

Philippines news articles from January 2021 to April 2022



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Philippines bets on fisherfolk, but halts policy protecting town waters from big fishers

<https://www.rappler.com/environment/philippines-bets-fisherfolk-halts-policy-protecting-town-waters-big-fishers/>

"The pervasive problem in the Philippines' municipal waters of fishermen competing for good catch with commercial fishing vessels has been exacerbated by the national government's weak and slow implementation of the vessel monitoring system (VMS). Environmental groups believe this could have addressed the issue that disproportionately impacts artisanal fishers and, ultimately, imperils the country's food security.

In October 2020, the Department of Agriculture's Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) 266 took effect, making the VMS installation mandatory for CFVs weighing 3.1 gross tons and above. The vessel owners are also assigned with maritime mobile service identity numbers by the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) as part of this tracking system.

"VMS requires a transponder onboard a vessel to transmit its positions and other messages regularly via satellite or shore-based stations, Julio Amador III, a transparency consultant at Global Fishing Watch in the Philippines, explained to Rappler."

Tropical storm Megi claims 138 lives in Philippines amid landslides, floods

<https://zeenews.india.com/world/tropical-storm-megi-claims-138-lives-in-philippines-amid-landslides-floods-2453935.html>

"The death toll from tropical storm Megi that battered the Philippines rose to 138, said the authorities.

Central and southern parts of the Philippines were hit by flooding and massive landslides last Saturday and Sunday, with the central Leyte province being the worst affected with 132 deaths.

The Baybay City government on Thursday said in a report that 101 bodies have been retrieved so far from the landslides in several villages in the city. Police said 31 bodies were recovered in

Abuyog town in Leyte province, one in Samar province and two in Cebu province.

The Philippine military said 159 areas in the provinces of Capiz, Aklan, Antique, and Iloilo in central Philippines were inundated as of Wednesday even as Megi dissipated, Xinhua news agency reported.

Megi, which hit land last Sunday, is the first tropical storm this year to hit the Southeast Asian

country. The Philippines archipelago which lies on the Pacific typhoon belt is battered by about 20 typhoons and storms every year as one of the world's most disaster-prone countries."

Death toll from Philippine landslides, floods rises to 58

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/death-toll-philippine-landslides-floods-rises-58-2623021>

"The death toll from landslides and floods in the Philippines rose to 58 on Wednesday (Apr 13), official tallies showed, as rescuers dug up more bodies with their bare hands in villages crushed by rain-induced avalanches of mud and earth.

Most of the deaths from tropical storm Megi - the strongest to hit the disaster-prone archipelago this year - were in the central province of Leyte where a series of landslides has devastated communities.

At least 47 people died and 27 were missing after waves of sodden soil smashed into farming settlements over the weekend, local authorities said. Just over 100 people were injured. Three people were also killed in the central province of Negros Oriental and three on the main southern island of Mindanao, according to the national disaster agency.

Search operations for survivors in Pilar village resumed at first light, with boats carrying rescuers to the coastal community of around 400 people after a landslide on Tuesday pushed most houses into the sea.

At least five people were killed, police said..."

Philippines Fisheries Bureau taps infotech for improved monitoring, control, surveillance

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1171591>

"The Philippines Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources has implemented the Integrated Marine Environment Monitoring System (IMEMS) Project, aiming to enhance the government's capability in the monitoring, control, and surveillance system over its maritime domain while intensifying the campaign against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The IMEMS project is an innovative, optimized, and integrated monitoring system that expands and improves the DA-BFAR's current program.

With the IMEMS project, the DA-BFAR can now track and communicate with Philippine-flagged fishing vessels in real-time on a national scale, integrating communication, licensing, and law enforcement functionalities to ensure compliance with various conservation and management measures being implemented in Philippine waters, exclusive economic zones (EEZ), and other coastal states..."

500 fishermen in the Philippines get fuel subsidy amid oil price hikes

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1572363/500-fishermen-in-subic-get-fuel-subsidy-amid-oil-price-hikes>

"At least 500 fishermen from the Philippines province of Subic, Zambales, received Monday cash cards containing P3,000 worth of fuel discounts, as the Department of Agriculture (DA) launched its fuel subsidy program in Central Luzon.

In a statement, the regional office of DA's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources said the discount cards were distributed at the Bulungan fish port in this town.

The 500 fishermen were the initial recipients of the program's first tranche, which would help them cope with the soaring prices of petroleum products.

A total of 6,709 fisherfolk in the region will receive the fuel discounts for the program's first tranche targeted for completion by April..."

French 'State Action at Sea as a model for SE Asian Coast Guards

<https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/french-state-action-at-sea-as-a-model-for-se-asian-coast-guards>

"South-East Asian countries like Philippines and Indonesia have to cope with an increasing number of maritime issues in order to exert their sovereign rights over their territorial waters, archipelagic waters and exclusive economic zones (EEZ).

In the midst of a tense geostrategic environment, the security of maritime areas and, more broadly, security in the high seas, are subject to major threats and illegal activities as recently summarized in the last Information Fusion Centre (IFC) annual report: piracy and sea robbery, maritime terrorism, cyber-attacks and AIS (automatic identification system) spoofing, trafficking of all kinds, illegal fishing activities and maritime pollution.

To address all the above-mentioned challenges, some countries make the choice to entrust to a specialized administration the relief and police missions. However, the implementation of these missions may fall into another state organization, which paradoxically does not consist of a specialized administration: it is the choice made, in particular, by France.

The French model "or 'State Action at Sea "appeared in the 1970s with the extension of the national maritime domain and the considerable growth of human activities at sea. Occasionally, since the creation of exclusive economic zones in 1976, France had to reconsider its maritime organization in order to be able to enforce its sovereign rights on vast maritime spaces. The studies conducted by the State services had quickly shown that, not only the creation of a specialized coastline administration would have been very expensive and would have suffered from a lack of efficiency..."

Philippines intensifies food stability, productivity amid Russia-Ukraine conflict

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/03/07/supplements/ph-intensifies-food-stability-productivity-amid-russia-ukraine-conflict/1835307>

"The Philippines has strengthened its efforts to ensure food security, productivity and economic growth, as the conflict between Russia and Ukraine continues.

President Rodrigo Duterte said mitigating measures and contingency plans will be in place such as food stability as part of the government's proactive response to the conflict. The President also approved the fuel discount vouchers for farmers and fisherfolks due to the rising oil prices.

The Department of Agriculture DA cited reasons why it decided to have a new certificate for import of small pelagic fish for this quarter of 2022. The fishing sector is one of the sub-sectors of agriculture that was badly hit by Typhoon Odette.

There is a need to enhance the capacity of fishers to catch. The high prices of fish in most of the markets contribute to food inflation. Logistic problems must be properly managed as well.

The National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC) said the country has more than enough supply, but based on the data of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), there is a potential deficit of about 119,000 metric tons this quarter.

Government should look after farmers, fisherfolk as oil price increases in Philippines

<https://www.bulatlat.com/2022/03/03/government-should-look-after-farmers-fisherfolk-as-oil-price-increases/>

"Farmers and fisherfolk are among those badly hit as oil prices continue to increase. 'Every oil price increase is an added burden to consumers, workers, farmers, and the poor. These price hikes have resulted in increased cost of production and lower income for farmers, fisherfolk, and transportation workers who have nothing to bring home to their families now, said Rafael Mariano, chairperson of Anakpawis Partylist. Government data said that the total net increase is at P7.95 per liter for gasoline, P10.20 per liter for diesel and P9.10 per liter for kerosene.

While the Philippine government said that it will provide fuel subsidies for affected transport sector, fisherfolk and farmers, Mariano stressed the need to suspend excise taxes on oil products which, he said, can immediately 'slash oil prices and give economic relief to consumers.

Apart from suspending the excise tax, there are also calls for the government to revisit the law that deregulated the oil industry. 'The government must have a strong political will to address the nonstop oil price hikes burdening Filipinos, Mariano, former agrarian reform secretary, said.

In a statement, fisherfolk group Pamalakaya said that they expect a significant decrease in fisheries output for the first quarter of the year due to the oil price hikes. Ronnel Arambulo, spokesperson of Pamalakaya, said that fuel cost covers almost 80 percent of production expenses.

In a study conducted by Pamalakaya, fisherfolk in Zambales need to spend P8,960 (\$173) for their monthly fuel expenses, given that the fuel cost is currently P56 (\$1.09) per liter. This is \$34 higher as the fuel cost used to be P45 (\$0.87) per liter.

Meanwhile, both Anakpawis and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas warned companies not to take advantage of the situation between Russia and Ukraine 'to jack up prices of food and other commodities. While there are noodle companies that have announced that their prices may increase, the farmers groups said that the US, not Russia, remains to be the leading source of wheat for the country.

Vessel monitoring key to fight against plunder of Philippines' seas, says advocacy group

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1556517/vessel-monitoring-key-to-the-fight-vs-plunder-of-ph-seas>

"I would like to remind everyone that the sea gives us our livelihood and food. We need to take care of it. Fisherman Ruperto Aleroza, head of the group Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Samahan sa Kanayunan, made this appeal to his fellow fishermen in light of efforts to fully implement the Vessel Monitoring Measure (VMM) system which would keep track of commercial fishing vessels, among other objectives.

Aleroza had joined the group Oceana in appealing for full enforcement of the VMM. The appeal came in the wake of an order by Solicitor General Jose Calida to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), which were among agencies tasked with implementing VMM, to comply with a court decision voiding Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 266, the legal document which is now basis of VMM enforcement.

FAO No. 266 was signed by Agriculture Secretary William Dar on Oct. 12, 2020 to list down rules and regulations in the implementation of the VMM and installment of Electronic Reporting System (ERS) in commercial fishing vessels operating in the Philippines.

Philippines: More support needed for thousands still reeling from Typhoon Rai

https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1111142?utm_source=UN+News+-+Newsletter&utm_campaign=5f461b3b10-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_02_03_01_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fdbf1af606-5f461b3b10-107475426

"Humanitarians are scaling up assistance in the Philippines to assist hundreds of thousands still impacted by Typhoon Rai which struck the islands seven weeks ago, the UN said on Wednesday, launching a \$169 million revised appeal to meet the urgent and growing needs. The revised Humanitarian Needs and Priorities Plan (HNP) targets 840,000 people over six months, up from 530,000 in the initial \$107 million HNP, released on 24 December.

‘The revised HNP reflects our new understanding based on over 70 field assessments, that despite the massive rapid response by the Government and civil society organizations, humanitarian needs remain very high, said Gustavo Gonzalez, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Philippines. Typhoon Rai, known locally as Odette, struck the Philippines on 16 December, sweeping through 11 of 17 provinces, including some of the poorest parts of the country.

Island Pacific raises funds to buy boats for fishermen in the Philippines affected by Typhoon Odette

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/island-pacific-raises-funds-to-purchase-boats-for-fishermen-affected-by-typhoon-odette-301473996.html>

"Through Project Simon Peter, Island Pacific comes to the aid of fishermen in Palawan and Siargao as they raise funds to replace the boats Typhoon Odette destroyed. Island Pacific's Project Simon Peter targets to replace damaged and lost boats. This will help fishermen rebuild their lives as they go back to the only source of livelihood they know “fishing.

Island Pacific has partnered with Petix Productions in Palawan and Richard Sharpe, a local in Siargao, to make sure the donations from Project Simon Peter reach the fishermen. On top of the Filipino supermarket's fundraising efforts, Petix Productions is also raising funds for construction materials like plywood, marine epoxy, and bronze nails to repair some boats.

Sarangani Bay communities in the Philippines battle crown-of-thorns starfish outbreak

<https://www.bworldonline.com/sarangani-bay-communities-battle-crown-of-thorns-starfish-outbreak/>

"Coastal communities around Sarangani Bay have been working together to collect crown-of-thorn (COT) starfish as an outbreak threatens coral reefs at the protected area. Protected Area Superintendent Joy C. Ologuin said teams composed of residents, local government workers and volunteers have collected over 100,000 of the COT starfish over the last three months.

'This is one of the worst COT breakouts not only in SBPS (Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape) but in the whole country, Ms. Ologuin said in a statement Tuesday released Monday by the Environment department's Soccsksargen regional office. 'The 101,323 COT collected do not include those collection efforts from volunteers during weekends.

She called on other stakeholders, including businesses and civic organizations, to help as continued gathering is needed. The Protected Area Management Office offers rice-for-work to encourage more community members to participate.

Typhoon-hit small-scale fishermen in the Philippines' Bohol to get aid

<https://www.boholchronicle.com.ph/2022/01/31/small-scale-fishermen-in-bohol-to-get-initial-p4-million-from-bfar/>

"The Philippines Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) VII has allocated at least P4 million as initial financial assistance to small-scale fishermen in Bohol whose livelihood were affected by Typhoon 'Odette. According to BFAR 7 director Alan Poquita, the allocation is part of the P17.5 million set aside by the agency for the entire region. He said that the BFAR is expected to be allocated for Bohol, which has incurred almost P1 billion in damages to its fisheries due to the typhoon.

Based on data from the BFAR, the storm also left around P362 million worth of damages to government fisheries and other related facilities. Poquita noted that the government will be prioritizing small-scale fisherfolks in their post-typhoon relief efforts.

Women power in the Philippines' Sarangani Bay keeps coral predators away

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1546377/women-power-in-sarangani-bay-keeps-coral-predators-away>

"The crown of thorns starfish that have been destroying corals in the 215,950-hectare Sarangani Bay Protected Seascape (SBPS) in General Santos City, the Philippines, have found their match among women in coastal communities here.

Thanks to a reward of rice given out by the SBPS Protected Area Management Office (Pamo), women volunteers, most of them housewives, are coming out in groups to pluck the crown of thorns out of the sea for good, preventing the invasive species from badly damaging the rich coral system in Sarangani Bay.

Joy Ologuin, head of the SBPS Pamo, said they launched 'Dap-ag Kapitalit Bugas (crown of thorns in exchange for rice) in Maasim town, Sarangani province, to combat the infestation that started in the area last year. The program aims to contain the damage brought about by this species of starfish, a known coral predator, through the help of local communities.

Philippines asked to shorten fishing ban to prevent imports

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/01/25/2156118/villar-da-shorten-fishing-ban-prevent-imports>

"The Philippines department of Agriculture (DA) should shorten the fishing ban enforced in many parts of the country to prevent the need to import fish, Sen. Cynthia Villar said yesterday. Villar, who chairs the Senate committee on agriculture and food, issued the statement during the panel's hearing on bills seeking to create 11 new fish hatcheries in various parts of the country that are supposed to be put up by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

She expressed dismay that the BFAR, which is under the DA, has failed to put up a single hatchery out of the 37 mandated hatcheries funded by Congress since 2016. She voiced fears that the same fate would meet the 11 additional hatcheries proposed in the Senate even if they would be approved.

Villar said various fishing organizations and stakeholders met and agreed to press the DA to hold off its plan to import 60,000 metric tons of galunggong (round scad) or at least greatly reduce its volume.

UN revises scale of destruction caused by Philippine typhoon

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2022-01/philippines-typhoon-rai-un-revises-scale-destruction.html>

"A little over a month after Typhoon Rai (local name Odette) hit the Philippines, the United Nations says that the initial assessment of the destruction caused has been 'badly underestimated, with the number of people 'seriously affected' rising to 9 million. Typhoon Rai, which ravaged the southern and central regions of the Philippines on 16 and 17 December, was the second-deadliest disaster last year after the earthquake in Haiti.

The storm swept through 11 of the country's 17 regions, leaving a swathe of destruction. It damaged houses and roads, tore down power lines, destroyed trees and crops, and smashed fishing boats to pieces. The Government declared a state of calamity in six regions. UN Resident Coordinator in the Philippines Gustavo Gonzalez said on Thursday the target would be revised after more than 66 field assessments showed the destruction was far worse than initially thought.

"One month since the first landfall of Super Typhoon Rai we realize that we have badly underestimated the scale of devastation," Gonzalez told a virtual briefing. He said more than 1.5 million houses were damaged or destroyed in the storm - almost a third more than in 2013's Super Typhoon Haiyan.

The number of people affected has grown 3 times to 3 million now from his briefing on 21 December. In terms of destroyed homes, the number has increased 7 times from 200,000 to over 1.5 million, which is more than that of Haiyan. In terms of casualties, the first assessment of 177 deaths has grown to 405 now.

Philippines agriculture chief details reasons for fish imports

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1543122/let-that-sink-in-agri-chief-details-reasons-to-import-fish>

"The Philippines Department of Agriculture (DA) on Thursday defended its decision to import 60,000 metric tons of fish in the first quarter of this year, insisting that local supply will fall short of demand during the period and this could cause prices to sharply increase. At an online briefing, Agriculture Secretary William Dar said the country needed more than 800,000 MT of fish to meet the demand for January to March 2022.

Supply, on the other hand, was projected to reach only 681,000 MT, or a gap of 119,000 MT as estimated by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) that needed to be filled either by raising production or imports.

Dar early this week announced that he had authorized the importation of 60,000 MT of fish to cover half of the estimated shortage in local supply in the first quarter. The importation, according to Dar, was aimed primarily at stabilizing supply and keep prices in the wet markets

from rising. The basic economic theory of supply and demand says that if too many buyers are chasing after a limited number of goods, then prices will tend to go up.

Olango Island in the Philippines still waiting for aid a month after Typhoon Odette

<https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/residents-olango-island-cebu-wait-for-aid-after-typhoon-odette/>

"On Sunday, January 16, a month after Typhoon Odette devastated Olango Island, residents lined up for their first round of P5,000 in financial assistance. The clouds were dark again. The wind was strong. But for the first time in a while, on this sleepy isolated island, the people had at least something to look forward to.

It took at least two weeks after the typhoon for the first food relief from government agencies on mainland Cebu to reach the people here. While Olango is only adjacent to the modern Metro Cebu, life here is much slower. The disparity between the isolated fishing village of Olango and the bustling Metro Cebu has existed for decades but only became more pronounced in the aftermath of the disaster.

While power, water, electricity, and cell signal have returned in many of the urban areas of Cebu, many of the province's rural villages remain in the dark. Odette's destructive winds wrecked the only port capable of docking large ships and RO-ROs (roll-on roll-off barges). Bringing aid here has been a logistical nightmare for local government and non-governmental organizations trying to deliver the much-needed help for the residents.

Coastal tribes proposed as sea patrollers in the Philippines

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1542614/marcos-sara-tandem-eyes-tapping-badjaos-as-sea-patrollers-fishers-group-says-its-unnecessary-dangerous>

"The tandem of former senator Ferdinand 'Bongbong Marcos Jr. and Davao Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio is looking into using Badjaos as sea patrollers to protect the country's marine environment and prevent illegal fishing. The proposal, however, was met with sharp criticism from a militant fishermen's group. 'Being expert fishermen, deep-sea divers, and navigators, Badjaos possess the skills to become effective 'Bantay Dagat' deputies, the tandem said in a statement. 'Their heritage and culture have always been tied to the sea, and they can be an invaluable ally in our environmental protection efforts.

A group of progressive fishermen on Wednesday opposed the proposal of the tandem, calling it 'very dangerous and unnecessary. 'Tapping Badjaos as sea patrols is a very dangerous measure

as this tribe group will never be capable of enforcing laws against illegal and destructive fishing vessels that are backed by big-fishing interests, and even despotic politicians, Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) said in a statement sent to INQUIRER.net.

‘Badjaos don’t need a law enforcement position because there are already the coast guard and maritime police to enforce the existing fishing laws against large-scale destructive and illegal fishing, Pamalakaya added.

Putting monitoring systems in fishing vessels in the Philippines now made voluntary

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1542645/putting-monitoring-systems-in-fishing-vessels-voluntary-bfar>

"The installation of a vessel monitoring system (VMS) and AN electronic reporting system (ERS) for commercial Philippine-flagged fishing vessels will now be voluntary, according to Michael Andayog, the officer in charge of the Fisheries Regulatory and Licensing Division of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR).

The issue was tackled on Tuesdays during the virtual consultative meeting with the industry’s stakeholders. The decision was made after some commercial fishing companies, through a petition, urged the Malabon City Regional Trial Court to cite BFAR and the National Telecommunications Commission for indirect contempt for allegedly defying a court order prohibiting them from implementing Fisheries Administrative Order No. 266.

Fishers in the Philippines oppose fish imports

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2022/01/20/2154999/fishers-buck-fish-imports>

"Fisherfolk group Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) is opposing the Philippines Department of Agriculture (DA)’s approval of the importation of 60,000 metric tons (MT) of small pelagic fish, saying such a move will hurt local fishers. In a statement, the group said more fish imports would pull down the farmgate prices of fish, forcing small fishers into deep crisis and bankruptcy.

‘Flooding our local markets with imported fish will pose more harm than good to our struggling fishing industry, PAMALAKAYA National chairperson Fernando Hicap said.

‘This liberalization scheme never addresses the country’s crisis in fisheries production. Rather, it is burden to local fisherfolks whose fishery products are affected by imported fish, he said.

Agriculture Secretary William Dar announced earlier this week the issuance of 60,000 MT of certificates of necessity (CNI) to import small pelagic fish in the first quarter.

Filipino environmental defender calls for more coastal greenbelts

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/focus/2022/01/16/filipino-environmental-defender-calls-for-more-coastal-greenbelts>

"Siargao Island in the Philippine Sea became known to the world for its surfing sites but in the aftermath of Super typhoon Odette (also known as Typhoon Rai), another feature of the island is getting attention: its mangroves, which have been credited with helping protect adjacent communities from the severest impact of the storm in December 2021.

According to reports from those who survived the destruction that Odette brought to the Visayas and Mindanao regions several days before Christmas, Siargao's mangrove forests protected residents from a storm surge headed toward Del Carmen, one of the nine municipalities on the island. The municipality boasts the largest mangrove forest in the Philippines, covering 4,871ha. Siargao is also the country's largest protected area under the National Integrated Protected Area System Act due to its 8,620ha mangrove forest.

Extreme storms like Odette and Yolanda highlight the need for building what Mindanao marine scientist Jurgenne Primavera calls 'coastal greenbelts'. Primavera, recognised by Time magazine as a 'Hero of the Environment' in 2008 for her work on mangrove ecosystem conservation, has called for legislation that would create a belt of mangrove forests across the Philippines to protect coastal communities from severe disasters.

This undertaking is even more urgent since "as the World Economic Forum warned in 2019 "over a third of the world's mangroves have disappeared, and they are being cleared faster than tropical rainforests due to land reclamation for agriculture, industrial development and infrastructure projects.

Philippines govt. gives incentives to boost sustainable fishery programme of local government units

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1165285>

"The Philippines Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in Western Visayas is banking on the Malinis at Masaganang Karagatan (MMK) program to boost the efforts of local government units on sustainable fishery. MMK is the banner program of BFAR that gives

recognition and incentives to outstanding coastal communities for their efforts on sustainable resources and fisheries management since 2016.

