Republic Act No. 8550, otherwise known as "The Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998" is hereby amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 4 Definition of Terms. As used in this Code, the following terms and phrases shall mean as follows:

x x x

10. *Commercial Fishing.* - x x x

1. small scale commercial fishing. - x x x
2. Medium scale commercial fishing - x x x
3. Large scale commercial fishing. - x x x
4. COMMERCIAL HANDLINE FISHING. - A TRADITIONAL PASSIVE FISHING METHOD WHICH UTILIZES A SINGLE FISHING LINE AND AN ATTACHED HOOK.
5. COMMERCIAL HANDLINE FISHING VESSEL - A COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL WHICH EXCLUSIVELY UTILIZES THE COMMERCIAL HANDLINE FISHING METHOD.

**SECTION 2.** Section 28 of the same Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 28. *Commercial Fishing Vessel Registration* – The registration, documentation, inspection and manning of the operation of all types of fishing vessels plying Philippine waters shall be in accordance with existing laws, rules and regulations: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE CONCERNED REGULATORY AGENCIES SHALL PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR COMMERCIAL HANDLINE FISHING VESSELS THAT REFLECT THE SIMPLICITY AND TRADITIONAL NATURE THEREOF.”

**SECTION 3.** Section 32 of the same Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 32. *Fishing by Philippine Commercial Fishing Fleet in International Waters* – Fishing vessels of Philippine registry may operate in international waters or waters of other countries which allow fishing operations: Provided, That they comply with the safety, manning and other requirements of the Philippine Coast Guard, Maritime Industry Authority and other agencies concerned. PROVIDED, FURTHER, THAT THE MARITIME INDUSTRY AUTHORITY SHALL PROMULGATE MANNING AND SAFETY RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR COMMERCIAL HANDLINE FISHING VESSELS THAT REFLECT THE SIMPLICITY AND TRADITIONAL NATURE THEREOF; *Provided, however, That they secure x x x.*”

**SECTION 4.** Section 36 of the same Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 36. *Complement of Fishing Vessels.* Every commercial fishing vessel of Philippine registry when actually operated, shall be manned in accordance with the requirements of the Philippine Merchant Marine rules and regulations: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE MARITIME INDUSTRY AUTHORITY SHALL PROMULGATE MANNING RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR COMMERCIAL HANDLINE FISHING VESSELS THAT REFLECT THE SIMPLICITY AND TRADITIONAL NATURE THEREOF.”

**SECTION 5.** *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved, \_\_\_\_\_.