

## Philippines approves fish import guidelines to ensure supply

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Philippines Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel Jr. has approved guidelines for the importation of up to 25,000 metric tons of fish and seafood starting March. The measure aims to ensure a stable food supply and prevent price surges in the market.

“This will also add variety to the market, especially for the food service industry, since the fish and marine species covered by this importation are mostly fish and marine products not caught locally,” said Secretary Tiu Laurel. “This should not affect local fishermen and should help with the ease of doing business,” he added.

The National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC) set this import ceiling late last year, viewing it as an experimental approach to address inflation concerns and improve import volume allocation for institutional buyers and wet markets. The goal is to test whether the combined import cap can stabilize prices while ensuring sufficient food supply.

As part of the trial, NFARMC also mandated an impact analysis to evaluate whether the import limit would effectively curb inflation, improve food security, and diversify nutritional offerings.

Under the approved guidelines, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) will issue sanitary and phytosanitary import clearances with 45-day validity. Additionally, only BFAR-accredited cold storage facilities will be allowed to store imported seafood.

Importers wishing to participate must have been accredited for at least one year and previously engaged in similar imports. Those under investigation for food safety violations, incomplete documentary requirements or without Bureau of Customs accreditation at the start of the importation period will be excluded.

Covered by the 25,000-metric-ton import ceiling are Alaskan pollock, barramundi, blue fin tuna, capelin, Chilean seabass, clams, cobia, cod, croaker, eel, emperor, fish meat, flounder, gindara, grouper, hake, halibut, hamachi, hoki, lobster, marlin, moonfish, mussels, mullet, octopus, oil fish, oyster, pangasius, red snapper, salmon, sardines, scallops, sea bream, silverfish, smelt, soft and hardshell crabs, squid, swordfish, tuna by-products, and yellowtail sole.