This first quarter of 2022, BFAR is expected to transfer funds to three coastal LGUs in the region chosen as regional winners in 2021 since they decided to forego the ceremonial awarding amid the health pandemic, said BFAR Regional Director Remia Aparri in an interview on Thursday.

They included the municipality of Caluya in Antique, which will receive PHP2 million worth of project as the first placer, and municipalities of San Joaquin and Concepcion in Iloilo that will be receiving PHP1 million and PHP500,000 worth of projects for landing in second and third places, respectively.

The winners were judged based on their implementation of the zero-waste, closed season for species that are important in their municipality, marine protected area (MPA), campaign against illegal fishing, and effective mangrove protection and rehabilitation program.

Typhoon Odette destroys over 7K fishing boats in Leyte Island, the Philippines

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1164960>

"Typhoon Odette has damaged at least 7,265 fishing boats in Southern Leyte and some parts of Leyte province, affecting the livelihood of 8,595 fishermen in these two provinces, the Philippines Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said in its initial report.

The fishery sector in the region has incurred PHP1.06 billion worth of losses due to the typhoon's fierce winds and storm surges, said BFAR Eastern Visayas Regional Director Juan Albaladejo. In Southern Leyte, badly-hit fishing communities are in the towns of San Ricardo, Pintuyan, Saint Bernard, Libagon, Sogod, Maasin City, San Juan, Bontoc, Tomas Oppus, Malitbog, Padre Burgos, Hinunangan, and Liloan.

In Leyte, damages to the fishery sector were also recorded in Abuyog, Bato, Baybay, Dulag, Hindang, Hilongos, Inopacan, Javier, Leyte, Macarthur, Matalom, Mayorga, Merida, Ormoc City, Palo, Tanauan, and Tolosa. Albaladejo said assessment is ongoing in the island town of Limasawa, one of the areas hit hard by 'Odette' that ravaged Mindanao and Visayas provinces on Dec. 16, 2021.

Fisherfolk in the Philippines call for suspension of closed fishing season policy in typhoon-affected provinces

<https://www.bworldonline.com/fisherfolk-call-for-suspension-of-closed-fishing-season-policy-in-typhoon-affected-provinces/>

"An organization of small-scale fishermen in the Philippines has expressed its opposition to importing fish for typhoon-hit areas, calling instead for aid to restore its members' livelihoods and the lifting of an order imposing a closed fishing season on key fishing grounds. The Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) said in a statement on Wednesday that the plan to import frozen fish for areas hit by Typhoon Odette (international name: Rai) will not address the livelihoods lost due to the typhoon.

'Instead of imports, we call for a quick and concrete rehabilitation of the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of fisherfolk whose fishing gear and boats were swept away by the recent typhoon. This action would restore the wheels of production and stabilize the supply and prices of fish in the typhoon-hit areas, PAMALAKAYA National Chairman Fernando L. Hicap said.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) approved a plan to import 11,015 metric tons of frozen small pelagic fish for wet markets in typhoon-hit areas to keep fish prices from rising due to lack of supply. PAMALAKAYA proposed that the DA expedite its rehabilitation efforts for coastal communities to help the fishermen rebuild their livelihoods. It said imports will negatively impact fisherfolk income by 'driv(ing) down farmgate prices.

'The immediate impact of imports will be felt by small fisherfolk whose local products will be outcompeted by imported fish, Mr. Hicap added. PAMALAKAYA also urged the government to lift Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) 167-3, which in November imposed a three-month closed fishing season in 33 coastal towns in Regions V, VI, and VII. The FAO will be in force until February.

Stop plan to import fish, group tells Philippines Department of Agriculture

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/01/06/business/agribusiness/group-to-da-stop-plan-to-import-fish/1828288>

"A fishers' group in the Philippines called on the Department of Agriculture (DA) to scrap its plan to import fish and instead push for quick and concrete rehabilitation of the livelihood of affected local fisherfolk whose fishing gears and boats were swept away by the recent typhoon. In a statement on Wednesday, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) said that importation of frozen fish for areas in the Visayas and Mindanao that were hit by Typhoon ""Odette"" will ""not stabilize the fish supply and market prices."

"Instead, Pamalakaya asked the Agriculture department to ""expedite its rehabilitation efforts on the devastated coastal communities to help the fisherfolk return to their fishing livelihood."" ""Instead of importation, we call for a quick and concrete rehabilitation of the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of fisherfolk..."

This action would restore the wheels of production and stabilize the supply and prices of fish in the typhoon-hit areas," said Fernando Hicap, Pamalakaya national chairman. The fishers' group reminded the DA on the negative effects of importation to local and small fisherfolk, as imported fishery products drive down farmgate prices.

Hicap, former Anakpawis party-list representative, pointed out that "the immediate impact of importation would be felt by small fisherfolk whose local products would be outcompeted by imported fish." Furthermore, Pamalakaya called for the lifting of the Fisheries Administrative Order 167-3, which established a three-month closed fishing season across the Visayan Sea from November 15 last year until February this year.

Scientists in the Philippines urge govt. to develop mangrove forests, seagrass beds to protect coastal residents

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/climate-and-environment/2021/12/30/2150933/scientists-urge-govt-develop-mangrove-forests-seagrass-beds-protect-coastal-residents>

"A scientist group in the Philippines has called on the government to develop mangrove and beach forests, and seagrass beds, which can help protect coastal communities from hazards.

In a statement Thursday, the Advocates of Science and Technology for the People (AGHAM) urged the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of the Interior and Local Government to establish coastal greenbelts instead of relocating coastal residents affected by Typhoon Odette (Rai) away from the sea.

According to AGHAM, these ecosystems are natural barriers against storm surge and coastal erosion. Mangrove and beach forests, and seagrass meadows also serve as habitats for commercially important fish and as carbon sinks.

Typhoon Odette damage to agriculture in the Philippines pegged at almost P6 bn, so far

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1532928/fwd-odette-damage-to-agriculture-reaches-almost-6-billion>

"The damage caused by Typhoon Odette to the agriculture sector has so far reached nearly P6 billion 'and still counting, with over 61,000 farmers and fishermen affected, Agriculture Secretary William Dar said Tuesday. In a briefing with President Rodrigo Duterte aired on Tuesday morning, Dar said that the total value loss so far recorded is at P5.79 billion, affecting 61,581 farmers and fishermen.

More than 70,000 hectares of farmlands were likewise affected and almost 105,000 metric tons were lost due to the typhoon. Dar said the fisheries sector registered the most damage, amounting to P1.8 billion or 30.9% of the total damage.

Coastal folk displaced in Siargao, the Philippines, can't return, may get govt. land

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1533256/displaced-siargao-coastal-folk-cant-return-may-get-govt-land>

"Residents of coastal areas in typhoon-devastated Siargao in the Philippines will not be allowed to rebuild their homes there and will instead be given land in other parts of the island, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The no-build zone policy is meant to avoid a repeat of the destruction of their houses when Typhoon 'Odette' (international name: Rai) struck the island nearly two weeks ago, Environment Undersecretary Benny Antiporda told President Duterte during a meeting at Malacaang on Monday.

A video of the meeting was aired on Tuesday. In response, the President said idle government lands should be given to displaced residents as part of the rehabilitation effort. 'Those idle government land, idle lands of the government [that are] not productive, better give it to the people right away, Mr. Duterte said.

Fishermen in the Philippines 'cautiously upbeat' for 2022

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/28/farmers-fishermen-cautiously-upbeat-for-2022/>

"Filipino livestock growers and fish producers are cautiously optimistic for the agriculture sector's prospects in 2022 despite myriad challenges the past two years. In a forum hosted by food security advocacy group Tugon Kabuhayan, local tilapia and bangus producers said they continue to invest and expand capacity even with limited or no government support.

'All we ask is for the next administration to ensure ease of doing business and to stop excessive fish imports, Taal Lake Aquaculture Alliance Inc. (TLAAI) spokesperson Adrienne Nera said.

Philippines council backs proposed summary eviction of residents on coastal easements

<https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/12/27/NDRRMC-backs-proposed-summary-eviction-of-residents-on-coastal-easements.html>

"The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) of the Philippines on Monday backed the "summary eviction" of residents living along coastal easements, a proposal made by President Rodrigo Duterte following a deadly typhoon. "

"The President's statement was borne out of his grave concern about those areas that have been affected...The houses that were totally destroyed were exposed to the storm surge hazard, flood hazard, and landslide hazard," NDRRMC spokesman Mark Timbal told CNN Philippines' The Source. "

"What the President said is in line with the national effort to ensure all populations are removed from danger areas by relocation," he added. President Rodrigo Duterte made the proposal last week after Interior Secretary Eduardo Aao said his department will ensure the implementation of a policy that prohibits dwelling within 40 meters from the shoreline to mitigate the impact of natural hazards.

Philippines Department of Agriculture sets P2.6-B assistance for typhoon-hit farmers, fishermen

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/12/24/21/da-sets-p26-b-aid-for-typhoon-hit-farmers-fishermen>

"A total of P2.6 billion worth of assistance is available for farmers and fishermen from 10 regions affected by the onslaught of Typhoon Odette, the Department of Agriculture said on Friday. Farmers and fishermen lost their livelihood when the typhoon that brought strong winds and heavy rains swept through the country's 10 regions last week. "

"Ten regions were affected and the initial damage to the agriculture and fisheries sector is at P3.5 billion but luckily we were able to give advise early and rice and corn were harvested last month. Our rice and corn production was not that affected", said Agriculture Assistant Secretary Noel Reyes.

UN allocates \$12 mn emergency funds for typhoon response in Philippines

https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/un-allocates-12-mn-emergency-funds-for-typhoon-response-in-philippines-121122400183_1.html

"UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths on Thursday announced a \$12 million rapid response allocation from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund to support the response to the devastating typhoon Rai in the Philippines.

The allocation will help 220,000 vulnerable people through interventions in food security, protection, water and sanitation hygiene, camp management, shelter and logistics, as well as telecommunications in the hardest-hit Caraga region and Region VIII, Xinhua news agency quoted the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs as saying.

The UN resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator in the Philippines, Gustavo Gonzalez, said on Thursday that typhoon Rai has been devastating. Some 3 million people need assistance, among them 1 million children. A total of 631,000 have been displaced and about 200,000 houses have been damaged, he told reporters at the UN headquarters in New York.

Marine scientist presses creation of ‘coastal greenbelts’ to cushion typhoon impacts

<https://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2021/12/marine-scientist-presses-creation-of-coastal-greenbelts-to-cushion-typhoon-impacts/>

"Jurgenne Primavera, a renowned marine scientist from Mindanao in the Philippines, has pushed anew the need to legislate the creation of ‘coastal greenbelts’ across the Philippines in the wake of the devastation wreaked by typhoon ‘Odette’ (international name: ‘Rai’). ‘We have to move from disaster response to resilience, specifically coastal resilience for a country yearly blighted by 20 storms which make landfall where the sea meets the sand, meaning on the beach lining most of our 36,300-km long coastlines.

So we need coastal greenbelts, she posted on social media. Primavera, who was born and raised in Agusan del Norte and was named by Time Magazine as ‘Hero of the Environment’ in 2008 for her work in mangrove conservation, said the coastal greenbelts were needed by the country decades ago.

According to her, mangroves can greatly help mitigate the impact of typhoons in coastal areas. She cited a study by McIvor et al in 2012, which states that a greenbelt 100 meters wide will absorb or reduce wave energy by up to 60 percent.

Primavera raised the need to establish coastal greenbelts following Odette’s wrath, which caused massive destruction on Siargao Island in Surigao del Norte and Dinagat Islands province in Mindanao and other parts of the Visayas.

Consumers in Philippines asked to ‘buy local to support chicken, fish, and pork sectors

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/12/12/consumers-asked-to-buy-local-to-support-chicken-fish-and-pork-sectors/>

"Local food producers made another appeal to Filipinos to buy local chicken, fish, and pork during the holidays, as this will not only provide consumers fresh options but will also help their industry, which is still reeling from the impact of previous lockdown restrictions and continuous importation. In a text exchange, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement President Edicio De La Torre said he wishes for Filipino consumers to buy local meat and fish, especially during this Christmas season.

'If you buy local meat and fish, they are not only fresh but also healthier than imported ones that are frozen, especially if they are sold in markets that don't have the prescribed storage facilities, Dela Torre said. He also said that there is enough local supply of fish catch from artisanal and commercial fishing, combined with fish harvest from aquaculture for the holidays.

In the Philippines, the estimated per capita consumption for fish and other fishery products stood at 40 per kilograms (/kg) per year, while the annual local consumption of pork is 15 kg per capita. For chicken, the estimated per capita consumption yearly is 8.2 kg. Like Dela Torre, Atty. Karen Jimeno, legal counsel of Vitarich Corporation Inc., is also making an appeal to consumers this time for chicken.

Philippines govt. readies more renewable energy use in agri-fishery sector

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2021/12/05/2145732/government-readies-more-re-use-agri-fishery-sector>

"The government of the Philippines is eyeing to increase the utilization of cost-efficient renewable energy (RE) systems and technologies in the country's agriculture and fisheries sector as it is set to implement an eight-year blueprint for the initiative.

The strategic directions for the Renewable Energy Program for the Agri-Fishery Sector (REPAFS) were recently presented during the first meeting of a joint technical working group (JTWG) chaired by the Department of Agriculture- Bureau of Agricultural and Fisheries Engineering (DA-BAFE) and the Department of Energy's Renewable Energy Management Bureau (REMB).

Formulated by the BAFE, the REPAFS is an eight-year program that will be implemented from 2022 to 2030. It acts as the blueprint in the effective and efficient integration of RE in agriculture and fisheries sectors, and serves as a component of the National Renewable Energy Program (NREP).

Short-term projects under the program or from 2022 to 2026 include promotion of RE technologies for agri-fisheries production and postharvest operations; and the integration of design of different RE systems as additional or alternative power source of agricultural and fisheries facilities (including comparative cost studies for different RE set-ups.

Local governments in the Philippines urged to enforce Visayan Sea fishing ban

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/11/17/local-governments-urged-to-enforce-visayan-sea-fishing-ban/>

"The Philippines Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) is urging local government units (LGUs) to strictly enforce the three-month fishing ban along the vast Visayan Sea. BFAR-6 Regional Director Remia Aparri said LGUs must have teams to strictly enforce the ban for fishermen to harvest and trade herrings, mackerels and sardines.

The three-month fishing ban that started last November 15 to February 15, 2022 aims to reverse the depleting population of the three types of fishes along the Visayan Sea, which is considered as the country's richest fishing ground. 'We need to have sustainability and there should be momentum, said Aparri.

The annual closed season that started in 2013 was designed to give time for herrings, mackerels and sardines to properly breed and boost its population while giving a long-term solution for sustainable fishing in the coastal communities along the Visayan Sea.

200 fishermen in the Philippines hold protest against Talisay reclamation

<https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1912589/Cebu/Local-News/200-fishermen-hold-protest-against-Talisay-reclamation>

"Around 200 fishermen in Talisay City, Cebu, the Philippines, conducted a protest against what they claimed as an ongoing reclamation of land, which is a part of an international container port, on Monday morning, Nov. 8, 2021. Mananagat sa Talisay Pamo Association (Matapa) vice president for external Joksan Branzuela said they want to have a dialogue with the management of the Cebu South Harbor and Container Terminal Complex (CSHCTC) to ask the latter about its plans for the area.

'We want to reach out to the concerned local and national agencies because this is a huge threat to the livelihood of our fisherfolk, especially in our situation on the two affected barangays, San Roque and Tanke, in Talisay, Branzuela told SunStar Cebu. He said the construction of a 25-hectare reclaimed area seemed to 'trap' them from their fishing activities.

'It also poses danger in our docking area. We were intimidated when the reclamation reached a portion of our shoreline area, he said in Cebuano.

Japan to aid fishing, farming families in Philippines region with Japanese-produced rice

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/11/04/japan-to-aid-fishing-farming-families-in-barmm-with-japanese-produced-rice/>

"The Japanese government will provide food aid to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the Philippines, benefiting thousands of fishing and farming households in the region. Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Koshikawa Kazuhiko and World Food Programme (WFP) Representative and Country Director of the Philippines Brenda Barton signed on Thursday, Nov. 4, a food grant aid project to BARMM worth 350 million yen.

Through the grant aid, the WFP as the implementer, will procure 1,788 metric tons of Japanese-produced rice. The initiative seeks to support 9,877 farming and fishing households, including decommissioned combatants and indigenous peoples in Bangsamoro, the Japanese Embassy said.

Fishermen in Zambales, the Philippines, still reluctant to go back to Scarborough Shoal

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1506891/zambales-fishermen-still-reluctant-to-go-back-to-scarborough-shoal>

"Despite the plan of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to boost its presence in the West Philippine Sea, some fishermen in the province of Zambales said they were still reluctant to go back to the contested Scarborough Shoal, their traditional fishing ground. 'The Filipino fishers can't be blamed if they are hesitant about venturing into the West Philippine Sea.

We are the ones experiencing harassment from the Chinese personnel operating in our traditional fishing grounds Bobby Roldan, a fisherman from Masinloc town, told the Inquirer on Monday, October 25. According to Roldan, who is also the vice chairman of the fishers' group Pamalakaya in Luzon, the continued presence of Chinese vessels and militia in the Philippine waters still poses a danger to them.

Landmark MSC certified sustainable fishery in Philippines opens markets for small-scale fishers internationally

https://finance.yahoo.com/news/landmark-msc-certified-sustainable-fishery-090108052.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9uZXdzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guc_e_referrer_sig=AQAAAJm13rckrw0lrf84ZhcDjvLwI9DTE3IZhD0eCdeyfSDqHEuFdUsuNR0XK-gD9owpQ3HqN6rM9HINjoif2RksDu-3kzLvmNLHhNdiy5k7pSpCjsDeUCse9qo3jQMmZBDy3jtnidnaJ41hDEWC-_1ibg8wkYT5rv91mzylvTBIhG8

"SCS Global Services (SCS) announces the first-ever Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Fishery Certification in the Philippines “the Philippine Small-Scale Yellowfin Tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) Handline Fishery. This landmark certification of small-scale fishers is quite rare, and was no easy feat. To reach this accomplishment, the fishery undertook a decade-long fishery improvement project (FIP) starting in 2011, and a year-and-a-half long independent assessment by SCS. Despite four major typhoons in the fall of 2020, which devastated many fishing villages and vessels under assessment, the client group persevered to complete the certification in October 2021.

This certification represents a major milestone and unique opportunity for small-scale fishers to better support the livelihoods and communities of small-scale handline fishermen in the Philippines. The client group, run by the Philippine Tuna Handline Partnership (PTHP), consists of more than 500 fishing vessels weighing three gross tonnes (GT) or less that harvest Yellowfin Tuna with handline fishing gear in Occidental-Mindoro Strait and Gulf of Lagonoy regions. Unlike large-scale industrial fishing operations, smaller operations often lack resources to tackle complex social and environmental challenges.

The MSC fishery certification supports the Filipino municipal fishers in gaining access to global markets, and provides an opportunity to participate in major management and governance improvements in the Philippines, a big win for nearly 2,000 individual fishers and the large archipelagic fishing nation more broadly. PTHP also serves as a potential model for other municipal fishing communities to pursue MSC certification as a means of improving livelihoods and supporting durable coastal communities.

Bill Holden, Senior Tuna Fisheries Outreach Manager, Marine Stewardship Council said: ‘PTHP demonstrates leadership amidst the many small-scale fishers internationally for their collaborative work in ensuring sustainable tuna fishing. We look forward to seeing the ripple of PTHP’s sustainably fished yellowfin tuna positively impact the supply chain, as it’s sold across the globe.

San Miguel Corp’s food drive continues in the Philippines, opens market for farmers, fisherfolk

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/10/27/public-square/smcs-food-drive-continues-to-help-struggling-families-and-opens-san-miguel-market-for-farmers-fisherfolk/1819848>

"San Miguel Corp. (SMC)'s pandemic food relief drive that began in March last year has yielded close to two million pieces of nutribun and pandesal bread throughout Metro Manila and neighboring provinces while its feeding center in Tondo continues to provide food aid to over 200,000 families living in Manila's poorest districts.

It also inaugurated the San Miguel Market, one of the key components of its relocation model that provides at-risk and displaced fisherfolk families in Sariaya, Quezon disaster-resilient homes, a safe community complete with amenities and facilities to support their livelihood and secure their future.

Meanwhile, SMC also opens San Miguel Market, a public market built by SMC for fisherfolk beneficiary families of its San Miguel-Christian Gayeta homes. It is envisioned to be part of a larger food supply hub in the province, where both fishermen and farmers can sell their produce to bulk buyers from all over Quezon province, neighboring provinces, as well as from Metro Manila. "

"Sariaya, Quezon is an important growth area for San Miguel. In particular, through our planned agro-industrial zone here, food production and agribusiness will be among our major activities. Helping to capacitate and enable local fishermen and farmers, and strengthening local agriculture, is a priority for us," said SMC President Ramon Ang.

Rising sea levels top list of 10 climate-induced risks facing Philippines

<https://www.rappler.com/environment/rising-sea-levels-top-list-climate-induced-risk-facing-philippines>

"Ahead of a high-stakes United Nations (UN) climate summit in Glasgow, a government panel of Filipino scientists released a list of the top 10 hazards the Philippines now faces with an increasingly warmer planet.

The newly-reconstituted National Panel of Technical Experts (NPTE) presented the list to Finance Secretary and Climate Change Commission (CCC) chairperson-designate Carlos Dominguez III before he flies to Glasgow for the UN summit opening on Sunday, October 31. The finance department issued a press release about the presentation on Wednesday, October 27.

According to the NPTE, rising sea levels, coastal erosion and flooding top the list of 10 climate-induced risks. The NPTE warned that the Philippines is experiencing one of the fastest rates of sea level rise in the world and that the phenomenon is affecting around 800 municipalities.

NPTE member Doracie Zoleta Nantes said a one- to two-meter increase in seawater levels has already been observed in Metro Manila, Cavite, Pampanga, and Bulacan “ among the economic hubs of Luzon with large populations. Rising sea levels could displace small island and coastal communities and endanger food and water security.

Philippines President brings up coral reef protection, illegal fishing during ASEAN-China dialogue

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/10/27/duterte-brings-up-coral-reef-protection-illegal-fishing-during-asean-china-dialogue/>

"Philippines President Duterte raised the issues of coral reef protection and illegal fishing during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) dialogue with China on Tuesday, Oct. 26. 'We hark back to the Philippines' ASEAN Chairmanship in 2017 where we declared the Decade of Coastal and Marine Environmental Protection in the South China Sea from 2017 to 2027, Duterte said during his intervention in the 24th ASEAN-China Summit, which is part of the ongoing 38th and 39th ASEAN Summits and Related Summits.

