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SENATE

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INTRODUCED BY SENATOR VILLAR

RESOLUTION

URGING THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE RISING NUMBER OF WORKERS IN THE TUNA INDUSTRY LOSING THEIR JOBS DUE TO THE CLOSURE ORDER IMPOSED BY THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION, WITH THE END IN VIEW OF DRAFTING INTERVENTION POLICIES THAT WILL ASSIST AFFECTED WORKERS WHILE THE BAN IS IN FORCE

Whereas, an estimated 120,000 residents in Soccsksargen (Region XII) are directly and indirectly dependent on the tuna industry;

Whereas, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), an international governing body, issued a closure of pockets of the high seas in the Pacific Ocean to purse seine fishing, which normally employs fish aggregating devices to catch tuna stocks;

Whereas, the order took effect last January 1, 2010 and will be in enforced for two years;

Whereas, the order was issued primarily to allow yellowfin and bigeye tuna species to replenish;

Whereas, there are about fifty (50) local fishing companies based in General Santos City, the Tuna Capital of the Philippines, thirteen (13) of which have licenses to fish in the high seas covered by the purse seine ban;

Whereas, only five (5) of the 13 have fishing agreements with Pacific Island nations such as Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, translating to eight (8) affected fishing companies that have to be back in Philippine waters with an estimated total work force of 1,600 people;

Whereas, the Soccsksargen Federation of Fishing and Allied Industries, Inc. (SFFAI) earlier projected a 20 percent decline in tuna catch from purse seine fishing as a result of the ban, and workers will be directly hit;

Whereas, barely a month after its enforcement, players in the local tuna industry are already feeling the effects of the closure, with one fishing company (NH Agro Industrial Corp.) officially informing the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) of work stoppage for six months – affecting the jobs of 208 workers;

Whereas, Phillips Seafoods Philippines, Corp., which is engaged in the processing and export of frozen tuna products, was also forced to suspend operations for three months to curb further losses, resulting to 29 worker losing their jobs;

Whereas, the DOLE is expecting more local fishing companies to be affected by the ban, in the same manner the SFFAII is expecting more workers in the fishing sector to become jobless in the next few months: Now therefore be it

RESOLVED, as it is hereby resolved, to urge the Senate Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development, Local Government and other appropriate committees, to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the rising number of workers in the tuna industry losing their jobs due to the closure order imposed by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, with the end in view of drafting intervention policies that will assist affected workers while the ban is in force.

Adopted,



MANNY VILLAR
Senator