'Pursuant to this, we call for holistic efforts to protect and preserve biodiversity and the marine environment, said Duterte, who is participating in the twin summits virtually. 'Vulnerable marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs and other living spaces of endangered and migratory wildlife species, should be prioritized, he noted.

Philippines govt. mulls fuel discount to fishermen

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/10/25/ph-govt-mulls-fuel-discount-to-fishermen/>

"The Philippines Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Energy (DOE) are in talks about the possible implementation of a gasoline discount mechanism in the fisheries sector, one of the most hit farm sub-sectors by the incessant rise in gasoline prices.

In a briefing Monday, Oct. 25, DA Undersecretary for Agri-Industrialization and Fisheries Cheryl Marie Natividad-Caballero said the government is now in an advanced stage of discussion when it comes to the plan of giving fishermen fuel discounts.

However, this will only be implemented among 30,000 municipal fisherfolks and 138 commercial fishing vessel operators based within the West Philippine Sea (WPS), she said.

Philippines worries over continuing presence of foreign vessels in West Philippine Sea

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/10/20/bfar-worries-over-continuing-presence-of-foreign-vessels-in-wps/>

"The Department of Agriculture's (DA) Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in the Philippines has raised concern over the continued presence of foreign vessels conducting fishing operations in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

Among others, Chinese Maritime Militia vessels have been monitored in big numbers in the West Philippine Sea, BFAR said in a statement. 'These foreign vessels have no clearance from

the Philippine government or any existing fisheries cooperation agreements with the country that allow them to conduct any fishing operations.

Their fishing activities, therefore, are considered Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing within the Philippine territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the government agency said. BFAR is closely coordinating with the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS) and supports its plan led by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) to file new diplomatic protests against the continuous presence and activities of these foreign vessels.

Small-scale tuna fishermen in Luzon, the Philippines, obtain international sustainability certification

<https://www.bworldonline.com/small-scale-tuna-fishermen-in-luzon-obtain-international-sustainability-certification/>

"The Philippine Tuna Handline Partnership (PTHP) is the first group of small-scale fishers and tuna processors in the Philippines to earn a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. The international certification was given on Oct. 19, or more than a year after the PTHP began the MSC assessment process in March 2020.

The certification is the latest development of a WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature)-Philippines-led project with handline tuna fishers in the Mindoro Strait and Lagonoy Gulf. The Fishery Improvement Project (FIP), which has been running since 2011, is a multi-stakeholder program that aims to establish sustainable fishing practices and improve the livelihoods of fishermen.

‘They capacitated us, said Atenogenes B. Reaso, a fisherman and chairman of the Gulf of Lagonoy Tuna Fishers Federation, Inc., at the Oct. 1 launch of a WWF coffee table book narrating the fishermen’s aforementioned 10-year journey. The FIPs helped their members understand what sustainability is, Mr. Reaso added.

Philippines fishermen’s association planning guide to help consumers identify imported fish

<https://www.bworldonline.com/fishermens-association-planning-guide-to-help-consumers-identify-imported-fish/>

"An association of fisherfolk in the Philippines, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA), said it will issue a guide to help the public tell

which fish are imported, after the government announced plans to import seafood that will compete with the local catch. 'The objective is to guide the public on how to identify the imported and local round scad (galunggong).

We will release and distribute leaflets explaining why we should boycott the imported galunggong and other fishery products, and instead patronize the fresh produce of our local fishers, PAMALAKAYA said in a statement Tuesday.

Migrant Filipino fishermen between the devil and the deep blue sea

<https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/devil-and-the-deep-blue-sea-migrant-seafarers>

"Fishing in the open sea is one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. Climate change has forced migrant fishermen to sail farther and farther into the open sea, chasing after squid and tuna. They work nearly non-stop onboard spartan fishing boats that often do not have adequate safety equipment or protocols in place.

For this kind of back breaking work, they are paid about \$300 a month. With the Philippines being the largest supplier of seafarers in the world, Filipino seafarers are among the most at risk.

The uneven application of maritime laws have left migrant fishermen the most vulnerable. Not all maritime laws include migrant fishermen under the definition and protections for seafarers. The government must address the systemic issues that plague the fishing industry.

Recruitment agencies reneging on their responsibility to safeguard the employment rights and welfare of the migrant fishermen is but one issue. It is not unheard of for recruitment agencies to declare bankruptcy to circumvent their financial responsibilities to migrant workers.

Retail markets to sell affordable fish products formed in Philippines National Capital Region

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/10/05/pfda-sets-up-iotg-retail-markets-to-sell-affordable-fish-products/>

"The Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) has set up isDA ON THE GO (IOTG) retail markets in several areas within the National Capital Region (NCR) to sell affordable fish products.

In a statement, PFDA said the iOTG team went to seven locations within Metro Manila to sell around 500 kilograms of affordable fish and fishery products (i.e., bangus, tilapia, galunggong, pampano, lapu-lapu, maya-maya, salay ginto, tanigue, tuna, shrimp, and squid). This, according to PFDA, is part of the expansion of the agency's iOTG Flagship Project.

Philippine ‘Angels of the Sea’ use their voices to repel Chinese ships

<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2021-09-29/philippines-angels-of-the-sea>

"The foreign fishing boats were deep in Philippine waters near a speck of coral reef known as Sabina Shoal. They bore no official markings, but their blue hulls of reinforced steel” used to ram other vessels” were the telltale signs of Chinese maritime militia. They had not come to fish, but to stake a claim to the sea. A white patrol ship approached.

A woman’s voice lifted through the crackle of a radio: ‘This is Philippine coast guard. You are within Philippine exclusive economic zone. You are requested to provide the following: name of vessel, intention, last and next port of call. The April 27 incident, which was captured on video, made public the Philippines’ newest ploy: dispatching an all-female unit of coast guard radio operators to counter Chinese aggression in the hotly contested South China Sea.

China’s actions in the region, including violating the territorial waters of other nations and building military installations on man-made islands, have become a dangerous tinderbox for Beijing and Washington.

Dubbed the Angels of the Sea, the group of 81 women will soon patrol the country’s so-called exclusive economic zone, which extends 200 nautical miles off the Philippine shoreline in an area speckled with rocks and reefs claimed by China.

The women were recruited under the belief they’d be better suited for repelling unwelcome foreign vessels and de-escalating a potential geopolitical crisis because their voices would remind opposing crews of their ‘wives or mothers, officials have said.

Commercial vessels continue to fish illegally in Philippine waters “report

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/09/26/commercial-vessels-continue-to-fish-illegally-in-ph-waters-report/>

"The number of commercial vessels fishing in municipal waters across different parts of the Philippines has gone down, but only a mere decline of 4.7 percent despite the pandemic, international marine conservation group Oceana observed. Data released by Oceana showed commercial fishing in municipal waters pervades from 44,952 vessels in 2019 to 42,934 vessels in 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

‘Oceana reports the seemingly continuing intrusion of commercial fishing vessels in the designated 15-kilometer from the shoreline municipal waters that is exclusive to municipal and artisanal fisherfolk, as prescribed by the Amended Fisheries Code or RA 10654, Oceana said.

Long-term plans needed in the Philippines to protect Metro Manila's most vulnerable from rising seas

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1493135/long-term-plans-needed-to-protect-metro-manilas-most-vulnerable-from-rising-seas>

"Ariel Cortes has lived most of his life surrounded by water. As a young boy in the 1970s, he worked as a fishpond caretaker until he was old enough to join the fishers in Manila Bay. 'Our lives here are dependent on fishing, but there are weeks, even whole months, when we don't go out to sea anymore, he said, blaming pollution and massive reclamation projects for the declining fish catch.

But the same waters that sustain him and his community also pose an existential challenge in the years ahead. Studies show that the rising sea level of Manila Bay could inundate coastal communities and force them to retreat elsewhere. For Cortes and other fishers, the prospect of moving permanently away from the coast would not only mean losing their homes and livelihood, but also their identities linked to the sea.

Philippines groups see typhoons affecting fish stocks

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/09/14/business/top-business/groups-see-typhoons-affecting-fish-stocks/1814629>

"Fish supply from Taal Lake decreased by 20 percent following the onslaught of typhoons ""Jolina""and ""Kiko"" but industry stakeholders assured Filipino consumers of sufficient fish supply. As a result, farmgate prices of tilapia and bangus (milkfish) have declined. "

"Let's say prior to 'Jolina,' fish supply in Taal was reduced to 80 percent and we are ready to supply it,"" Mario Balazon, director of the Taal Lake Aquaculture Alliance Inc. (TLAAI), said in Filipino in a virtual briefing held Monday.

International groups decry destruction of mussel farms in Cavite, Philippines

<https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO2109/S00071/intl-groups-decry-the-destruction-of-mussel-farms-in-cavite-philippines.htm>

"A day before the deadline set by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to dismantle mussel farms and other fisheries structures on Manila Bay in towns of

Cavite province, south of Manila, fisherfolk activists led by Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) protested in front of its central office in Quezon City.

They denounced the order as ""unjust and anti-fisherfolk,"" and that it will affect the livelihood of around 15,000 fisherfolk in the province. They were joined by activists from the People's Coalition for Food Sovereignty (PCFS), an international movement of rural peoples organizations that led support actions in other countries and continents.

Storm-hit Philippines braces for powerful typhoon

<https://gulfnnews.com/world/asia/storm-hit-philippines-braces-for-powerful-typhoon-1.82135670>

"At least one person died and 17 were missing after a storm dumped heavy rain and caused flooding in the Philippines, authorities said on Thursday, as a powerful typhoon barrelled towards the country.

Tropical Storm Conson hit the central province of Eastern Samar as a typhoon on Monday before weakening as it passed over the archipelago, forcing around 10,000 people to flee their homes, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

The heavy rain and flooding came as Typhoon Chanthu - packing maximum sustained wind speeds of 195 kilometres per hour (121 miles per hour) - swept across the Philippine Sea towards the country's northeastern tip. The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons every year, a dangerous and disruptive part of life in most of the country.

Philippines food co. assists Zamboanga fishing communities through adopt-a-farm program

<https://www.bworldonline.com/century-pacific-assists-zamboanga-fishing-communities-through-adopt-a-farm-program/>

"Century Pacific Food, Inc. (CNPf) has joined the Labor department's livelihood program that allows companies to source produce direct from farms tended by workers displaced during the closed fishing season in Zamboanga.

In a statement disclosed to the exchange on Tuesday, CNPF said it inked an agreement with the Department of Labor and Employment for the Project Hope Adopt-A-Farm program via its nonprofit affiliate, RSPo Foundation, Inc.

Online classroom in the Philippines gives voice to fishers in fisheries governance

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/09/05/online-classroom-gives-voice-to-fishers-in-fisheries-governance/>

"Oceana initiated a virtual classroom for fisherfolk recently to prepare the food frontliners for their important role in fisheries governance and in the protection of the Philippines' marine environment through the Fisheries Management Areas (FMA) mechanism, a news release said.

The Philippine territorial waters have been subdivided into 12 FMAs based on approximate stock boundaries, range, distribution, and structure of its resources.

Indigenous people are the world's biggest conservationists, but they rarely get credit for it

<https://www.vox.com/22518592/indigenous-people-conserve-nature-icca>

"In a lush swath of tropical forest on the eastern coast of Mindanao, the second-largest island in the Philippines, you can glimpse the brilliant plumage of the rare rufous-lore kingfisher or " if you're lucky " hear the shrill cry of the large Philippine eagle, a critically endangered species. Wildlife is abundant here, but not because the region was left untouched in a protected area, or conserved by an international environmental organization.

It's because the territory known as Pangasananan has been occupied for centuries by the Manobo people, who have long relied on the land to cultivate crops, hunt and fish, and gather herbs. They use a number of techniques to conserve the land, from restricting access to sacred areas to designating wildlife sanctuaries and an offseason for hunting, owing in part to a traditional belief that nature and its resources are guarded by spirits.

Pangasananan is one of many areas around the world that remain ecologically intact due to the conservation practices of Indigenous peoples or local communities. Although these places are not widely documented by researchers, they cover an estimated 21 percent of all land on Earth, according to a new report by the ICCA Consortium, a group that advocates for Indigenous and community-led conservation.

Philippines reactivating Marine Research Center in Pagasa

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/08/28/2123143/philippines-reactivating-marine-research-center-pagasa>

"Philippines National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. announced yesterday the government's efforts to reactivate its Marine Research Center on Pagasa Island in the West Philippine Sea. He said the move seeks to better study and safeguard the country's maritime resources and look after the welfare of fishermen in the area.

Philippines takes stronger stance on illegal fishing

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/08/31/business/top-business/da-takes-stronger-stance-vs-illegal-fishing/1812947>

"The Philippines Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR) on Friday reiterated its commitment to deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities in the country's maritime domain, most particularly in the West Philippine Sea.

In a virtual briefing, Agriculture Undersecretary for Agri-Industrialization and Fisheries Cheryl Marie Natividad-Caballero said DA-BFAR is intensifying its efforts ""to denounce IUU fishing activities in the country's maritime domain including the West Philippine Sea.""

Philippine artisanal fishermen cry for help as illegal fishing empties municipal waters

<https://pcij.org/article/6778/philippine-fishermen-cry-help-illegal-fishing-empties-municipal-waters>

"After two months of lockdown, the Philippines government finally recognized artisanal fisherfolk as 'essential personnel' and allowed them access to the sea at any time of the day. By then the monsoon had arrived and the risk of accidents for the small boats of artisanal fishermen was high. The inclement weather also drove away fish stocks.

Artisanal fishermen" those who use fishing boats weighing less than 3.1 gross tons " are among the country's marginalized. They typically live below the poverty line, have five to 13 children while supporting an extended family, and are buried in debt, based on community assessments by Rare Philippines, a marine conservation NGO.

4 nabbed for illegal fishing in Marinduque, Philippines

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1474283/4-nabbed-for-illegal-fishing-in-marinduque>

"Four fishermen were arrested Monday for illegal fishing in Buenavista town in Marinduque province, according to a report from the Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan) police office. The police arrested boat captain Manuelito Mengua, 45; assistant boat captain Marino Jugno, 59; Chanliee Mengua, 27; and Judireck Catamio, 22, all residents of Barangay Caigangan about 6:30 a.m. in Barangay Yook.

US blocks seafood from Fiji ship accused of enslaving crew

<https://apnews.com/article/business-environment-and-nature-global-trade-89048cd53746f5d1491d18293da3dbb7>

"A tuna fishing boat based in the Pacific island nation of Fiji that has been accused of essentially enslaving its crew was blocked Wednesday from importing seafood into the United States, part of an increasing effort to keep goods produced with forced labor from entering the country. U.S. Customs and Border Protection issued an order to stop any shipments in American ports from the Hangton No. 112, a longliner operated by a Chinese national, after the agency determined there was credible evidence that the crew was subjected to conditions defined as forced labor under international standards.

It's the latest in a series of such orders targeting Asian fishing vessels amid reports that crews made up largely of vulnerable migrant workers from poorer countries are subjected to horrific conditions by operators traveling farther at sea and for longer periods as fish populations decline worldwide. 'Foreign fishing vessels like the Hangton No. 112 continue to lure vulnerable migrant workers into forced labor situations so that they can sell seafood below market value, which threatens the livelihoods of American fishermen, CBP Acting Commissioner Troy Miller said in a statement released ahead of the announcement of the order.

'CBP will continue to stand up against these vessels' abusive labor practices by preventing the introduction of their unethically harvested seafood into the U.S. market. Records show about \$40 million in tuna and other fish from the Hangton No. 112 have been imported into the U.S. market in recent years despite industry efforts to address the issue, said Ana Hinojosa, executive director of the CBP directorate that investigates allegations of forced labor. The agency does not publicly identify the importers who received the shipments.

CBP said its investigation found evidence that the crew of the Hangton 112 had wages improperly withheld from them, their identity documents were taken and they were kept in 'debt bondage, which typically involves charging workers an excessive amount in advance for travel and other expenses and holding them until they worked to pay if off.

The agency found additional conditions that were 'difficult to read, Hinojosa said, even considering that fishing is a notoriously difficult and dangerous industry. 'I wouldn't call it a fun job, but there are certain protections of human rights that are expected in any kind of working environment.

In May, the U.S. blocked imports of seafood from the entire fleet of a Chinese company with more than 30 ships that authorities say forced crew members to work in slave-like conditions that led to the deaths of several Indonesian fishermen last year. CBP has also issued orders against individual vessels from Taiwan and elsewhere.

The 102-foot (34-meter) Hangton No. 112 operates with a crew of about a dozen, according to online records. The boat was cited in a December 2019 investigative report by Greenpeace Southeast Asia and the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union that documented abusive conditions in the Pacific fishing fleet. The operator denied the allegations at the time.

Advocates such as Greenpeace say migrant workers, often from the Philippines and Indonesia, are particularly vulnerable to abusive labor conditions, with brokers often taking a cut of their wages and ship operators and companies forcing them to work extreme hours and endure brutal treatment, in one of the most dangerous occupations, with no recourse and no way to escape while at sea.

In recent years, the issue of unregulated fishing has gained increased attention not just for the abusive treatment of workers but also the damage it does to the environment, economies around the world and food supply. An investigation of the fishing industry by The Associated Press, which received the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service, resulted in the freeing of more than 2,000 slaves and traced seafood they caught to supermarkets and pet food providers around the U.S.

This is how Nestle Philippines is addressing plastic waste pollution

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/07/29/this-is-how-nestle-philippines-is-addressing-plastic-waste-pollution/>

"The Philippines is undeniably a beautiful archipelago blessed with more than 7,000 islands surrounded with bodies of water, rich with different marine biodiversity. Unfortunately, according to the 2020 report of Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), the Philippines is one of the world's worst offenders on marine life pollution. Annually, Filipinos used 60 billion sachets, and an estimated 0.75 million metric tons of this mismanaged plastic waste ended up in the ocean.

This alarming situation has domino effects. Every time a typhoon comes, plastic wastes end up in our shores just like in Manila Bay. The Instagrammable dolomite beach and sand washed ashore and is replaced by tons of plastic wastes. Meanwhile, Sea Circular report says that these wastes also yield negative effects to the livelihood of fishermen. 'Waste thrown into waterways contributes to frequent flooding in the Metro region, the report says. 'This eventually leaks to the marine environment and have negative impacts on revenue-generating nature-based tourism, as well as on the fishing industry. Fishermen have commented that plastics are smothering coral reefs, resulting in lower fish yields and ecosystem-wide impacts.

To end this cycle, everyone, from individual to institutions has an important role to play. And for Nestle Philippines, the change start from within. In an exclusive interview with The Manila

Bulletin, Arlene Tan-Bantoto, senior vice president, head of corporate affairs & communications of Nestle Philippines, Inc. shares the steps and programs the company is doing in addressing the plastic waste. ‘Nestle is committed to taking a leadership role in tackling plastic waste towards a waste-free future.

We are implementing a comprehensive approach with three focus areas, namely: packaging alternatives and innovation; collection and recycling; and consumer education, Arlene says. ‘Our biggest environmental milestone to date is the achievement of plastic neutrality, which means that we are collecting plastic waste equivalent to that from our packaging.

Apart from adjusting their product packaging to make it more environmental friendly and sustainable, the company also kicked off Isabuhay sa Bahay Challenge. This is a program designed to encourage their employees to be mindful of their waste production and to embody a sustainable lifestyle. ‘As the Kasambuhay for the environment, we have made commitments to tackle plastic waste.

Our employee challenge called Isabuhay sa Bahay actively involves our own employees in implementing sustainability practices at home and not only at work, in particular taking a more sustainable lifestyle through waste reduction, waste segregation, and composting among others, she says. ‘It is an attempt to inspire others to do the same so that our collective action can create impact towards a waste-free future for the planet.

Through this program, the company aims to show everyone that sustainable lifestyle is doable. ‘Our employees took inspiration from the commitments we made last April during our Net Zero Fair and began practicing proper solid waste management at home through the Isabuhay sa Bahay Challenge, she continues. ‘For us, starting at home or with ourselves is the best way to live out the company’s sustainability commitments and we hope that it inspires not just our employees, but the people around them”and you can too.

The company also acknowledged the importance of educating the young ones. With that, Nestle also partnered with the Department of Education (DepEd). ‘Through our Wellness Campus Program in partnership with the Department of Education, we have developed solid waste management modules endorsed by the National Solid Waste Management Commission that are currently being taught in public schools so that students will learn and practice proper waste management, Arlene says.

‘We have also developed a condensed version of these modules to educate parents and teens. Our plan is to further expand waste education to communities. To make sure everyone has access to recycling bins even schools are closed, Nestle also placed collection point in different SM branches. ‘Another ongoing initiative is our partnership with Plastic Credit Exchange where we sponsored collection points at SM malls where consumers can drop off their dry and clean plastic waste, she says.

‘Nestle PH is also advocating the passage of a law mandating an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme in which manufacturers and importers are made responsible for post-consumer plastic waste. Arlene then reminds everyone about the importance of collective effort. ‘By working together, we can do more to prevent plastic waste from entering the environment, she says. ‘None of us can do it alone, but a waste-free future is possible through individual contributions and collective actions.

As climate change intensifies, Philippine coastal communities enumerate needs to weather storms, health crisis

<https://interaksyon.philstar.com/politics-issues/2021/07/22/196641/as-climate-change-intensifies-philippine-coastal-communities-enumerate-needs-to-weather-storms-health-crisis/>

"Some coastal communities in the Philippines are calling for financial and livelihood support amid the onslaught of past typhoons that hit the Philippines and amid the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic. ‘Our need for various resources that could help us improve our tenacity over disasters and other challenges has really intensified since the pandemic began, Mercy Raymundo, a local community leader of Barangay Ipil in the province of Camarines Sur, told the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI). Pedro Calumpiano, coastal community leader of Barangay Maslog in Eastern Samar, also shared the same sentiment.

‘Our pre-pandemic needs remain the same, and we need them much more now because the pandemic has affected people’s sources of income, Calumpiano said to HHI. In a study conducted by the academic and research center HHI, financial and livelihood support, access to essential services, training and disaster response equipment, better infrastructure and facilities, and policy and access to information are some of the long-term needs of coastal communities in the Philippines.

As the effects of climate change intensify, the fish supply dwindles, prompting fisherfolks to spend more hours farther on the sea to obtain enough catch. Strong typhoons and extreme weather conditions made it harder for fishers to go on a sail, leaving families without income during disasters. Given this condition, communities near the coast stressed their need for financial and livelihood support. ‘With the temperamental sea [bigger waves] and dwindling fish catch, many are pushed to look for alternative livelihoods.

However, the lockdown restrictions implemented periodically due to the rising COVID-19 cases in our province make it tough to do so, Calumpiano said. The study further revealed that it is not just the livelihood of coastal communities affected by climate change, as harsh storms threaten the integrity of infrastructures near the coastlines. Accessible community health facilities, higher dikes, stronger sea walls, evacuation centers, toilets, water pumping facilities,

and garbage recycling facilities are some of the things that coastal communities need, based on the Harvard study.

The country was frequently exposed to extreme weather conditions. The study revealed that the inaccessibility of essential services made it difficult for residents near the coast to recover, even for those situated in urban areas. One of those communities is Sitio Aplaya in Baseco Compound in Metro Manila. The study revealed that residents need stable access to electricity, potable water, food, and medical assistance.

A separate HHI survey in 2017 showed that if people were to be given enough funds, most Filipinos would choose to store necessary supplies to be prepared for disasters. Participants of the study conducted by Harvard also stressed the lack of disaster response equipment among their communities. The study also noted the need for these communities to undergo the necessary training.

According to a 2017 study by HHI, only two out of ten Filipinos have participated in disaster preparedness and response training. Improper water disposal, water shortage, saltwater intrusion, lack of alternative livelihoods, and illegal fishing are some of the other problems of the coastal communities, which the Harvard study has noted. To address these issues, the study recommended improving policies and disaster information to improve the resilience of communities.

The residents also stressed the importance of collaboration between residents and local government in protecting the people and the environment from climate change. Furthermore, HHI recommends developing community organizing, zoning plans, structures for marine protected areas, and holistic tourism plans among these areas.

The HHI case study titled 'Experiences of Coastal Communities in Climate Change and Disasters' was conducted in early 2020. It seeks to identify the unaddressed needs of seaside communities to improve their preparedness, coping, and recovery from natural disasters.

Enhanced monsoon unleashes heavy rains, floods in Metro Manila, Philippines

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/07/22/2114189/enhanced-monsoon-unleashes-heavy-rains-floods-metro-manila>

"Heavy rains brought by the enhanced southwest monsoon triggered floods in several areas in Metro Manila in the Philippines yesterday, disrupting classes and work in both government and private offices. Monsoon rains will persist today over Babuyan Islands, Bataan, Batanes, Batangas, Bulacan, Cavite, the Cordilleras, Ilocos region, Metro Manila, Occidental Mindoro, northern portion of Palawan including Calamian and Kalayaan Islands, Pampanga, Tarlac and

Zambales, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

PAGASA said Typhoon Fabian (In-fa) and Tropical Depression Cempaka continued to boost the southwest monsoon. As of 4 p.m., the eye of Fabian was located 655 kilometers northeast of Ibayat, Batanes, packing winds of 150 kilometers per hour near the center and gustiness of up to 185 kph. It was forecast to move west at 10 kph.

Cempaka, which was outside the Philippine area of responsibility, was spotted 1,145 km west of extreme Northern Luzon or in the vicinity of Maoming, Guangdong, China as of 3 p.m., with maximum sustained winds of 55 kph near the center and gustiness of up to 70 kph.

It was moving west northwest slowly. The enhanced southwest monsoon and Fabian will also bring rough to very rough seas with waves as high as 4.5 meters over the seaboard of Batanes and Babuyan Islands, Occidental Mindoro including Lubang Islands and the western seaboard of Palawan including Kalayaan and Calamian Islands.

Moderate to rough seas of up to 3.5 meters high will also prevail over the eastern and rest of the northern and western seaboard of Luzon. Fabian was forecast to exit the Philippine area of responsibility on Saturday.

Eight crewmembers of a motorized banca and two fishermen were rescued by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) in the waters off Antique and Batangas, respectively, after their vessel capsized due to strong winds and heavy rain. The M/B Roxanne with eight crewmembers sank in the waters off Semirara Island in Caluya, Antique.

The vessel was headed to the island from San Jose, Occidental Mindoro when it was battered by high waves and strong winds. Meanwhile, the fishermen's boat capsized in the waters off Cape Santiago Light Station in Calatagan, Batangas.

Sewage from anchored ships laying waste to coral reefs in Spratly Islands in the South China Sea” report

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/07/12/2111973/sewage-anchored-ships-laying-waste-coral-reefs-spratlys-report>

"Raw sewage from hundreds of anchored ships in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, including West Philippine Sea, have damaged coral reefs in the area, according to a report from a US-based geospatial imagery and data analysis company. Liz Derr, co-founder and CEO at Similarity, presented the Spratlys water quality report in an online forum organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute on the fifth anniversary of the South China Sea arbitral ruling. Similarity released satellite images showing how anchored ships created chlorophyll-a blooms

in Union Banks, located entirely within the country's exclusive economic zone in the West Philippine Sea.

According to the report, chlorophyll-a concentration in water is a measure of phytoplankton. "Excess phytoplankton that cannot be consumed by the reef inhabitants dies off and sinks to the sea floor, where it is consumed by bacteria," the report read. "These bacteria consume oxygen that would normally be available to the fish, creating a 'dead zone,'" it added.

The report showed chlorophyll-a concentration on Mabini (Johnson South), McKennan (Hughes), Pagkakaisa (Lansdowne), Ross and Roxas (Collins) Reefs. Mabini and McKennan Reefs are occupied by China while Pagkakaisa and Roxas Reefs are occupied by Vietnam. Satellite images showed that there had been increased chlorophyll-a concentration on these features in the past five years, indicating overgrowth of algae. "

"Fleshy algae on reefs increase copious amounts of nutrients, which microbes eat. These microbes then endanger corals by depleting oxygen from the environment or by introducing diseases," Similarity reported. What is worse is that overfishing in the waters near coral reefs have removed the primary-algae eaters, increasing the population of fleshy algae. "

"Tipping the balance towards algae results in increased acidification of the water, increasing coral erosion," the report read, adding that this is in addition to increased ocean acidification from climate change. Coral reefs in the Spratlys matter as fishes from the area supply 85% of coastal inhabitants.

Similarity also noted that Spratly reefs serve as nurseries for adult fish stock that make up the fisheries in the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. "Damaging these reefs directly affects the fish stocks of the entire South China Sea and can lead to a hunger crisis in coastal regions and a collapse of commercial fishing in the South China Sea," Similarity said. As of June 17, 236 ships, likely Chinese, have been spotted in Union Banks as seen on satellite images released by Similarity.

Five years after South China Sea ruling, China's presence around Philippines only growing

<https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/five-years-after-south-china-sea-ruling--china-s-presence-around-philippines-only-growing/46772164>

"Filipino fisherman Randy Megu has often braved the storms that spring up in the South China Sea, but these days he has a greater fear: seeing a Chinese maritime enforcement vessel on the horizon. Five years after a landmark international arbitration court ruling repudiated China's claims to the waters where Megu fishes, the 48-year-old complains that his encounters with Chinese boats are more frequent than ever. "

"I was so scared," said Megu, describing how a Chinese vessel had tracked his wooden outrigger boat for three hours some 140 nautical miles (260 km) from the coast in May. He said other fishermen had reported being rammed or blasted with water cannons while working in what they considered their historic fishing grounds - which they had hoped to secure after the ruling in The Hague in 2016.

China rejected the ruling and has stood by its claim to most of the waters within a so-called Nine Dash Line, which is also contested by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In just one incident in March, the Philippines complained of incursions by what it said were more than 200 Chinese militia vessels into the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which extends 200 nautical miles from its coast.

Chinese diplomats said the boats were sheltering from rough seas and no militia were aboard. "The data here is very clear," said Greg Poling of Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies. "Chinese Coast Guard ships and the militia are in the Philippines' EEZ more than they were five years ago." A July 2020 opinion poll showed that 70% of Filipinos want the government to assert its claim in the South China Sea. "We firmly reject attempts to undermine it; nay, even erase it from law, history and our collective memories," Foreign Minister Teodoro Locsin said in a statement last month.

The country has made 128 diplomatic protests over China's activities in contested waters since 2016, and coast guard and bureau of fisheries vessels have conducted "sovereign" patrols in the Philippines' EEZ. But the Philippines has done little else to press its claim under firebrand President Rodrigo Duterte, who has made the relationship with China a plan of his foreign policy and said it is "inutile" to try to challenge its vastly bigger neighbour.

After some of his cabinet stepped up rhetoric over the waters early this year, Duterte barred them from speaking out. "China is more in control. The only thing the Duterte government can point to is they haven't had a major incident," Poling said. "If you just keep surrendering to the bully, of course there won't be a fight." The Philippine coast guard and ministry of defence did not respond to requests for comment.

China's presence has also grown elsewhere in the South China Sea. It has continued to strengthen artificial islands equipped with secured ports, airstrips and surface-to-air-missiles. Confrontations with Vietnam have set back energy projects. Malaysia has complained about the actions of Chinese vessels. Their presence have also drawn concern in Indonesia - even though it is not technically a claimant state.

Occasional freedom of navigation operations by the U.S. Navy have challenged China's claims but show no sign of discouraging Beijing from deploying vessels around the Philippines or elsewhere.

Before his election in 2016, Duterte had said he would stand up for his country's claims in the South China Sea. He is due to step down at the end of his single six-year term next year, but talk that he could be vice president or be succeeded by his daughter have raised doubts that policies will change. The fishermen of Pangasinan see little hope of a challenge to the Chinese vessels that now dictate their movements. ""Now, it is as if we are the ones stealing from our own backyard,"" said 51-year old fisherman Christopher de Vera.

With growing pressures, can the Philippines sustain its marine reserves?

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/with-growing-pressures-can-the-philippines-sustain-its-marine-reserves/>

"In the town of Pilar in the central Philippines, a community of 11,308 residents looks after one of the most successful marine protected areas in the country: the Pilar Municipal Marine Park (PMMP). Established in 2005, the 179-hectare (443-acre) park stands out among the thousands of MPAs in the Philippines, which experts say are only protected on paper. At the heart of the PMMP is a 29-hectare (72-acre) no-take zone, an area where fishing and all other marine activities are banned.

Like in all MPAs, these no-take zones are spawning grounds for fish. To balance the livelihood needs of the community, the remaining 150 hectares (371 acres) of the PMMP have been allotted as a marine reserve open to limited fishing activities using non-destructive, basic fishing gear. Susan Catalyo, a resident of Pilar, says the MPA was a lifesaver when Typhoon Haiyan struck in 2013 and cut her island off from the rest of the province of Cebu. 'Camotes is far from Cebu City, which was also devastated by Haiyan, she tells Mongabay. 'If we waited for aid, we would have gone hungry. But the spillover fish from the MPA kept us alive.#

Rene Abesamis, the country's foremost expert on MPAs, say marine reserves are known as such since they function as 'piggy banks' a stop-gap resource to alleviate community needs during drastic events. Governments and communities have recognized the importance of MPAs in boosting fish stocks, generating local income through tourism, and cushioning climate change impacts, which in the Philippines manifest as a string of late-season super typhoons from the Pacific.

The Philippines puts its MPA system at the forefront of its conservation strategy: In 2020, the country reported protecting 9.7% of its seascapes, narrowly missing its commitment under the Convention on Biological Diversity's Aichi Biodiversity Targets to protect 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020. Yet the country's accomplishments in sustaining its more than 1,500 MPAs have been beset with challenges. Experts say it's possible that only a third of the country's MPAs are well-managed, and the collective coverage of no-take zones barely protects the country's corals.

While some MPAs report high fish abundance, overfishing in the areas surrounding these MPAs and the intrusion by fishing vessels due to weak monitoring and enforcement structures have doomed these reserves to the extent that experts call them ‘dummy parks’ protected on paper but not on the ground. Experts point to various ‘moving parts,’ factors that contribute to the effectiveness of marine protected areas and their promised bounty. At the top, laws and policies collide and overlap.

On the ground, changing political will and community engagement exacerbated by resource limitations weaken the effectiveness of MPAs both as a conservation and a fisheries management model. Policies in the 1970s and 1980s focused on increasing fish yields, and the string of seas threading through the central Philippines became a playground for fishers using destructive gear. Fishing with cyanide-loaded explosives was the norm, so was the use of trawling techniques called muro-ami, baling-baling and hulbot-hulbot in the Visayan tongue. Despite the ban on these methods, recent studies show that some are still in use today.

The country is considered the ‘center of marine biodiversity in the world’ by the Global Marine Species Assessment of the World Conservation Union, a designation that highlights its importance in the Pacific Coral Triangle. The country’s waters contain the third most extensive reef system in the world, spanning about 22,000 square kilometers (8,500 square miles). Threatened by coastal development, pollution, overfishing and destructive fishing practices, how the Philippines manages its seascapes impacts global marine conservation, a study states.

In the last decade, the Philippines lost one-third of its coral cover, and nearly 75% of the country’s fishing grounds are overfished” figures based on assessments done a decade ago, which means the situation may have worsened today, says Oceana Philippines, a marine NGO. Coral protection was the focus of the MPA movement in the 1970s, and marine protected areas back then were adapted to allow corals to regenerate and to improve decreasing fish stocks. Initiatives started in two areas: off Sumilon Island, established in 1974, and Apo Island, in 1984.

Both located in the central Philippines, these MPAs became the blueprint for the more than 1,500 MPAs that now dot the country’s waters: small, averaging just 15 hectares (37 acres); close to shore; and, most importantly, co-managed by the local government and the coastal community. Studies by Angel Alcala and Gary Russ of Australia’s James Cook University show that MPAs can contribute directly to fish biomass and diversity.

An MPA with limited to no fishing activities can see a rebound in fish stocks, as was the case in Apo Island. By contrast, Sumilon, where fishing is allowed, failed to meet its purpose of replenishing fish stocks and coral rehabilitation. Experts call Sumilon ‘a failure’ and Apo its successful counterpart. Both case studies highlight the importance of protecting the most ecologically important part of the seascape, the ‘core zone,’ which is usually the spawning ground for fish. But to sustain a community-managed reserve requires social preparations, says Abesamis. ‘You can’t just tell fisherfolk to stop fishing in an area that’s important to their

livelihood, he says. ‘There’s a psychological impact in creating an MPA and there’s a lot of social preparations necessary to establish one.

In Sumilon and Apo, locals’ livelihoods were a major consideration, if not the main driving force. Alcala tells Mongabay that the coral reefs around the islands were zoned into two parts: 15-25% of the area of these reefs was within no-take zones, and the remainder was opened to ‘fishermen using only non-destructive fishing methods. While the country’s MPAs started small, Alcala pushed for a bigger system when he was appointed secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in 1992.

He influenced the creation of expansive, government-managed MPAs through the National Integrated Protected Area Systems (NIPAS) Act, which provided legal protection to three marine seascapes in 1992. It would take 26 years, however, before the Philippines issued a follow-up: In 2018, the government enacted the Expanded National Integrated Protected Area Systems (E-NIPAS), supporting 32 marine protected areas with legislation, and including Apo and Sumilon islands under this protection scheme.

Currently, the Visayas region holds the greatest number of NIPAS sites with seven MPAs covering 548,157 hectares (1.35 million acres). The slow road to legislating government-managed MPAs, prompted local governments and communities to establish smaller ones in the 1990s through the Local Government Code (LGU Code), which gave them power to enact ordinances. This saw the mushrooming of 564 MPAs in the thousands of scattered islands in the Visayas, making it the region that holds a third of the country’s MPAs today.

While NIPAS and E-NIPAS sites receive steady funding from the national treasury, community-managed MPAs depend on a budget allocated by local officials, which are most often sourced from tourism receipts. As such, these sites have different levels of protection, their fates relying on political priorities. Pilar’s waters used to teem with reef fish species like the Napoleon wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) and the bumphead parrotfish (*Bolbometopon muricatum*), Catalyo says. But during the 1990s, the parrotfish speared by fisherfolks were getting smaller in size, and by the 2000s, the seas were ‘empty’ devoid of fish, large or small.

This forced fishers to go farther out to sea, up to 20 km (12 mi), spend more hours fishing and more money on motorized boats and expensive gear. After Pilar established its protected area, the community devised a rigorous enforcement scheme that saw volunteers working in shifts to keep illegal fishers and poachers at bay. The results were immediate: In four years, the fish returned. Biophysical assessments done there, however, show the corals remain in poor condition. Despite this, the PMMP received the DENR’s ‘Para el MAR’ award in 2009, a recognition given to well-managed MPAs in the country.

Pilar’s mayor said in 2009 that it was political will that led to the success of the PMMP. For community members like Catalyo, it was the enforcement: ‘When Haiyan struck, our watch house was washed away, but even then, we have volunteers watching over the marine protected

area, she says. Other MPAs, however, are failing. In a study on community-managed marine protected areas in the Visayas in 2008, Alcala found that only about 34% of the 564 MPAs there were ‘working in improving fish biomass. The lack of consistent monitoring and enforcement, compounded by meager community engagement, had created ‘dummy parks.

Food advocacy group hails Philippines’ role in fight against illegal fishing

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/06/28/food-advocacy-group-hails-pnoys-role-in-fight-against-illegal-fishing/>

"Tugon Kabuhayan, a food advocacy group in the Philippines, has recognized late President Benigno S. Aquino III’s contributions in improving the country’s food security status, particularly the amendment of the Fisheries Code, which strengthened government efforts against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUUF) in the country.

The food advocacy group said it was during Aquino’s leadership that the government gave further importance to the country’s fisheries resource management through ‘the hiring, training and capacitating the Fisheries Regulatory and Enforcement Office, acquisition of patrol vessels and amendment of the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998 [RA 8550].

In a Facebook post, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) remembered Aquino’s administration that enacted Republic Act 10654 or the amended Philippine Fisheries Code to further curtail IUUF in the country. ‘To this day, the implementation of RA 10654 continues to bolster the enforcement of fishery laws and regulations and curb Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing in our seas, BFAR, an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, said.

‘Together with the whole fishery sector, we are thankful for President Noynoy’s contribution and service to the country, it added. Tugon Kabuhayan noted that the goal of the RA 10654 is to ‘rehabilitate and protect the resource base in order to increase and ensure sustainable production and food security. The group added that under the Aquino administration, the ‘Bangkang Pinoy Program was implemented, which aimed to replace wooden municipal fishing boats with ‘safer, sturdier and more modern boats, made of fiberglass.#

‘The program was continued by the current administration as ‘FB Pagbabago’ and has since constructed and modernize over 30,000 fiberglass boats all over the country, it added. Furthermore, the group said the Aquino administration was also aggressive in the construction of community fish landing centers, equipped with freezers and stainless-steel fish tables, in municipal fish landing sites.

‘These are intended to help fisherfolk ensure the safety and preserve the quality of their fish and fishery products. This enables them to sell their produce and catch at better prices, it said.

‘Tugon Kabuhayan draws inspiration from the policies and programs initiated through the leadership of former President Noynoy Aquino, from resource management and protection to law enforcement that would help propel national food security, the group added.

Why the world’s most fertile fishing ground is facing a ‘unique and dire’ threat

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/14/why-the-worlds-most-fertile-fishing-ground-is-facing-a-unique-and-dire-threat>

"Since long before the steel-hulled fishing boats from foreign countries arrived in the South Pacific its people have had their own systems for sharing the ocean’s catches. In the New Zealand territory of Tokelau, in the middle of the region, the 1,400 people living on its three atolls practise a system called inati, which ensures every household gets fish. Several times a month all atoll men are given time to prepare and bait lines and the ‘grey hairs ‘ as leaders are called ‘ decide on the targeted fish, including tuna and trevally, using traditional knowledge of the best grounds, along with tides and the phases of the moon.

They set off late at night and return 12 hours later, well after the sun has risen. Their catch is then sorted into different species and sizes. Bigger families get bigger shares. Across the Pacific, traditional fishing practices like this take place alongside huge commercial fishing operations, where the catches are not always shared so fairly, nor disclosed so transparently. The Pacific region exported 530,000 metric tonnes of seafood products in 2019, netting US\$1.2bn. The biggest exporters were Papua New Guinea (\$470m), Fiji (\$182m), the Federated States of Micronesia (\$130m), Vanuatu (\$108m) and Solomon Islands (\$101m). The biggest importers of Pacific fish in 2019 were Thailand, with seafood imports from the Pacific worth \$300m, the Philippines (\$195m), Japan (\$130m), China (\$100m) and the US (\$100m).

In some ways the fishing industry is a success story for the Pacific region. In a landmark moment of regional cooperation in 1982, eight countries signed the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, which allowed the tiny countries to collectively negotiate the access to their waters by foreign fishing vessels, a move that has generated an additional \$500m a year in revenue. But the Pacific ‘ the world’s most fertile fishing ground, which supplies well over half of the world’s tuna ‘ also falls victim to illegal fishing, with up to one in every five wild-caught fish illegally caught.

The small Pacific countries in whose waters these illegal fishing operations take place lose out on the profit, suffer depletion of stocks and, without the capacity to fully police their waters, are often also penalised by fishing importers for not being able to guarantee the sustainable provenance of the catch.

The 17 nations and territories of the region directly control their own territorial waters. Fishing outside the territorial waters, in the nations’ larger exclusive economic zones (EEZ), is

monitored and coordinated by the intergovernmental Forum Fisheries Agency. Pacific EEZs produce around US\$26bn worth of tuna for consumers but the islands earn only about 10% of that value. Only a handful of Pacific countries process any of the catches in their waters “ this usually takes place in Bangkok and other Asian cities. Pacific countries seldom even crew fishing boats and make money only on the licensing.

The high seas beyond the EEZs, claimed by no one, come under the multinational Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC). In 2019, WCPFC’s total tuna catch was a record-setting 2,961,059 tonnes, 81% of the total Pacific Ocean tuna catch and 55% of the global tuna catch. It is dominated by boats from deep-water fishing nations including China, Japan, South Korea and the US. Industrial-scale fishing began in the South Pacific after the second world war. It was dominated by the US and Japan but in the past two decades China has dispatched wave after wave of fishing boats, mainly longliners and purse seiners.

Longliners set out fishing lines up to 100km in length, each with up to 3,000 hooks. They use electronics to find a school of fish and then, using boat speed, haul the line through it. Careful skippers avoid killing sharks, billfish such as marlin and swordfish, sea turtles and seabirds in the process. Others do not care. Few longlining tuna boats in the Pacific have independent observers on board; as they are small and often dangerous, few want to sail on them. Purse seiners are bigger and more comfortable “attracting observers “and use onboard helicopters and floating aggregation devices to attract tuna. A seiner will use boats to encircle an entire school with nets (the ‘purse ’) which is then closed, capturing all the fish “and often dolphins and sharks.

Having grossly overfished its own regional waters, notably the China seas, China’s fleets are now taking huge quantities of tuna from the world’s most fertile fishing ground. Since 2012 the Chinese Pacific fishing fleet has grown by more than 500%. A survey of boats operating in the Pacific in 2016 found that Chinese-flagged vessels far outstripped those of any other country. China had 290 industrial vessels licensed to operate in the region at the time, more than a quarter of the total, and more than the 240 from all the Pacific nations combined.

Their longline fleets, targeting albacore and yellow fin, dominate EEZs in places such as Vanuatu and the high seas. Silky and whitetip sharks are a favourite ‘bycatch ’, their fins kept and the rest dumped. In the past 10 years China and Hong Kong have sought to close down the shark fin trade, partly by banning the consumption of shark fin soup at government functions, and through public efforts to publicly stigmatise it. The continuing decline in oceanic shark numbers points to limited success so far. According to WCPFC records, China has more than 600 vessels out of a total of 1,300 foreign-operated ships licensed to fish in the area. Earlier this year China said it had banned its fleets from catching squid in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans for three months to help populations recover. Global Times, a state-run newspaper, reported that the move highlighted ‘China’s image as a responsible fishing power and is a milestone for China’s participation in international maritime management.

Miren Gutierrez, a research associate at the London-based Overseas Development Institute (ODI), co-wrote a study on Chinese deep-water fishing. ‘Having depleted fish stocks in domestic waters and encouraged by subsidies, China’s distant-water fishing fleets have been travelling farther and farther afield, and its companies have been building more and more vessels to meet the rising demand for seafood, she said.

Various estimates of the Chinese fleet range between 1,600 and 3,400 vessels but the ODI study says this figure is likely to be five to eight times higher. The authors identified 12,490 vessels observed outside internationally recognised Chinese waters between 2017 and 2018. ‘China is a fisheries superpower, the study says. ‘It has the largest fishing fleet and the largest DWF [distant water fishing] fleet in the world. Chinese vessels have been extensively documented engaging in illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. In January the Washington-based Brookings Institute published a study, quoting industry, regulatory and media outlets, that said: ‘Chinese fishing practices present a truly unique and dire IUU threat.

Written by the Brookings fellow Michael Sinclair, a former US Coast Guard captain, it said China used the world’s largest fishing fleet to ‘devastating effect’ to meet its population’s huge demand for protein. ‘When working together in fleets, these vessels are rapacious, Sinclair wrote. Early last year, China took action when Ecuador alleged that at least 150 Chinese fish vessels had turned off tracking systems so they could operate near the Galapagos Islands. In response in April last year, China’s Bureau of Fisheries announced it would begin blacklisting vessels and captains found to have engaged in IUU fishing. Beijing has banned a number of vessels with its flag for IUU violations in the Pacific, but industry observers question the effectiveness of this, especially because Chinese vessels continue to go blind, switch off their tracking, while in the Pacific.

In the Pacific, much of the suspected IUU is in the unreported column, a result made up of a combination of illegal transshipping on the high seas “when catches are transferred between vessels” and corrupt or careless monitoring in Pacific ports. While China is the most cited IUU fisher, other nations, notably South Korea and Vanuatu, are also mentioned and IUU fishing remains a continuing problem even with small Pacific states as offenders. Various studies have tried to give a value to IUU catches. A 2019 report by the World Resources Institute estimated that up to 7.2m tonnes of IUU fish valued at between US\$4.3bn to US\$8.3bn disappeared annually. The loss of so much fish to IUU fishing has long been a drain on the economies of small states without any other exports, as well as damaging to the global environment. The inability of Pacific nations to cope with IUU fishing has drawn the ire of rich importers, seeking certification of the legality of fish catches.

The EU gave Vanuatu a warning in 2012 over the role of IUU vessels carrying its flag. Facing the prospect of EU bans on its exports, Vanuatu reformed its regulations and was formally advised in 2016 that the warning had been lifted. But the country then found itself in trouble with the US over a fleet of apparently Taiwanese-owned vessels flying Vanuatu’s flag, including

a ship called Tunago 61. In 2016, six of Tunago 61's Indonesian crew murdered the ship's captain while fishing east of Pitcairn Island. They kept the body in the freezer and took it to Suva, Fiji, where they confessed to the crime.

They said they had been working for 16 months without pay and without leaving the ship. Because the ship was flying under Vanuatu's flag, Fiji flew the men to Vanuatu, a country they had never been to, where they were convicted and jailed for 18 years. They still sit in cells there. Transform Aqorau, Solomon Islands' ambassador to the US, who was responsible for driving through the Parties to the Nauru agreement, has argued that IUU fishing poses one of the biggest threats to fisheries management for developing countries. Flags of convenience and shell company operations in tax havens hide what is happening.

'Most developing countries do not have the capacity to verify information provided by these vessels, Aqorau said. As a consequence there was an often substantial loss of income for poorer Pacific countries from IUU fishing, especially because it often involved traditional fishing grounds. 'The loss to developing countries is, therefore, not only expressed in economic terms by the lower licence fees paid, but also in resource terms, by the greater accessibility to the resource.

Fisherfolk in Dingalan, Aurora in the Philippines equipped with livelihood technology tool

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/06/14/public-square/fisherfolk-in-dingalan-aurora-equipped-with-livelihood-tool/1803151>

"Life at sea is perilous, especially for fisherfolk, who do not have the means to properly monitor weather conditions. Many of them merely rely on the moon, the sun and the wind to predict changes in weather. The lack of scientific basis to keep the fishermen protected from hazardous situations when sailing prompted Globe, the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI), and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Philippines to collaborate and launch ISDApp in Dingalan, Aurora.

This innovation benefits 300 fishermen from fishing communities Barangay Aplaya, Barangay Butas na Bato and Barangay Paltic. As part of the pilot, participating fishermen will be given free mobile phones by NFRDI, which they can use to receive timely weather advisories and emergency notifications without the need for an internet connection. This will be complemented by prepaid load support from Globe.

During the ceremonies, Globe Head for Sustainability and Social Responsibility Apple Evangelista underscored the significant contribution of the fishing industry to the country's food security, as she pointed out the need to ensure the safety of both the lives and livelihood of the fishing community through technology.

The Globe-powered ISDApp was developed by iNON IT Solutions as a way to collect localized weather data that can be shared with community members via text message to help them decide whether or not to set sail. Fishermen also receive recommendations as to what precautions they should take under less than ideal conditions. Dingalan Mayor Shierwin Taay expressed gratitude for having his municipality chosen as the second beneficiary after Sariaya, Quezon.

In January this year, ISDApp also benefited 300 fishermen in Sariaya. Its success motivated the proponents to expand the service to Dingalan, given the high typhoon incidence in the province. Globe supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically UN SDG No. 9 and UN SDG No. 11, which emphasize the importance of fostering innovation and building sustainable cities and communities. Globe is committed to upholding the 10 United Nations Global Compact principles and 10 UN SDGs.

On World Ocean Day, fishermen and their supporters oppose MPAs favoured by environmental NGOs

www.icsf.net

"On 8 June 2021 -- World Ocean Day -- organizations of fishermen and their supporters, including the Collectif Pache & Developpement in Lorient, France, rallied to declare their opposition to the unilateral and exclusionary policies that favour the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) designed to declare 30 per cent of the world's oceans as complete reserves closed to so-called "industrial" fishing.

Industrial fishing is defined as fishing involving motorised vessels that are over 12 m long and 6 m wide, with a capacity of over 50 kg catch/voyage, and that require substantial sums for their construction, maintenance and operation, and are mostly sold commercially, including all fishing using trawling gears that are dragged or towed across the seafloor or through the water column, and fishing using purse seines and large longlines.

Pointing to the disregard for fishermen's experiences, knowledge and commitments, the Collectif PÃche & DÃ©veloppement asserts that to embark on a path of authoritarian and technocratic ocean management is to call into question the culture, knowledge and life of fishermen without taking into account the reality of their practices and commitments.

'If we look at the recent history of the fight for the environment not only in Brittany, but also in other countries from the North to the South, we find fishermen fighting against, for instance, the Plogoff nuclear power plant, and the development of marinas, sand and oil spills, notes the Collectif Pache & Developpement. 'They are involved in MPAs such as the Iroise Marine Park, the Natura 2000 area of the Roches de Penmarc'h, the SMVM of the Golfe du Morbihan, the Sein Island reserve, etc. They have set up programmes for the restoration of crayfish, the protection of maerl beds, the RESPECT project, etc.

They debate within the MPA management and programme steering bodies, with scientists and local environmental associations. This takes time and energy, and the debates are sometimes difficult, but there is respect on both sides. This is how things can move forward on a democratic basis, whereas authoritarian decisions taken by political or scientific bodies that are totally removed from the realities and complexity of the marine environment can only lead to sterile opposition. Unfortunately, it is feared that the machines for excluding the voiceless will inexorably continue its steamroller course -- unless our warnings provoke strong and salutary reactions.

According to the indigenous peoples' organization, Survival International: "Major conservation NGOs claim that (MPAs) will mitigate climate change, reduce wildlife loss, enhance biodiversity and so save our environment. They are wrong. Protected areas will not save our planet. On the contrary, they will increase human suffering and so accelerate the destruction of the spaces they claim to protect, because local opposition to them will grow. They have no effect on climate change and have been shown to be generally poor to prevent wildlife loss. The idea of 'conservation-fortress' -- that local people should be removed from their land in order to protect nature -- is colonial. "

" In a paper published in World Development (Volume 146, October 2021), Marco J. Haenssger et al analyzed the socioeconomic development impact of marine resource management and conservation in Southeast Asia. They concluded: 'Qualitative research " based on 22 interviews in Koh Sdach Archipelago, Cambodia " demonstrates how the local community experienced improving relationships with the state and a slowing deterioration of marine resources, but also social division, heightened livelihood anxiety, and potentially a false sense of economic security.

We hypothesise on this basis that marine conservation could impede socio-economic development, for which we find support in our quantitative analysis across Cambodia, the Philippines, and Timor-Leste: MPAs materialised in better-off communities but were associated with slower and partly regressive socio-economic development, in particular decreasing wealth and increasing child mortality.

They added: 'These findings suggest that the rapid global expansion of MPA coverage in its current, environmental-conservation-focused form is problematic as it disregards local social realities. Livelihood adaptation support should complement the implementation of marine resource governance mechanisms to mitigate unintended negative consequences.

On World Oceans Day, threats to West Philippine Sea gain relevance

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/196833/on-world-oceans-day-threats-to-west-philippine-sea-gain-relevance>

"World Oceans Day is celebrated each year across the globe every June 8. The United Nations said the yearly event seeks to generate awareness on the impact of human activities on oceans, which is gaining relevance especially in the West Philippine Sea. 'World Oceans Day reminds everyone of the major role the oceans have in everyday life, the UN said. 'They are the lungs of our planet and a major source of food and medicine and a critical part of the biosphere, it added. As part of this year's celebration of World Oceans Day, the global impact of illegal fishing, especially by China in the West Philippine Sea, is recalled.

A study published in 2020 in the scientific journal *Science Advances* revealed that between 2005 to 2014, at least 7.7 to 14 million metric tons of illegal fish catches were traded illicitly each year. As a result, between \$8.9 and \$17.2 billion in gross revenues were lost to illicit trading. The study also found that Asia, Africa, and South America were dealt a huge blow in illegal catch and gross revenue losses during the same period. Analysis by data consumer company Statista on Tuesday (June 8) noted that the Asian continent loses at least \$6.7 billion in annual gross revenue from illegal fishing and trading.

'Assuming that 50 to 80 percent of illicit commercial catch and 10 to 30 percent of the illicit artisanal catch is traded, up to \$3.4 billion is lost every year in the Western Central Pacific (incl. the South China Sea), while up to \$2.0 billion vanishes annually in Northeast Asia and up to \$1.5 billion of revenue goes missing in the Eastern Indian Ocean every year, said Statista's Katharina Bucholz, citing the 2020 study. The Central Eastern Atlantic lost around \$4.3 billion each year. Among the countries that suffered the most revenue loss due to illicit fishing were China, the Philippines, the US Pacific territories, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, Mauritania, Russia, and Guinea.

The harmful economic impact of the illicit trade of illegally caught fish does not only harm annual revenues of regions or countries worldwide. According to the study, illegal fishing has also brought to Asia food insecurity, job loss, and income loss for local fishers. In 2019, out of a total of 152 coastal states assessed worldwide, China gained the worst scores for their degree of exposure to and quality of response toward illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. <https://www.iuufishingindex.net/> China, which operates the world's largest overseas fishing fleet with 200,000 to 800,000 fishing boats, accounts for nearly half of the world's fishing activity" according to an article published in 2020 at the Yale School of the Environment.

Aside from being the world's biggest seafood exporter, China's population also accounts for over a third of the total fish consumption worldwide. 'Having depleted the seas close to home, the Chinese fishing fleet has been sailing farther afield in recent years to exploit the waters of other countries, including those in West Africa and Latin America, where enforcement tends to be weaker as local governments lack the resources or inclination to police their waters, said investigative reporter Ian Urbina in his article.

‘Most Chinese distant-water ships are so large that they scoop up as many fish in one week as local boats from Senegal or Mexico might catch in a year’ he added. China has also expanded its maritime presence in Northeast Asia and most notably in the West Philippine Sea”causing the still unresolved territorial dispute and tension between the Philippines and China. This was despite the international arbitral ruling in The Hague in 2016 which declared China’s mythical nine-dash claim to most of the South China Sea, including the West Philippine Sea, as invalid and baseless.

China, according to the ruling, violated Philippine sovereignty and Filipinos’ right to fish and explore resources in the West Philippine Sea. Beijing considered the ruling as trash and does not recognize it. The Philippines, along with fellow Southeast Asian neighbors Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam, have overlapping claims to the sea along with China. Despite an agreement to refrain from provocative actions, China has continued to expand and militarize territories that it claims in the maritime region.

After 2 years talks progress on compensation for Philippines fishermen hit by Chinese vessel

<https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/6/8/Gem-Ver-fishermen-China-vessel-compensation.html>

"The discussions on compensation for Filipino fishermen abandoned by a Chinese vessel that hit their boat in the West Philippine Sea finally moves forward after two years. Philippine officials from the Justice and Foreign Affairs departments met with China’s Bureau of Fisheries and representatives of owners of the Chinese fishing vessel on Monday, according to Justice Undersecretary Adrian Sugay.

He said on Tuesday that the talks focused on the compensation for actual and moral damages for the owner of the F/B Gem-Ver fishing boat and its 22 Filipino fishermen. Sugay did not give the exact figures but said the number previously mentioned by DOJ Secretary Menardo Guevarra still stands. The compensation requested by the Gem-Ver camp will total P12.016 million to pay for boat expenses, six months of lost income, and moral damages.

The DOJ said Philippine officials underscored the violations committed by the Chinese fishermen when their vessel hit the anchored F/B Gem-Ver near Recto Bank, an underwater feature claimed by both Manila and Beijing, then left the Filipino fishermen floating in the open sea on June 9, 2019. They were eventually rescued by Vietnamese fishermen. "

"The Philippine panel invited attention to the fact that the crew members of the Chinese fishing vessel, in violation of relevant international conventions and customary international maritime law, failed to extend assistance to persons who were clearly in distress at sea," the statement said. As for China's side, the representatives of the owners of the Chinese fishing vessel informed the Gem-Ver team of their counter-proposal.

Sugay said the opposing sides may meet again depending on whether or not the Gem-Ver camp accepts the counter-proposal. He added that filing a case after the compensation will also hinge on the decision of the two parties. The owner of the Chinese vessel that rammed the Gem-Ver boat earlier apologized, but maintained that it was an ‘accidental collision.

Restricted access, trawlers hurt small-scale fishermen in Philippines, says fishing group

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/philippines-southchinasea-06042021163259.html>

"Restrictions in Philippine territorial waters and the open seas, along with threats from large-scale fishing operations, are the biggest issues facing subsistence fishermen in this archipelagic country of 7,100 islands, according to an organization representing them. In recent years, governments of coastal municipalities have begun restricting their ‘municipal fishing grounds, or waters up to 15 km (9 miles) from the shore, allowing only resident fishermen who register with local authorities, said Fernando Hicap, chairman of Pamalakaya, a Philippine fishermen’s organization. ‘Imagine, you’re a Filipino fisherman, you’re in the Philippines, and you’re on municipal fishing grounds, but you’re sued for illegal entry.

How hurtful is that? Isn’t that wrong? Hicap told BenarNews, an RFA-affiliated online news service. ‘What misery. Add to that this [COVID-19] pandemic “ no one’s buying what little catch they bring home because of the lockdowns, said Hicap, adding that fishermen have little choice but to consume their own catch, or barter them for other small goods. Municipalities are allowing outsiders to pay an annual fee, usually not lower than 1,000 pesos (U.S. \$20) “ a fee that subsistence fishermen, who use small-scale, low-technology practices, cannot afford to pay “ according to Hicap’s group.

Besides, it’s not feasible to register and pay fees at every coastal municipality to be able to fish in waters that have traditionally been communal to Filipinos. Restrictions were not an issue in past decades when there were more fish in the shallows, said Benjamin Sumaganday, a fisherman in northern Masinloc town. ‘There used to be huge catches in the past. But the population grew over the years, and we can’t afford to just stay in municipal waters, the father of four told BenarNews.

Meanwhile on June 5, the world will mark the fourth International Day for the Fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU). According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, a United Nations agency, ‘IUU fishing includes many types of illicit activities, for example, fishing without a license or authorization, not reporting or misreporting catches, fishing in prohibited areas and catching or selling prohibited species, or fishing in areas not covered by a regulatory framework.

The Philippines Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has vowed to protect locals against such activities. Calling on Filipinos to focus their fishing efforts in the West Philippine

Sea “ a region of the South China Sea that the Philippines claims as its territory “ the government agency promised to boost patrols against illegal fishing put local fishers at a disadvantage. “[W]e remain committed in our mandate to address IUU fishing in Philippine waters, the bureau said in a news release earlier this year.”

" Even as municipal governments cite conservation as the reason for restricting fishing access to their waters, Hicap said those in power could be benefiting “ otherwise, they would not let in commercial trawlers. “Small-time fishermen are not the reason there is depletion in municipal waters. The cause of that depletion is the commercial vessels who freely exploit those waters, Hicap said. Anna Oposa, head of the advocacy group Save Philippine Seas, said enforcement must be stricter and commercial fishing must be prohibited.

“Our fisherfolk are already some of the poorest, most marginalized groups in the country working hard to feed the country and the rest of the world. There can be no positive outcome for the Filipino people if we allow commercial fishing activities where they shouldn’t be allowed, Oposa said. Sumaganday, 52, said many fishermen in his community have joined fishing fleets to be able to fish farther out at sea even as territorial tensions pit Filipinos against foreign fishing fleets, specifically from China.

“Most of the time it is not hostile, but there are times that we are being shooed away from territories that are traditionally ours, the fisherman from Masinloc said. In March, government security officials reported the presence of about 200 Chinese trawlers at Whitsun Reef in the Philippine exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and elsewhere in the contested South China Sea. The officials said the trawlers were crewed by maritime militias, but Beijing has denied the accusation and insisted the waters were within Chinese territory.

Manila has been filing daily diplomatic protests with Beijing since April, demanding it remove the ships. In addition, the Philippine navy, coast guard, and fisheries bureau have deployed more ships to Scarborough Shoal and the Spratly Islands to try to drive out or at least challenge the Chinese trawlers. Since Beijing took control of Mischief Reef in the Philippine EEZ in 1995, the presence of Chinese ships has increased steadily in the South China Sea.

In 2012, China and the Philippines were involved in a months-long standoff at Scarborough Shoal. Four years later, in 2016, an international arbitral court ruled in favor of Manila’s territorial claims in the maritime region, but that has not slowed Beijing’s expansionist activities in the sea. Hicap’s group, Pamalakaya, recently petitioned the U.N. to nullify Beijing’s new coast guard law, investigate the environmental damage Chinese ships have caused in the South China Sea, and ‘demilitarize’ the strategic and resource-rich waterway.

The law, which took effect in February, allows its ships to use weapons against any vessels found in waters that Beijing claims as its territory. Philippine authorities who lack maritime assets have been hard pressed to catch poachers, including foreign ones from China and

Vietnam. ‘There’s been significant damage to marine life in municipal waters. The numbers vary in different studies, but it’s been estimated that 60 percent to 75 percent of the Philippines’ fishing grounds are overfished, Oposa told BenarNews.

‘There’s also a significant decline in coral reef health and cover, which is alarming because coral reefs are habitats of fishes. An organization of fishermen who used to fish freely at the Scarborough Shoal said their catch “and income “had declined by as much as 80 percent. ‘We used to be able to go there, but not anymore, Sumaganday said. ‘Now are we are forced to fish elsewhere, he said, adding that the shoal, in bygone days, was the source for a bountiful catch.

Subsistence fishermen make up the largest sector of the Philippines’ fishing industry, according to the most recent data from BFAR. Of the 1.9 million fishermen registered with BFAR, more than 927,000 do small-scale ‘capture fishing, while more than 239,000 do ‘gleaning or fishing with basic gear in shallow water. Paddle boats accounted for about 68 percent of registered vessels. Meanwhile, much of government support for the industry goes into aquaculture “ raising fish in ponds, nets or cages in natural or artificial bodies of water “ which employs about 209,000, according to official statistics.

Most fishermen live hand-to-mouth and have few options to professionalize their livelihood including acquiring larger, more dependable boats and equipment. As Chinese and Vietnamese fishermen sport metal or wood-and-metal trawlers, many Filipinos use traditional-type wooden outriggers. Hicap worries that as the Philippine Congress moves to amend the constitution to allow full foreign ownership of businesses in the country, Filipino fishermen, especially the poor, will sink even farther down the government’s list of priorities.

‘The government should ensure municipal fishing grounds remain communal. They should be limited to subsistence fishers, with no commercial vessels, he said.

Philippines Senator cites fishermen during National Fisherfolks Day celebration

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/06/01/villar-cites-fishermen-during-national-fisherfolks-day-celebration/>

"Sen. Cynthia A. Villar of the Philippines has lauded the significant contribution of fisherfolks to accelerate the growth of the country’s economy. In a video message during the celebration of the National Fisherfolks Day, Villar recognized them for continuously bringing foods from the bodies of water amid the pandemic. The country observes the National Fisherfolks Day every May 31 through a Presidential Proclamation issued in 2000 or 21 years ago.

‘During this Fisherfolks Day, we honor our fishermen whom we hailed as ‘frontliners because they go fishing everyday despite the risk of intense heat or rain, Villar said. ‘Let us help them

by buying their catch while they guarantee to keep our rivers and seas clean. Let us also continue to fight illegal fishing activities that destroy rich resources from our waters. she added. In her home city of Las Pinas, Villar extolled they have been protecting and conserving their coastal areas and marine sanctuaries like the Las Pinas Paranaque Wetland Park.

She stressed this would ensure that they can have regular sources of fishes and other seafoods leave the Las Pinas Paranaque Wetland Park Mangrove Area is they growing ground of fishes in Manila Bay. Furthermore, she told fishermen from Bernabe Compound in Las Pinas they belong to the 1.8 million small scale fishermen in our country. The fishermen from Bernabe Compound were chosen by the National Fisheries Research and Development Institute(NFRDI), Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Researches (BFAR) , to attend the important assembly held in Las Pinas. This year's celebration has for its theme, 'Mussle Culture, Handling and Technologies.

She said the NFRDI, BFAR Villar Sipag Farm School will provide guidance to our mussels culture through training that will be set in the next few days. 'Fishes and mussels are seen as good alternative sources of protein. Like urban vegetable gardening that we are promoting, I will also focus in helping improve the lives of our Bernabe Compound fisherfolks, noted Villar.

She also reminded Fisherfolks to register in the BFAR fish database for registration of fisherfolks in the municipal waters. She said they must also update their profile so any help from the national government can easily reach them.

Philippines, India eye cooperation in fisheries

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/05/28/business/top-business/ph-india-eye-cooperation-in-fisheries/1800979>

"The Philippines and India are looking at enormous opportunity for trade cooperation on marine fishery and aquaculture starting off with Philippines' potential investments in putting up tuna processing facilities in India or importing its needed tuna raw materials from India. During the India Philippines Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture virtual business conference on Thursday attended by representatives of India's fishery industry and the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Fisheries Inc., Indian Ambassador to the Philippines Shambhu Kumaran highlighted that India is looking at investment and technology exchange in fisheries with the Philippines. "

"It will be the start of a long process of linking to raise productivity. We invite you to look at business opportunities in India,"" Kumaran said. He said India and the Philippines have enormous opportunities to learn together, exchange technologies, build capacity, and enact policies that can support both countries' fisheries sectors. ""In the post Covid world, health security is really important. But equally important is food security. We must work together to make our food more climate resilient and supply chain more stronger... more vibrant and dynamic,"" Kumaran said.

In particular, there is a huge opportunity for tuna value addition in India as it produces largely tuna ready for canning, according to Cherian Kurian, managing director of India's M/S HIC ABF Special Foods. This is where Philippines' global leadership in tuna processing and canning comes in. Tuna is one of the Philippines' largest seafood export with a yearly value of \$350 to \$400 million. Frabelle Fishing Corp. President Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said tuna fishing in India is also a potential opportunity for local fish producers. "

"(The Philippine) Tuna fleet is willing to expand when they're welcome to fish," Laurel said, noting that local tuna processors-canners can put up canning facilities in India. However, it may be more advantageous to import India's raw tuna production and process these locally, said Francisco Buencamino, Tuna Canners Association of the Philippines executive director. This is mainly because the Philippines has preferential duty privileges to the European Union for tuna export.

Kurian noted that India's oceanic tuna resource potential within its exclusive economic zone reaches 2.13 million metric tons (MT) with yellowfin taking up 54 percent and skipjack 40 percent. He added that India can start exporting tuna to the Philippines in bigger volume. Doing so, the Philippines can maximize its processing-canning capabilities.

Another area of cooperation is shrimp as India may extend technology and research and development (R&D) to the Philippines that suffers from difficulty handling shrimp diseases. India is the world's largest shrimp producer and exporter particularly the vannamei species. It exports 90 percent of shrimp production with almost 50 percent to the United States. However, there is still 9.7 million hectares of potential shrimp area in India.

Of the total figure, 8.5 million hectares are waterlogged saline areas and 1.2 million hectares are brackishwater. For his part, Miguel Rene Dominguez, Alsons Agribusiness Unit vice president, said there is an opportunity to raise productivity in shrimp and mangrove crab production in the Philippines.

India's technology expertise in these technologies may potentially help raise Philippines' shrimp and mangrove crab production. For the Philippines, there is a huge opportunity in finfish, shrimp and crab, Dominguez said. ""The Philippines has a rich reservoir of resources both physical and know-how for aquaculture development,"" he noted.

Philippines and China to meet on aid for fishermen on board fishing boat Gem-Ver

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/philippines-china-meet-aid-gem-ver-fishermen-may-2021>

"After almost two years since Philippine fishing boat Gem-Ver was rammed, sunk, and abandoned by a Chinese trawler in the West Philippine Sea, officials from the Philippines and China are finally scheduled to meet in June to discuss aid that's due Gem-Ver's crew and owners.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra told reporters on Monday, May 24, that a meeting between the two countries has been scheduled for June 2 and 7, after compensation for Gem-Ver's fishermen was discussed during a bilateral meeting on May 21.

'As far as the Filipino fishermen are concerned, it is important that they recover fully their expenses for the boat repair and the income they lost while the boat was under repair, Guevarra said, adding that the discussions aim to "'put a close to this festering issue.'" Talks on compensation for the 22 fishermen of Gem-Ver and the vessel's owners, Felix and Fe dela Torre, will take place nearly two years from the day a Chinese vessel rammed and left Gem-Ver in pieces near Recto Bank (Reed Bank) on June 9, 2019.

Last year, officials from the Duterte government said they would help the owners and crew of Gem-Ver to seek compensation from the Chinese, though progress had gone only as far as estimating the cost of damages. Help for the 22 fishermen of Gem-Ver came only after they had tried every outlet they could access to request that the Philippine government help them file a case against the Chinese.

Based on an assessment done by the justice department last July to August 2020, civil damages were pegged at about P12 million. At the time, Guevarra said the amount covered expenses for the repair of the fishing vessel, loss of income, wages for 6 months, and moral damages. Guevarra told Rappler that the P12-million amount would serve as the 'starting point' for discussions with China in June.

Diplomatic sources also told Rappler that among issues to be discussed is the necessary clarification on the differences in the legal systems of the two countries. They also said that once the remaining issues are ironed out, compensation could be completed. The small group from the Philippines will be led by the Department of Justice and include representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Department of Agriculture/Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

The fishermen and owners of Gem-Ver have not received any compensation despite the government's earlier commitment to help them claim these from the Chinese. After spending about P2.1 million to repair Gem-Ver in late 2019, the Dela Torre family had hoped any damages they could claim would stop their financial bleeding.

In a public apology addressed to Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. on August 28, 2019, the owner of the Chinese ship earlier offered to pay the Filipino fishermen. The apology was made on the same day President Rodrigo Duterte was set to leave for China for an official visit, where he was scheduled to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Since Gem-Ver's sinking in 2019, the captain of the ship, Junel Insigne and other crew members had drifted apart, while other crew had been forced to find other ways to make a living since the coronavirus pandemic hit the Philippines. The sinking of Gem-Ver had been one of the biggest

crises to hit the Duterte administration and had put a spotlight on President Rodrigo Duterte's policy on the West Philippine Sea.

Testing Duterte's strong ties with Beijing, the sinking of Gem-Ver was also one of the most heated issues in the West Philippine Sea ever since the 2012 Scarborough Shoal standoff prompted the Philippines to file "and win" its historic case against China. On the night of the sinking, a Chinese ship rammed Gem-Ver while it was anchored near Recto Bank in the middle of the night. The impact left a gaping hole at Gem-Ver's tip, while the Chinese abandoned the Filipino fishermen.

The Filipino fishermen were later saved by a Vietnamese fishing boat after two of the Gem-Ver crewmen rowed for hours in the dark in search of help. The sinking prompted the Philippines to file a diplomatic protest.

Philippines ignores China fishing ban in disputed waters

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/philippines-ignores-china-fishing-ban-disputed-waters>

"The Philippine government took another step this month in opposing China by telling its vast fishing fleet to ignore Beijing's annual fishing ban in the South China Sea, where the two countries are locked in a sovereignty dispute.

This year's fishing moratorium 'does not apply to our fishermen, the Philippines' South China Sea task force said on May 4, as reported by domestic media. Officials have 'encouraged fishing boats to trawl the sea, news website Philstar.com reported.

China's moratorium from May 1 to August 16, imposed unilaterally since 1999 in the northern part of the sea, is intended to improve marine ecology, the official Xinhua News Agency in Beijing said last month. More than 50,000 Chinese vessels would suspend operations, it said. Mounting public pressure against China in the Philippines prompted the government to reject the moratorium publicly, a potential boon to a domestic fishing industry that employs some 2 million people, experts say.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte forged a new friendship with China in 2016 by laying aside the sovereignty dispute, but Chinese vessels continue to appear in waters claimed by Manila. Duterte's political allies, who plan to seek office next year after he steps down due to term limits, are expected to follow public opinion on China. 'There's a lot of political heat, so the Philippine government cannot be seen to be acquiescing to Chinese pressure, said Eduardo Araral, associate professor at the National University of Singapore's public policy school.

Fishing vessel operators want the government to take a 'much stronger posture toward the South China Sea, said Jay Batongbacal, international maritime affairs professor at the University of the

Philippines in Quezon City. They complain they seldom see their own country's navy or coast guard, he said. Four Philippine Navy ships set off this week to support fishing vessels in the Spratly Islands. 'Because of the more intense public pressure, they're responding by sending ships to show some visibility and also encouraging the fishermen to fish, Batongbacal said.

China claims about 90% of the 3.5 million-square-kilometer sea that's prized for fisheries and fossil fuel reserves. It's the most militarily advanced of the six governments that dispute sovereignty over the sea. Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam call all or parts of the South China Sea their own, as well. Claimants prize the waterway for its fishing stocks and fossil fuel reserves. The moratorium zone covers waters used by Taiwan and Malaysia as well as the Philippines. Duterte visited Beijing in 2016 to set aside the sovereignty issue. China then pledged \$24 billion in aid and investment for the developing Southeast Asian country. But Duterte has angered Filipinos since that visit by saying China was too strong at sea for the Philippines to resist.

Officials in Manila said little about previous Chinese fishing bans. Philippine fishing boats know where it's safe and unsafe after so many years of bans, Araral said. China has stoked public hostility by letting hundreds of its fishing vessels pass at least twice near Philippine-controlled islets in the disputed sea. A flotilla that peaked at 220 vessels moored at Whitsun Reef in the sea's Spratly Islands in March. Philippine officials demanded that those vessels leave the unoccupied feature.

Filipinos had never regarded China as a friend before 2016, allying instead with the United States militarily since the 1950s. Officials in Manila aim now to retain their Visiting Forces Agreement with Washington this year, even though Duterte had once vowed to scrap it. 'For Duterte, this is an opportunity to demonstrate that he is keen to resist China in the way he deems fit, said Collin Koh, maritime security research fellow at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

China has not publicly rebutted the Philippine government for urging fishing boats to ignore the moratorium. It will probably just ask that any boats leave the no-fishing zone rather than impounding them, lest Philippine officials get even angrier, Araral said.

A frayed Sino-Philippine relationship risks pushing Manila closer to Washington. Beijing resents U.S. presence in the South China Sea, although the U.S. has no territorial claims there. China might tell its fishing boats to leave Whitsun Reef as well as letting Philippine fishermen fish in the moratorium zone, said Aaron Rabena, research fellow at the Asia-Pacific Pathways to Progress Foundation in Metro Manila. 'There can be relative stability if the fishing vessels withdraw and they don't enforce that fishing ban on us, he said.

The first Asian American settlement was established by Filipino fishermen

<https://www.history.com/news/first-asian-american-settlement-filipino-st-malo>

"The history of the oldest known permanent Asian American settlement remains mysterious and as murky as the mosquito-infested marshland it was built on. Saint Malo was first established as a fishing village along the shores of Lake Borgne in Louisiana in the 18th century and continued to flourish until the 20th century.

The settlement's namesake, Juan San Mala, was a leader of a group of Maroons (runaway enslaved people) who took refuge in the marshlands. True to the settlement's namesake, the Asian pioneers of Saint Malo were the Filipino sailors and indentured servants who escaped the Spanish Galleons in the 1700s. They were later known in history as the Manilamen after the capital city of the Philippines.

The Manila Galleon Trade was a thriving global trade network between 1565 and 1815 that connected the economies of Asia, the Americas and Europe for over two centuries. It was during this era that the Luzones Indios (natives of Luzon) became vital in the biannual voyages of the Spanish Galleons across the Pacific. Luzon is the largest island of the Philippines where Manila is also located. As early as the 16th century, many Filipino sailors and indentured servants jumped ship and settled across land that is now Mexico and parts of the United States. They were placed under different racial categories that only added to their mystery.

In Mexico they were often listed as Indios Chinos, while in Louisiana they were later known as the Manilamen. According to oral traditions there was already an existing Filipino community in Saint Malo as early as 1763 when both the Philippines and Louisiana were under the Spanish colonial government in Mexico.

However, the oldest known documentation of Saint Malo as a Filipino settlement only dates back to the 19th century. It was in 1883 when Lafcadio Hearn, a Japanese writer of Greek-Irish descent, wrote about his journey to Saint Malo in an article for Harper's Weekly magazine. Despite the uncertainties regarding the earliest Filipino settlers prior to Hearn's 1883 article, the Manilamen of Louisiana were already active participants in the history of the United States. They were among the bands of privateers who took part in the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. They fought under the command of future President Andrew Jackson in a decisive battle that secured U.S. victory against the British in the War of 1812.

Hearn's article notes that the Filipino settlement of Saint Malo in Saint Bernard Parish had existed for at least 50 years before his visit. He described the fishing village as a thriving community of houses built on stilts similar to the countless floating communities in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. 'All are built in true Manila style, with immense hat-shaped eaves and balconies, but in wood,' he wrote. The hurricane-prone, mosquito-infested marshland that many others avoided reminded the Manilamen of the Philippines, according to Rhonda Richoux.

Richoux is a sixth-generation descendant of Felipe Madriaga, a sailor from the Philippines who settled in Saint Malo with his Irish wife in 1849. Their descendants remain residents of Saint Bernard Parish up to 2021. The Manilamen revolutionized the shrimping industry in the south by introducing methods such as the Shrimp Dance. The method was a process of separating shrimp shells from the meat by teams of fishermen dancing and stomping on piles of shrimp in a circular motion. Their tradition of drying shrimp was an effective way of preserving the shellfish before the advent of refrigeration technology. It was not only fishing and shrimping traditions that Manilamen brought over to the bayous of Southeastern Louisiana.

Throughout history the Manilamen of Louisiana intermarried with other ethnic groups of the region, such as the neighboring Isleño and Cajun communities. These intermarriages began as early as Saint Malo's establishment when the early Filipino settlers were composed of mostly men. The Manilamen and their families became an integral part of Louisiana's multicultural society. Their multiethnic families often blurred and challenged the racial lines imposed by mainstream society.

Their colorful contributions to the distinct cuisine and architecture of the region persists in the 21st century. In a journal article published in 1994, filmmaker Jim Kenny said 'The ~melting pot' never intended to include African- or Asian-Americans who are racially and culturally distinct. Yet, as our film [Dancing the Shrimp] shows, the experiences of eight generations of Filipino-Americans refutes the ~melting pot's' narrow exclusivity and illustrates a unique example of cultural adaptation and assimilation.

Their experiences with the tropical typhoons of Southeast Asia prepared the Manilamen in dealing with the raging hurricanes from the Gulf of Mexico. However, in 1915 the village of Saint Malo was destroyed by a Category 4 hurricane that swept through New Orleans. According to their descendants, countless Manilamen stayed behind for many years in what remained of their village after the hurricane.

Since the 1800s other settlements similar to Saint Malo were also founded by the Manilamen in nearby areas. This included the bigger settlement called Manila Village in Barataria Bay that existed until 1965 when Hurricane Betsy destroyed it permanently. In 2005, the descendants of the Madriaga and Burtanog families hosted a grand reunion in a camp similar to the stilt houses of Saint Malo and Manila Village where their grandparents and great-grandparents were raised. Little did they know that Hurricane Katrina would wreak havoc a few months later.

While the earlier hurricanes of 1915 and 1965 washed away the fishing villages, it was Hurricane Katrina in 2005 that delivered the final heartbreaking blow. Richoux recalled how the Category 5 hurricane destroyed much of the research and artifacts relating to the Manilamen and Saint Malo, including the recordings of her own grandparents.

Many of their families were also forced to relocate across the United States but they remained steadfast in preserving their heritage. Despite the destruction caused by the hurricanes, the

legacy of Saint Malo and the Manilamen of Louisiana transcends beyond the physical fishing villages. A historical marker to commemorate Manila Village was unveiled in 2012 and another one for Saint Malo in Saint Bernard Parish was installed in 2019.

Our land and waters are our lifeblood, says Dinna Umengan

<https://business.inquirer.net/322462/katipunan-descendants-align-with-fisherfolk-leaders>

"On April 30, direct descendants of Katipunan heroes who fought and died for our sovereignty against Spain supported fisherfolk leaders. This they did with a carefully crafted position paper they sent to the President. Dinna Umengan, the elected chair of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Banner Program of the legislated Philippine Council of Agriculture and Fisheries, is grateful for this position and completely agrees with it. She is also the executive director of Tambuyog Development Foundation (TDF). Since its founding in 1984, TDF has been calling for 'attention to our declining fishery resources.

Today, we do not have enough fish to feed our people. We are only 89 percent self-sufficient. If we lose control of the West Philippine Sea, we will lose another 7 percent of our already limited fish catch. This should not be allowed, given our very serious hunger situation. According to a Social Weather Stations survey, there were 4 million families hungry in November 2020, double the prepandemic level of 2.1million in December 2019. Because of the ongoing COVID problem, it is even worse today. We cannot allow the illegal Chinese incursion into our territorial waters to further exacerbate our hunger situation.

Former Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Director and Tugon Kabuhayan convenor Asis Perez said the 237 illegal Chinese vessels were harvesting at least P720 million a month. Villardo Abuene, Homonhon Environment Rescue Organization president, said: 'The Chinese fishermen have been overfishing, depleting our marine resources. Our fishermen have been driven away by Chinese coast guards and fishing vessels. This is actually worse than invasion. Our fishermen are starving. They face hunger because of the Chinese.

Umengan supports the position of the five-coalition Agrifisheries Alliance (AFA) submitted to the President on April 24 protesting the Chinese ships' 'illegal and threatening presence in the West Philippine Sea. The AFA position based its case on defending three cherished principles: sovereignty, food security and livelihood. In addition, Umengan has signed the following statement submitted on April 30 to the President: 'We are Filipinos, whose identity has been defined and shaped not only by our history and culture, but also by the length and breadth of our territory and by the natural beauty and resources within such possessions.

Our land and waters are our lifeblood. 'We are protesting the continuous and progressive occupation in the West Philippine Sea by China of our precious reef, being converted into islands and fortresses, and of the surrounding seas, all of which are within our exclusive economic zone.

We are protesting this violative intrusion by China into our territorial integrity. ‘Our claims to these reefs and waters are not only based on historical facts and precedents, but also supported by international and legal jurisprudence. The Chinese on the other hand, have absolutely no basis. They use armed might and force to get their way.

‘Our forebears fought and died for freedom and control of our land and seas. Let their sacrifices not go down in vain. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less than to reap the fruits of such national possessions. We will all be guilty of gross negligence and breach of trust if we do not speak out at this time against this blatant attack on our nation’s sovereignty. ‘We stand before China, head up high and unbowed, ready to give it all for our beloved Philippines.

The above position was formulated by direct descendants of Katipunan leaders with their alumni classmates from Ateneo de Manila University Grade School ‘61, High School ‘65 and College ‘69 (ADMU616569). Among their great-grandfathers were Pedro Paterno, prime minister of the Malolos Congress after Apolinario Mabini; Gen. Miguel Malvar, President of the First Philippine Republic after Emilio Aguinaldo was captured, and the last general to surrender to the Americans; Pedro Casimiro, a Katipunan treasurer who was jailed with Juan Luna and narrowly escaped death; Andres Agcaoili, a Katipunero who was at Bagumbayan when Jose Rizal was executed; and active combatants like Gen. Juan Araneta, Gen. Servillano Aquino and Capt. Leon Mercado.

On April 30, with the position stated above, these Katipunan descendants wrote the Office of the President: ‘We hope and pray that President Duterte can find a way of helping our people in this very sensitive and difficult matter. On March 3, the President said to the Chinese: ‘Just leave the fishermen alone because they have to eat.

Amid this intense and emotionally charged controversy, we hope these valid arguments generate more light than heat. We look forward to Mr. Duterte’s statement on May 3 defending our fishermen as an indication of his winning back our sovereignty, the same way our Katipunan heroes did. The author is Agriwatch chair, former secretary of presidential programs and projects and former undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Philippines tells fishermen to ignore Beijing’s ban on fishing in South China Sea

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-tells-fishermen-ignore-beijings-ban-fishing-south-china-sea-2021-05-05/>

"The Philippines has rejected an annual summer fishing ban imposed by China in the disputed South China Sea and encouraged its boats to keep fishing in the country's territorial waters. The fishing moratorium imposed by China since 1999 runs from May 1 to Aug. 16 and covers areas of the South China Sea as well as other waters off China. "

"This fishing ban does not apply to our fishermen," the Philippines' South China Sea taskforce said in a statement late on Tuesday. The taskforce opposed China's imposition of the ban over the areas within the territory and jurisdiction of the Philippines, adding "our fisherfolk are encouraged to go out and fish in our waters in the WPS (West Philippine Sea)" The Chinese embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Manila, which refers to area as the West Philippine Sea, has for years been embroiled in a dispute over Beijing's sweeping claims of sovereignty over the South China Sea.

An international tribunal in 2016 invalidated China's claims, but China has rejected the ruling. Tensions between the two countries have recently escalated after Manila accused China of territorial incursions by hundreds of its vessels in the resource-rich waterway. The Philippines has filed diplomatic protests against China over what it calls the "illegal" presence of the Chinese vessels, which it says are manned by militia. Chinese diplomats have said the boats were just sheltering from rough seas and no militia were aboard.

The Philippines' South China Sea taskforce said it spotted seven "Chinese Maritime Militia" at the Sabina shoal in the disputed Spratly archipelago on April 27, which dispersed after being challenged by the Philippine coast guard. Five returned two days later but left after the Philippine coast guard arrived, it said. Sabina shoal is around 130 nautical miles from the western Philippine island of Palawan. "The Philippines is not deterred from defending our national interest, patrimony, and our dignity as a people with all that we have," the task force said.

Hits and misses for a legal tool, Writ of Kalikasan, to protect the environment in Philippines

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/04/hits-and-misses-for-a-legal-tool-to-protect-the-environment-in-philippines/>

"Filipino fishers call it the 'secret island' a group of three sandbars that emerge when the tide's low enough, located a mile or so away from Pag-asa Island, known outside the Philippines as Thitu. They go there because it's teeming with fish. But since 2017, the area has been largely inaccessible due to an international maritime dispute over parts of the South China Sea: Pag-asa, which is 390 kilometers (240 miles) northwest of the Philippine province of Palawan, is one of the areas to which China has staked a claim.

The Philippines has successfully challenged China's claim, lodging a case at a U.N. tribunal and winning recognition of its sovereignty over Pag-asa in 2016. China, however, has refused to recognize the tribunal's jurisdiction and insists on addressing the maritime dispute bilaterally. Even after the ruling was handed down, the fishers have still been unable to access the secret island, they say, with the Chinese Coast Guard blocking their access to the sandbar since 2017. 'We cannot fish there anymore, it's forbidden, already forbidden,' Robert Asiado, president of the local fishers' group, told Mongabay.

The National Task Force “West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS), a government body created in 2016 to enforce maritime security in the areas that fall within the Philippine’s exclusive economic zone, alleges that Chinese vessels have wreaked havoc on the area, harvesting protected species including coral, giant clams, and sea turtles. Asiado is one of 37 fishers who signed a petition for ‘Writ of Kalikasan on April 2019. It’s an attempt to use a unique legal mechanism to force the Philippine government to take action to ensure that national environmental protection laws are enforced in the area. By August 2019, four months later, Asiado and 17 other fishers asked for the case to be withdrawn, highlighting the complexity and limitations of this legal remedy.

In 2010, the Philippines’ Supreme Court set the provisions for what it calls the ‘Writ of Kalikasan, a landmark legal remedy that compels the government to act and halt environmental degradation that impacts more than one municipality. More than a decade since it was first defined and used in court, the writ has been invoked for various cases, from closing open dumpsites and illegal landfills, to prompting the government to protect important bodies of water like the rehabilitation of Manila Bay. - While many petitions have been approved this way, the rulings haven’t always been implemented by local governments.

In 2019, fishers deprived of access to a fishing site in a part of the South China Sea claimed by Beijing filed a petition for Writ of Kalikasan; however, they backed out of the case soon after, citing a lack of understanding of the legal complexities. Since 2010, Filipinos have had a distinctive legal weapon: the Writ of Kalikasan (nature) is based on the constitutional mandate for the state to ‘protect and advance the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology.

Created by the Supreme Court, the writ can be invoked in cases where this constitutional right is violated by ‘environmental damage of such magnitude as to prejudice the life, health or property of inhabitants. In the subsequent decade, attempts to use the Writ of Kalikasan to force a government response have yielded both high-profile successes and failures. In the case concerning disputed territories in the South China Sea, including Pag-asa Island, fishers from the provinces of Palawan and Zambales filed a petition for a Writ of Kalikasan on April 16, 2019. Jose Manuel ‘Chel Diokno from the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), the official organization of lawyers in the country, represented them.

The petition called on the Supreme Court to order government agencies overseeing the protection of environment, fisheries and aquatic resources” the Philippine Navy, Coast Guard, national police force, its maritime division, and the Department of Justice ” to implement Philippine laws in areas that are part of the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone but whose ownership is being disputed by China in the South China Sea: Scarborough Shoal, Second Thomas Shoal, and Mischief Reef.

The petition alleged that government agencies had failed to prevent Chinese vessels from harvesting coral, giant claims and sea turtles within the Philippines’ EEZ, thereby failing to carry out their obligations under the CITES wildlife trade convention; the Philippine Fisheries Code;

and Presidential Decree No. 1586, which requires environmental impact statements. Petitioners said their ‘constitutional right was violated by environmental crimes committed by foreigners in 2012 and 2013 that resulted to massive destruction | Their constitutional right continues to be violated by Public Respondents’ failure, if not refusal, to vindicate the Petitioner’s constitutional right by prosecuting the foreigners who committed the crimes.

The High Court issued a Writ of Kalikasan on May 3, 2019, which meant the petition was found to be sufficient in form and substance, and scheduled oral arguments on July 2 and 9, where both parties presented their case. This petition had the potential to be a landmark case, said Antonio La Via, an environmental lawyer not involved in the case. ‘It would be a landmark ruling because it would be finding that the executive branch was not doing its job to implement Philippine fisheries environmental law in the West Philippine Sea, La Via said. ‘Depending on how prescriptive the SC [Supreme Court] decision is, it could also be a victory of judicial activism versus the conventional view that foreign policy and national security are the exclusive domain of the executive branch.

Then, on July 9, Solicitor General Jose Calida dropped a bombshell: he said the petitioners had withdrawn their signatures and submitted affidavits saying they didn’t know anything about the petition for the Writ of Kalikasan nor did they support it. ‘These statements show deception, Calida said. ‘The IBP lawyers involved in this case foisted egregious deceit not only on the fisherfolk but also on the honorable court.

Asiado and Abogado, another officer of the Kalayaan Palawan Farmers and Fisherfolk Association, alleged that the lawyers did not fully inform them about the nature of the petition they were signing. ‘We were so confused because we’re not really well-educated, this was the first time this happened to us, it became so messy, it was like a nylon, everything was tied up, you cannot uncoil it, Asiado said. ‘That was where the problem totally came from, they were able to explain what the petition for the writ is but we didn’t know that the impact on us will be that big. ‘They signed immediately because they did not understand what it was about ” they thought it was aid from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Asiado added, referring to the government agency that oversees the management and protection of marine resources. Diokno, the lead lawyer on the case, did not respond to several requests for comment.

Legal experts not affiliated with the case note that marginalized communities, such as fishers, are vulnerable to pressure from outside forces, such as the government, and that lawyers need to work carefully to build ties and trust with petitioners. ‘Without second-guessing the IBP lawyers or judging the fisherfolk as I truly understand them, clearly the lesson here is to try to find petitioners that are not vulnerable to such pressure, La Via said. ‘That means the lawyers must have a strong relationship with such petitioners established over years of struggle.#

To succeed, cases like this require lawyers ‘fully vetting the prospective complaining parties and ensuring their full commitment to the case by insulating them from external influences, said

maritime law expert Jay Batongbacal. ‘I think the problem here is that the petitioner-fishermen were quite vulnerable to government pressure due to their respective situations. Future petitioners have to be selected very carefully, and must be sure of pursuing their cases to the very end.

Previous petitions for Writs of Kalikasan that did progress showed what the writ can do, from seeking damages to stopping projects that can potentially damage the environment. One of the highest-profile attempts to use the Writ of Kalikasan came in 2014, after a U.S. Navy ship, the USS Guardian, ran aground on the Tubbataha Reefs, a natural park and UNESCO World Heritage Site. A group that included environmentalists, bishops and other notable figures filed a petition against then-president Benigno Aquino III and three U.S. military officials, seeking 58 million pesos, or around \$1.9 million from the U.S. as compensation for the damages. The Supreme Court dismissed the petition because it was considered a case against the U.S. itself, and states are shielded from lawsuits under the principle of sovereign immunity.

However, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs later raised the demand for compensation with its U.S. counterpart. In 2015, the U.S. paid the Philippines \$2 million for the damages. There were other clear victories. In March 2018, the Supreme Court upheld a 2017 ruling by the Court of Appeals that granted a Writ of Kalikasan sought by then-city councilor Joel Capili Garganera, who filed it on behalf of the cities of Cebu and Talisay and ‘future generations.

Garganera had asked that then-mayor Tomas Osmea stop the operations of the Inayawan landfill, which the Department of Health said fell short of sanitary requirements. The Supreme Court ruled in Garganera’s favor and ordered the landfill’s permanent closure. In 2013, the Court of Appeals also ordered the closure and rehabilitation of an open dumpsite in the northern province of Bontoc after the Kalinga Anti-Pollution Action Group filed a Writ of Kalikasan saying the waste had polluted irrigation water.

However, even when a Writ of Kalikasan is granted, the verdict is not always implemented. For example, a 2012 verdict by an appeals court ordered the permanent closure of the Irisan dumpsite in Baguio City. Typhoon Nanmadol had caused a trash slide at the dumpsite in 2011, killing five people. Despite the verdict, operations at the dumpsite continued six years later. It was eventually closed, however, and was turned into an ecological park. Several petitions for Writ of Kalikasan have also been rejected. In April 2018, the Supreme Court denied a petition filed by Ang Aroroy ay Alagaan Inc., an NGO, against the mining company Filminera Resources Corp.

The court found no merit in the petitioners’ argument that the company’s operations had destroyed the environment in the province of Masbate. In 2017, the court also rejected a Writ of Kalikasan petition asking government officials to adopt a road-sharing policy, where half the road is allocated for motor vehicles and the other half for bicycles and trams. The Supreme Court

said the petitioners had presented insufficient evidence that a failure to designate a portion of the road for bike lanes would violate their right to a balanced and healthful ecology.

In May 2015, the Supreme Court overturned a 2013 decision by a lower court that granted a Writ of Kalikasan filed against Redondo Peninsula Energy for its planned construction of a 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant. The court said the petitioners had failed to prove that the project carries health risk, thereby paving the way for the plant's construction. For the future In the case of the fishers in Palawan, despite the failure of the lawsuit, the general sentiment is that the government has already stepped up in coming to their aid against Chinese authorities and even fishers from other countries.

‘There’s been 70% improvement, the patrol ships of China don’t stay as much as they do so in Pag-asa, Abogado said. But despite this improvement and his withdrawal from the 2019 case, Abogado said local fishers are not ruling out filing another petition of the Writ of Kalikasan, provided they are consulted extensively and as a group next time. He said that, more than ever, the filing of such a petition would benefit those who will come after them. ‘It will not only be for this generation, but for the one succeeding us, Abogado said, ‘because the ocean will still be there.

COVID-19 and small-scale fisheries in Southeast Asia: Impacts and Responses

<http://www.asianfisheriessociety.org/publication/downloadfile.php?id=1355&file=Y0dSbUx6QXIOekU0TkRRd01ERTJNVGswTURZME1qa3VjR1Jt>

"This new paper describes the impacts of and responses to COVID-19 of small-scale fisheries in six selected countries in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The paper used a structured case study approach to analyse the impacts and responses and relied heavily on existing reports and data sources in each country.

The pandemic has further revealed the vulnerability of small-scale fishing households in the region. Given the few assets of fisher households, their ability to cushion the negative impact of crises and shocks is limited. Fishers made adaptive responses such as direct fish marketing, online marketing, and home delivery services.

While short-term responses of providing food and financial assistance have been helpful, long-term support to address pandemics such as COVID-19 and other stressors will require developing more resilient fishing households. The paper recommends several approaches and interventions to improve household resilience and to be better prepared for similar challenges and threats in the future.

These include: i) strengthening the fishing households’ social network of friends, relatives, and neighbours to serve as both a social safety net and a bridge towards the transition to financial

inclusion; ii) diversifying livelihood to reduce dependency on the fishery and provide for additional sources of income and food; iii) promoting financial inclusion through savings, credit, digital payment products, and insurance; iv) value chain upgrading through post-harvest fish handling and processing methods; and, v) providing access, especially for women, to social protection measures such as government health insurance and social security.

How COVID-19 affects the fishing industry

<https://www.borgenmagazine.com/fishing-industry/>

"The global seafood market is a huge industry that employs millions of people. Valued at \$159 billion in 2019, it will grow to almost \$200 billion by 2027. The system is a network of formal and informal producers and distributors, retailers and consumers. In low-income countries, the fishing industry is especially important as a way to reduce poverty. Developing countries employ 97% of the people, directly and indirectly, working in the fishing industry. About 90% of the fishing work force are small-scale fishermen.

By exporting seafood, low-income countries can boost their economies through the oceanic sector. The fishing industry also helps to increase nutrition and food security for the impoverished. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has devastated the fishing industry, just as it has most other industries. The pandemic has disrupted supply chains and lowered demand, reducing profits in the industry. Lockdowns and curfews have also reduced catch sizes, which in turn means that fisherfolk make less per day of work.

What they do not sell often goes to waste as cold storage is expensive and not widely available to small-scale fishermen. The most affected groups are small and medium-scale fisheries, especially in rural areas, as they lack the resources that large-scale fisheries have to be able to transition and adapt during COVID-19. Furthermore, they do not have the safety net of social protection programs that large-scale fisheries may have.

Many developing countries with large fishing sectors have been struggling to offset the effects of COVID-19. In Thailand and India, migrant fish workers were met with lockdowns and nowhere to sell their products. Traders in India and Myanmar reported a 15% drop in fish prices post-lockdowns. In China, a shift to frozen and processed seafood left fresh-catch fishers floundering. Besides the loss of income, supply chain disruptions have led to a reduction in fish consumption in low-income countries.

Fish is very important to the global food chain as it represents a nutritious source of food that is often more affordable than meat or poultry. The FAO estimates that in 2016, fish provided about 3.2 billion people with almost 20% of their average intake of animal protein, with an even higher proportion in low-income countries. But, as household incomes have decreased due to lockdowns, people around the world have bought less fish. Small-scale farmers in Myanmar, a

country with a large fishing sector, have reported buying less animal-sourced food and shifting toward staple foods during the pandemic.

There is a diminished supply of fish available for those in low-income countries, which makes a once staple food in low-income households, a food that is no longer available. It is also unaffordable because the lower supply means that fish prices are seeing a sharp rise, which puts fish products out of reach for the impoverished. This situation directly impacts overall nutrition in low-income households.

Luckily, there are many organizations working to address this global issue. PROBLUE, a Multi-Donor Trust Fund run by the World Bank, helps countries develop their oceanic sectors with the goals of ending extreme poverty and increasing the quality of life of the impoverished in a sustainable way. Under the umbrella of PROBLUE, there are other trust funds focusing on more targeted issues. One of them is PROFISH, which focuses on maximizing the economic benefits of fisheries in developing countries. It works to capture the ‘sunken billions’ an estimated \$80 billion that is lost every year by the fishing industry.

PROFISH does this by designing and implementing good governance systems through investments and partnerships as well as providing knowledge to those in the aquaculture sectors on how to create sustainable wealth and improve the efficiency of the fishing industry. If efficiency increases, millions of impoverished people in the fishing industry could improve their economic circumstances. PROFISH has been put in place in developing countries all around the world that hold an opportunity for the fishing sector to dramatically improve.

Future of Fish is a nonprofit working to directly mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the fishing industry in South America. In Peru, it works with other NGOs, fishermen, chefs and local media to increase demand for seafood to offset the pandemic drops. It has used social media to facilitate buying and selling and supported transport logistics to help move fish from the coast to market centers and customers. It also launched a campaign to supply small fishing villages with the protective equipment needed to safely sell seafood products.

Future of Fish also runs on-the-ground initiatives to help fishermen export their catches. In Peru, the mahi mahi fishery is the second-largest artisanal fishery, Future of Fish has implemented traceability programs along all steps of the supply chain to make sure that the catches can be verified as ‘Best Choice’ by Seafood Watch, and therefore, be accepted into the U.S. by the FDA. Creative solutions are also popping up. Developed by USAID as part of the Fish Right project, online fish markets in the Philippines allow fisherfolk to maintain their main source of income.

Fish Tiangge is an online marketplace that connects 6,000 fisherfolk with consumers from more than 300,000 households. ‘By connecting fishers and consumers online, the U.S. government is helping to protect fisherfolk income and prevent a food crisis, while ensuring that conservation

measures are not compromised in areas that are hard-hit by COVID-19, says U.S. ambassador, Sung Kim.

COVID-19 has significantly impacted the lives of fisherfolk across the globe. Fortunately, governments and organizations are working to help them by creating lasting impacts that will remain even when the COVID-19 pandemic is over. With the sustained investment of the global community, the fishing industry can reach its full potential as a vehicle for poverty reduction.

Chinese ships in West Philippines Sea 'prejudicial to peace, security of region', says National Task Force

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/west-philippine-sea-task-force-statement-chinese-ships-presence>

"The National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS) has slammed the continuous swarming of Chinese ships in the West Philippine Sea despite fair weather, calling it ""prejudicial"" to regional peace and security. In a statement on Tuesday, April 13, the NTF-WPS noted that over a month after hundreds of Chinese vessels were first spotted near Julian Felipe (Whitsun) Reef, there are even more Chinese ships in the West Philippine Sea " navy warships, coast guard vessels, and ships manned by Chinese maritime militia (CMM) personnel, 'The combined presence of PLAN warships, CCG, and CMM in the municipality of Kalayaan and the Philippine EEZ is prejudicial to the peace and security of the region,'" the task force said.

""The continuous swarming of Chinese vessels poses a threat to the safety of navigation, safety of life at sea, and impedes the exclusive right of Filipinos to benefit from the marine wealth in the EEZ, it added. In its latest maritime patrol, the NTF-WPS monitored the presence of People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels, China Coast Guard (CCG) ships, and Chinese maritime militia vessels. All in all, there are 261 Chinese ships in Philippine waters as of April 11 "even higher than the March 29 tally of NTF-WPS when 258 Chinese ships were spotted inside the exclusive economic zone.

This is also a far cry from the figure of only 28 Chinese ships supposedly in Philippine waters, according to the statement of Armed Forces chief General Cirilito Sobejana on April 11. Meanwhile, along with the imminent threat of another island occupation, the Chinese militia vessels were also involved in illegal fishing, according to the task force.

The NTF-WPS estimated that the 240 Chinese maritime militia vessels in Pagkakaisa (Union) Banks and Pag-asa Island illegally obtained 240,000 kilos of fish every day in the area. China's illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUUF) is considered by the Food and Agriculture Organization as a threat to 'livelihoods, exacerbates poverty, and augments food insecurity.

The Philippines' maritime patrols also reported that the CMM vessels were collecting giant clams in the Pag-asa Islands, in violation of the Philippine fisheries and wildlife laws and the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Scientists have warned that the fishing industry might collapse if China continues its aggressive illegal fishing in the South China Sea. The task force also expressed "serious alarm" over the harassment of journalist Chiara Zambrano and her crew by Chinese ships in waters near Ayungin Shoal.

Philippines files new diplomatic protests over Chinese boats in disputed waters

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-china-southchinasea/philippines-files-new-diplomatic-protests-over-chinese-boats-in-disputed-waters-idINKBN2C110V>

"The Philippines filed fresh diplomatic protests to China on Wednesday after accusing its giant neighbour of undertaking illegal fishing and massing more than 240 boats within the Southeast Asian country's territorial waters. The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs said that two protests had been lodged, days after Manila summoned Chinese Ambassador Huang Xilian to press for the withdrawal of its vessels on the disputed Whitsun Reef in the South China Sea and other Philippine maritime zones.

The Philippines last month described the presence of over 200 boats believed to be manned by militias inside its 200 mile (322 km) exclusive economic zone as 'swarming and threatening', while the United States, Japan and others have voiced concern about China's intentions, prompting rebukes by Beijing. In a Twitter post, Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin said: 'they really are fishing everything in the water that belongs by law to us.

A Philippine government taskforce said the vessels, which are about 60 metres (197 ft) in length, can catch a tonne of fish a day. It said 240 were in various areas in Philippine waters as of Sunday, including nine at Whitsun Reef. 'The continuous swarming of Chinese vessels poses a threat to the safety of navigation, safety of life at sea, and impedes the exclusive right of Filipinos to benefit from the marine wealth in the EEZ, the task force said in a statement late on Monday.

China's embassy in Manila and the foreign ministry in Beijing did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Chinese diplomats have previously said the Whitsun reef was part of its traditional fishing grounds, and that vessels were taking shelter from rough seas and did not have militia aboard.

Since coming to power in 2016, President Rodrigo Duterte has criticised U.S. foreign policy and sought to improve ties with Beijing, but China's maritime assertiveness has put him in a difficult spot at times. The Philippine navy planned to deploy three more ships in the South China Sea. 'We have to understand that to say that one area is ours, we have to be there,' army spokesman

Major General Edgard Arevalo said.

Philippines ready to defend West Philippine Sea sovereignty: Defense Secretary

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/03/29/2087739/dnd-philippines-ready-defend-west-philippine-sea-sovereignty>

"The Philippines is ready to defend its sovereignty, according to Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, as he again called on China to immediately withdraw its vessels still in formation in Julian Felipe Reef in the West Philippine Sea. Lorenzana assured the public that the government is actively addressing the situation as almost 200 Chinese vessels, said to be manned by militias, have been docked in the reef since earlier this month. 'We stand by our position calling for the immediate withdrawal of Chinese vessels in Julian Felipe Reef, which was communicated to the Chinese ambassador.

We are ready to defend our national sovereignty and protect the marine resources of the Philippines, Lorenzana said in a statement over the weekend. The defense chief said he has ordered an increased presence of the Philippine Navy and Philippine Coast Guard to conduct sovereignty patrols and protect local fishermen in the West Philippine Sea. The Philippine Air Force has also been deploying an AS211 jet aircraft daily to monitor the actual situation in the reef, which is within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ). A news report posted on the website of South China Morning Post last Saturday night said China would conduct a military drill in the South China Sea today and tomorrow, based on a notice issued by the China Maritime Safety Administration last Friday afternoon.

The notice stated that an area between Hainan, China's southernmost province, and Paracel islands would be closed to marine traffic due to 'military training. The Department of National Defense is coordinating with other government agencies, including the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources on activities in the West Philippine Sea and the Kalayaan group of islands. 'By securing the West Philippine Sea and its islands in the Kalayaan area, the Philippines reinforces its commitment to keeping the freedom of navigation and maintaining regional peace and stability, Lorenzana said.

China has claimed that the vessels were only seeking shelter in the reef due to bad weather. At least four of the Philippine Navy's gray ships, including its two new missile frigates, will patrol the West Philippine Sea following the recent swarm of Chinese fishing vessels in Julian Felipe. AFP chief Lt. Gen Cirilito Sobejana has ordered increased presence in the disputed waters within the country's EEZ. Philippine Navy chief Vice Admiral Giovanni Carlo Bacordo said the BRP Ramon Alcaraz, a corvette, and the BRP Conrado Yap, an offshore patrol vessel, have been deployed to the Naval Forces West and Naval Forces Northern Luzon, respectively, to conduct sovereignty patrols in the West Philippine Sea.

Bacordo added that the Philippine Navy's brand new missile frigates, the BRP Jose Rizal and BRP Antonio Luna, 'will also be deployed for sovereignty patrols as soon as they complete their manufacturer's mandatory trainings and system tests. 'It is now up to the operational commanders on the operational employment of these vessels, he replied, when asked for specifics on how the patrols would be carried out. Sobejana directed the deployment of more naval assets in the West Philippine Sea last week after the continued presence of at least 183 Chinese fishing vessels in Julian Felipe Reef was validated by the AFP in its aerial patrol.

Claiming it is doing a 'great job in abiding by international rules, China refused the label of militarization in South China Sea to be pinned on Beijing as it denied that it was the first to carry out construction activities and deploy facilities in the disputed waters. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying slammed the speech of United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization headquarters that China threatens freedom of navigation and militarize the South China Sea. Blinken said China is 'working to undercut the rules of the international system and the values we and our allies share, and threatens our collective security and prosperity.

Hua stressed that the US is not in the position to ask China to play by international rules since the only system in the world is the international system centered on the United Nations, and the only set of rules is the basic norms governing international relations with the UN Charter as the core. 'Speaking of abiding by international rules, China is doing a great job while the US has a poor record. This is a fact recognized by the international community, she said in a press conference in Beijing on Thursday.

'The label of undermining the rules of the international system cannot be pinned on China, she said. The Chinese official warned that the US could by no means deprive China of the right to self-preservation and self-defense over its own territory by putting a label of militarization on China. 'The label of militarization in South China Sea cannot be pinned on China. China is not the first to carry out construction activities and deploy necessary facilities on islands and reefs in the South China Sea. Nor is it the one that has conducted the most of such activities, she said.

Hua claimed the US built military bases around South China Sea, where offensive weapons and equipment are deployed. The US, she said, has also repeatedly sent aircraft carriers and strategic bombers to South China Sea and deployed military aircraft and warships there on a regular basis and conducted activities in the disputed waters for more than a hundred times by impersonating civil aircraft of other countries. 'No one is more suitable than the US for the label of militarization and jeopardizing freedom of navigation, she added.

Aquaculture industry in the Philippines given go-ahead to more fully exploit mangrove crab resource

<https://www.bworldonline.com/aquaculture-industry-given-go-ahead-to-more-fully-exploit-mangrove-crab-resource/>

"The aquaculture industry in the Philippines has been given the go-ahead to catch more juvenile mangrove crabs and crablets to help with restocking, an order which authorities billed as an aid to the industry's recovery. According to Administrative Circular No.2 issued by the Department of Agriculture.

‘There is a clamor for stakeholders whose livelihoods are affected by the implementation of the (fisheries administrative order) to allow them to catch, transport, trade, and sell crablets less than five centimeters carapace width for aquaculture purposes, in order to augment their income during this coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and also to support the recovery of the aquaculture industry.

Circular No. 2 partially suspends the implementation of Section 3 of Fisheries Administrative Order No. 264, which prohibited catching and trading of those resources. Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar, who signed the circular on March 5, said the juvenile mangrove crabs and mangrove crablets can be caught only for further growing by aquaculture operations.

Mr. Dar also ordered the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to provide immediate assistance to mangrove crablet gatherers, consolidators, traders, and growers affected by the pandemic. Mr. Dar also instructed BFAR regional offices to implement conservation and management measures such as mangrove reforestation, ensure the release of egg-bearing crabs, and establish crab sanctuaries.

The circular will be automatically lifted after one year or once Proclamation No. 922 declaring the state of public health emergency is withdrawn by President Rodrigo R. Duterte.

40% of fish caught in the Philippines comes from illegal fishing “USAID

<https://mb.com.ph/2021/03/10/40-of-fish-caught-in-ph-comes-from-illegal-fishing-usaid/>

"Up to 40 percent of the fish caught and distributed in the Philippines in 2019 came from illegal fishing, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) report showed. On March 9, USAID, together with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), released the results of a study that quantified illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Philippines.

According to the report, illegal fishing amounted to 27 to 40 percent of fish caught in 2019 in the Philippines, which translates to approximately P62 billion (US\$1.3 billion) in value annually. Moreover, at least 30,000 or 30 percent of municipal vessels remain unregistered, and commercial fishers do not report up to 422,000 metric tons of fish each year. These statistics show the vast impact IUU fishing has on the Philippines' marine ecosystem, USAID said.

IUU fishing ranges from small-scale, unlawful domestic fishing to more complex operations carried out by industrial fishing fleets. It is by nature complex and clandestine, which means data are hard to come by and substantiate. The report summarizes findings from a survey and a consensus-building workshop conducted in September 2020 by BFAR, USAID, Rare Philippines, the University of the Philippines (UP) Marine Science Institute, and the UP School of Statistics.

During the workshop, more than 100 experts and practitioners estimated the quantity and value of illegal and unreported fish catch in the Philippines and discussed the local context of unregulated fishing. In the end, the report highlighted that while the government has invested significant resources in the campaign against illegal fishing, its operational assets have to be augmented to curb the country's huge economic losses from destructive and unsustainable fishing practices.

The report also noted that fisher compliance with fisheries laws and regulations requires a strong, responsive governance structure and that reducing IUU fishing is a shared responsibility that requires a whole-of-society approach guided by science. 'Addressing IUU fishing remains an important Philippine government priority. USAID has worked with BFAR for over three decades to promote sustainable fisheries.

And we are pleased that this report will further strengthen government efforts to help prevent IUU here in one of the world's most biodiverse marine sanctuaries, said Lawrence Hardy II, Mission Director of USAID Philippines. BFAR Director Eduardo Gongona, for his part, said his agency's 'strong resolve to prevent and put an end to IUU fishing in Philippine waters will not waiver, especially now that the agency is gaining momentum technology-wise. 'With the use of science and data, we are in the process of developing an IUU Fishing Index and Threat Assessment Tool, which will be adopted in the 12 Fisheries Management Areas, Gongona said. He further said that once fully implemented, this tool will provide BFAR with periodic information needed to identify other ways to encourage voluntary compliance, strategically guide law enforcement operations, and clearly communicate our progress in reducing IUU fishing in the Philippines.

In September last year, Business Bulletin talked with USAID and professors from the University of the Philippines (UP) regarding the threat of IUU to Philippine fisheries and how there is still no way to measure its impact on government revenues. 'The aim of the amended fisheries code is to curb this [IUU], but we don't have metrics yet to measure how we are doing. If you don't know how much is being taken, you are assuming you have more fish in the ocean but it is unreported.

The unregulated, on the other hand, is not necessarily illegal but they should be closely monitored because they might become a threat to the sustainability of our fisheries, Rollan Geronimo, IUU Fishing Specialist for USAID Fish Right Project, said.

The rough estimate is that the Philippines is losing \$101.8 billion or nearly P5 trillion every year due to IUU, based on a study made by Rhodora Azanza, professor emeritus at the Marine Science Institute of UP. This includes \$99.2 billion losses due to blast fishing, \$189 million due to overfishing, \$1.2 billion due to poaching, and \$1.14 billion to post-harvest losses.

This is enough to feed around 281 million Filipinos for an entire year, according to USAID. Erniel Barrios, professor at UP School of Statistics, said that what the country has right now in terms of fish catch data collection are only the number of fishing vessels registered at BFAR as well as the Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) data on fish output, which is only based on what is being reported at fish landing centers.

Fishers caught in COVID-19 net, sink into poverty

<https://phys.org/news/2021-03-fishers-caught-covid-net-poverty.html>

"Lockdown restrictions following the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have severely impacted fishing operations, processing, markets and supply chains, leaving those in low-income groups vulnerable to malnutrition and poverty, say the authors of a new study. When the pandemic caused global lockdowns in March 2020 it disrupted the fish market supply chain on a global level, the ripple effects of which continue to be felt. The decline in demand for fresh fish has led to fewer wage opportunities while increased costs of transportation have led to either oversupply or wastage.

The global seafood market reached a value of US\$159.31 billion in 2019, and is projected to reach about US\$194 billion dollars by 2027. The study notes that the seafood system is a meshed network of formal and informal producers and distributors, retailers and consumers. Developing countries, in particular, are exporting high volumes of seafood as part of poverty alleviation programs. According to the World Wildlife Fund, the developing world employ 97 percent of the world's fishing workforce with an overwhelming majority, 90 percent, are small-scale fishermen.

The Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that about 200 million people were directly and indirectly employed along the value chain many of whom are women. Published online by Global Food Security in February, the study highlights labor and production disruptions that affected the incomes of self-employed and casual workers based on analysis of data collected from official government agencies and market reporting.

The entry of migrant fish workers into ports, in Thailand and India for example, were restricted while most fish markets were shut down. Traders in India and Myanmar reported a 15 percent drop in fish prices after lockdowns were implemented. Though large-scale operators were eventually able to adapt, smaller operations especially from rural areas have had a harder time recovering due to limited access to technology and social protection programs. Businesses in

China, for example, shifted to frozen and processed seafood in response to consumers staying home and cooking more.

Small to medium enterprises had a more difficult time pivoting without access to a network of consumers online and a reliable transportation system. "With market disruptions people are not that likely to be fishing more, because they can't sell the product. One way to support the loss of income is setting up COVID-safe markets, through mobile apps for example, to minimize crowds. This has already been going on in the Philippines," explains Kate Barclay, professor of International Studies and Global Societies, University of Technology Sydney.

The disruptions led to a significant reduction in consumption of nutrient-dense foods like fish in low-income countries, with households shifting towards staple foods, according to the study. Small-scale farmers in Myanmar reported buying less food, especially animal-sourced food. Since the fish sector is important in maintaining the global food chain, the authors of the study recommend longer-term adaptations over short-term coping mechanisms to safeguard against future volatilities. These include more investment in sustainable fishing and less reliance on food imports."

"Fish and other aquatic animals are a nutritious source of food, one that tends to be more affordable than meat or poultry. When we think about how to recover from this pandemic there needs to be more investment and support given that this sector is an important source of livelihood for so many people," says Ben Belton, a co-author of the study and senior scientist at WorldFish. Belton also suggests social safety nets targeted at low-income groups and migrant workers. "

"In a crisis like this there's actually very little formal support that people are able to access. If you lose your job or you're unable to continue your business, you don't have many options and may be forced to borrow informally. But if there were more of a social safety net in times of need, whether it be in the form of cheap loans or food, it could at least provide a bit of a buffer," says Belton.

One of the challenges for government and policy makers is identifying what kinds of support are effective at preserving businesses, income and food security while balancing sustainable practices. "Policy measures taken to help fishers through these extremely difficult times should be designed to respond to the specific problems in a given context, and should keep the long-term sustainability of the sector in mind," says Alice Tipping, lead of fish subsidies at the International Institute for Sustainable Development. "

"If a country is facing a drop off in fish supply because fishers are subject to lockdowns, providing general income support to the poorest sectors of the population may be the measure that best addresses the problem," Tipping says. "If fishers are able to fish but demand is lacking, for example because restaurants are closed, the best way of supporting fishers is to give them money directly, rather than trying to prop them up by further reducing their fishing costs

which is likely to encourage them to fish more than may be sustainable," she adds.

A tale of two seas: Closed season is a mixed bag for Philippine sardines industry

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/02/a-tale-of-two-seas-closed-season-is-a-mixed-bag-for-philippine-sardines-industry/>

"Four years ago, villagers in the town of Labason in the southern Philippines' Zamboanga Peninsula woke up to a spectacle they never thought could happen in these modern times: the sight of tons of wriggling sardines washed ashore. Ecstatic residents, young and old alike, rushed to the shoreline with all kinds of containers and filled them with these tamban (*Sardinella lemuru*) that they scooped up with their bare hands. The extraordinary event of the heyday fish harvest was caught on video that went viral on social media. For most Filipinos, sardines are a cheap source of protein.

A can of sardines, which costs about 20 pesos (40 U.S. cents) at mom-and-pop stores, is a must-have pantry item in poor Philippine households. Robert 'Dodoy' Ballon, president of the Coalition of Municipal Fisherfolk Association in Zamboanga Sibugay (COMFAZS), says the 'sardine galore' event occurred not just in Labason but also in nearby Pagadian City and Tukuran municipality. Ballon, a two-time national winner of the Gawad Saka ng Pangulo Award (Presidential Excellence Award for Agriculture), attributes the unusual beaching of tamban to an annual, three-month-long ban on commercial sardine fishing.

The fishing ban extends from Dec. 1 to Mar. 1, the peak of the sardine spawning season, and covers commercial operators in a conservation area spanning 22,260 square kilometers (8,600 square miles) in portions of the East Sulu Sea, Basilan Strait and Zamboanga Sibugay province. Under Philippine law, violators of the fishing ban can face imprisonment of six months to six years, as well as fines ranging from 40,000 to 1 million pesos (\$830 to \$20,700), confiscation of their catch and gear, and loss of fishing licenses.

The closure was introduced in 2011 by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) after studies conducted in the Zamboanga Peninsula, the heart of the country's sardine production, concluded that the sardine catch was dwindling and individual sardines were getting smaller, apparently due to overfishing. In addition to commercial fishing and canning, the species has spawned a cottage industry involving the production of bottled Spanish-style sardines. The combined value of all of these ventures is around 20 billion pesos (\$413 million), according to data from the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA).

The ban was supported by major players in the sardine industry, and has also gained support from small fishers. The big stakeholders, including the canned sardine manufacturers and commercial fishing operators, feared that without conservation measures, the species would dwindle to a point where catches would no longer be feasible for commercial operations, which

would result in industry-wide shutdowns that would displace tens of thousands of workers. Municipal fishers also welcomed the conservation initiative, which imposes no additional restrictions on small operators. The fishing ban does not apply to fishing in the zone designated for marginal fishers, called municipal waters, which extend up to 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the shoreline.

Also, because commercial fishing operations further offshore are restricted during the closed season, high-value fish such as tuna can stray into municipal waters, to the benefit of the small-scale fishers. ‘With fewer efforts, municipal fishers catch more sardines and other fish species during the closed fishing season because commercial operations are not allowed. It’s a blessing to the marginal fisherfolk, Ballon says.

During the fishing ban, Ballon told Mongabay, a municipal fisher can catch 50 to 100 kilograms (110 to 220 pounds) of sardines even without venturing far from the shoreline, because schools of the fish swarm close to shore to feed on plankton. Records from the BFAR show a steady rise in the volume of sardines landed by both commercial and municipal fishers. From 141,658 tons in 2015, the catch rose to 208,000 tons in 2019.

A study by experts at the University of the Philippines Los Baos from 2016 to 2018 recommended the continuation of the closed fishing season, noting that the results of the ban showed not only an increase in sardine catches but also a rise in the landed catch of high-value non-sardine species such as tuna. ‘There was a positive impact to society overall, the authors said. Nevertheless, workers in the sardine canning plants and commercial fishing companies were displaced during the closed fishing season in the Zamboanga Peninsula, which produces 70% of sardines in the Philippines.

There are at least 26 commercial fishing companies and 11 canning firms operating in the peninsula, providing jobs for 50,000 people, industry data show. During the closed fishing season, many displaced sardine cannery workers look for other work to sustain themselves and their families, such as working in the rubber plantations that thrive in the region, or engaging in talaba (oyster) harvesting. Others find work in the bottled sardine industry.

The government, through the Department of Agriculture, also offers easy access to small loans for workers affected by the closed season. The sardine canneries and commercial fishing companies, meanwhile, use the downtime to conduct repair and maintenance operations on their facilities and vessels.

Proposal allowing commercial vessels in Philippines municipal fishing grounds opposed

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/02/08/proposal-allowing-commercial-vessels-in-municipal-fishing-grounds-opposed/>

"Various stakeholders on Friday rejected the proposal to allow commercial fishing vessels to go fishing within the 15-kilometer municipal fishing ground in the Philippines due to its potential adverse impact on the environment and the livelihood of municipal fishermen. In particular, they rejected House Bill (HB) 7583 filed by Cebu Rep. Pablo John F. Garcia which seeks to allow commercial fishing between 10.1 to 15 kilometers inside the 15-kilometer municipal fishing ground.

They said municipal fishing grounds are already overfished and allowing commercial fishing in municipal fishing grounds will further deplete the country's fish stocks. Commercial fishing vessels are often accused of using destructive fishing methods that would threaten coastal and marine ecosystems. More importantly, they said municipal fishers cannot compete with commercial fishing vessels, adding to the fact that municipal fishing grounds are already running out of commercially-viable fish to catch.

Oceana Philippines Vice President Gloria Estenzo Ramos said during an online press conference that commercial fishers and municipal fishers cannot co-exist. She said the proposed measure, if enacted, 'will only give additional ground for additional conflict between commercial fishers and municipal fishers. The current law on fisheries, the Amended Fisheries Code or Republic Act (RA) 10654, she said, has introduced 'crucial policy reform needed by the fisheries sector. 'Right now, the law is fine. RA 10654 is not even mentioned in HB 7583.

The law states the policy reform. Crucial is the vessel monitoring system that is supposed to be implemented. This is a policy issuance, science-based and participatory fisheries management system. We are closer to the reforms being sought under RA 10654. Oceana, an international ocean conservation advocacy nongovernment organization, is pushing for the implementation of the vessel monitoring system and the fisheries management system.

She said a commercial fishing company is pushing for the enactment of the amendatory bill to escape implementation of the vessel monitoring system and fisheries management system that will protect fisheries area and favorably lean toward municipal fishing. Wilfredo Campos, a marine science and fishery expert from the University of the Philippines-Visayas said the country's fishing grounds are already overfished and fish stocks are already depleted.

'To sustain fish catch year after year, we must let other fish spawn so that the following year, we will have fish to catch, he said. He said the combined catches of the sector will reach its ceiling, if one sector like commercial fishing sector is allowed to go to areas closer to the shore. Commercial fishers will increase their catch, but this could put municipal fishers at a disadvantage.

'Within just weeks or months [of commercial fishing in municipal waters], municipal fishers will be displaced, he warned. 'The spirit of the Fisheries Code is very clearly, gives preference to the smaller fishermen. If we will amend the provision of the law that is not consistent with the spirit

of the law, then little by little, we attack the spirit of the law.

Mayor of Philippines island town tells fishermen to keep off area with Chinese ships

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/193345/mayor-of-ph-island-town-tells-fishermen-to-keep-off-area-with-chinese-ships>

"The mayor of Kalayaan in the West Philippine Sea, with jurisdiction over Philippine-occupied Pag-asa (Thitu) Island, has advised the town's fishermen to stay away from Chinese ships to avoid raising further tensions in the disputed waters. 'My instruction is for them to just stay near the area, there's plenty of fish there aside from the sandbar near Subi Reef, said Mayor Roberto Del Mundo, reacting to a report by a fisherman in the town about a China Coast Guard ship blocking his path on Monday (Jan. 25).

Fisherman Larry Hugo earlier said a white Chinese government ship prevented him from going to one of the sandbars near Pag-asa, a traditional fishing ground which China is claiming to own along with nearly the entire South China Sea. The mayor has acknowledged that cases of Chinese ships blocking Filipino fishermen do happen there, but he argued it was nothing like what the fishermen in Scarborough (Panatag) Shoal are experiencing, like being chased or being driven away by water cannon.

'That's really happening there always, they drive you away, said Del Mundo. 'Once they get near, it means you should go away. But nothing happens like that in Scarborough, the mayor said. 'We've been there long and nothing happens it's like they're shooting you away, he added. But the situation leaves Del Mundo with not much of a choice. 'It seems wrong if you think about it, he said. 'That's really ours and we're supposed to be the one shooting them away, he added.

'But the armed forces is just trying to get a feel of the situation. There are instructions to them not to take any action that would ruin our relationship, the mayor said. 'As the municipality of Kalayaa, we just follow the national government, the DFA and DND, on what instruction is needed, said Del Mundo. The mayor said the national government is also doing its best to protest Chinese aggression. 'There's so much being done there but it seems China is hardening its stance, isn't it? he said.

Filipino fisherman narrates harassment by China Coast Guard near Pag-asa Island

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/193321/filipino-fisherman-narrates-harassment-by-china-coast-guard-near-pag-asa-island>

"A China Coast Guard ship tried to drive away a Filipino fishing boat by blocking its path on its way to one of the sandbars near the Philippine-occupied Pag-asa (Thitu) Island in the West Philippine Sea, a recent display of Beijing's continued assertion of its maritime agenda in the disputed waters. Larry Hugo, a 42-year-old Filipino fisherman, said he tried to go to one of the sandbars near Pag-asa Island early on Monday (Jan. 25), his first time to venture out to the sandbars since November. But he was surprised when a China Coast Guard ship, with bow number 5103, prevented him from getting closer.

'I thought it was just passing by, there were many ships out there, he told INQUIRER.net in Filipino by phone. 'It suddenly blocked me. Like they didn't want us to enter the area we used to go to, he said. 'I saw no one, just the ship, Hugo said. 'It seems they're preventing us from going to the sandbar area, two sandbars there where we're going, he said. The practice of Chinese vessels driving away Filipino fishermen near Pag-asa Island, and the rest of South China Sea has been going on for years. It was the first time, however, for Hugo to experience Chinese intimidation after fishing in the area for many years. "

"Before, they also watch out for Filipino boats there but not like what happened to me earlier. They were really close, about 100 meters from me, Hugo said. He said he counted at least seven other vessels, believed to be Chinese, too, near the area at the time of his ordeal there. China is known to be using maritime militias to assert its claim in the area to avoid escalating the dispute into a full-blown war.

'The only ship that blocked was the China Coast Guard, Hugo narrated in Filipino. 'The others were just floating near the sandbar. They have many ships there, around seven. There are others in the distance. I'm not sure what they are. They're not fishermen, they're just stationed there, he said.

He was able to take a video of the ship after he turned away. He said he was afraid to film while he was in front of the vessel because it might provoke the Chinese. 'When I was turning around, I took the video because if I took a video of them and they saw me, they might get angrier, Hugo said in Filipino. 'I took the video and photo when I was leaving already. When the ship left already because I was afraid, he said.

MANILA, Philippines" A China Coast Guard ship tried to drive away a Filipino fishing boat by blocking its path on its way to one of the sandbars near the Philippine-occupied Pag-asa (Thitu) Island in the West Philippine Sea, a recent display of Beijing's continued assertion of its maritime agenda in the disputed waters.

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‘I took the video and photo when I was leaving already. When the ship left already because I was afraid, he said. ‘I have many enemies at sea. Look. Those are Chinese ships in front of me. They’re blocking me and I can’t get to sandbar 2, Hugo said in the 26-second video clip, speaking in Filipino. ‘I will leave first, he said. China claims almost the entire South China Sea, including waters that are part of the territories of the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam. It has maintained an almost constant presence near Pag-asa, with the deployment of at least one coast guard ship and militia vessels. Elsewhere in the South China Sea, these ships at times chase away fishing boats or even sink them.

The latest episode of aggression near Pag-asa came after Beijing recently passed a law, empowering its coast guard to fire at foreign vessels. It was seen by observers as a move that would escalate tensions in the contested waters. This new law should be a concern to the Philippines, said maritime law expert Jay Batongbacal. ‘This is another step in their slow incremental imposition of their administration and control over the South China Sea, he said.