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**NEW FISHERIES ORDER ENFORCES VESSEL MONITORING MEASURES ON PH
VESSELS AGAINST IUUF**

The Philippines has intensified its monitoring, control and surveillance of its waters against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing through a new Fisheries Administrative Order, which now includes all Philippine catcher vessels to install Vessel Monitoring Measures (VMM) and Electronic Reporting System (ERS).

FAO No. 266, signed by Agriculture Secretary William Dar on October 12, 2020, updates FAO No. 260 of 2018, which is the government's initial effort in implementing VMM and only covers commercial vessels catching straddling and highly-migratory fish stocks.

A product of public consultations and deliberation by the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC), the country's highest recommending and advisory body on fisheries policies, the VMM will enhance the capacity of the government to monitor fishing operations and enforce laws in Philippine waters to achieve long-term sustainability of our resources.

Vessel Monitoring Measures, which cover Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), are used to track and monitor the position, course, and speed of fishing vessels at any given time for the purpose of management of fisheries and fishing effort and traceability. The system will use an Automatic Location Communicator (ALC) or a tracking device equipped with a distress alert button, which when activated will automatically locate the vessel and alert authorities during accidents or other emergencies, ensuring safety of fishers at sea. Based on the new order, DA-BFAR will accredit, verify as fully operational, and certify the tracking devices that will be used as prerequisite for registration or renewal of license.

Aside from this, an Electronic Reporting System (ERS) will be used to record and transmit catch data including species and volume of fish caught, position of the vessel where the fish are caught, vessel activity, and port of origin and arrival in real time. The system will improve the country's catch documentation and seafood traceability. Data from ERS and VMS can also be used in tracking fishing behavior for scientific research and serve as basis for more effective fisheries management measures.

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Based on the new FAO, vessels weighing 3.1 to less than 30 GT must have a DA-BFAR-approved VMS installed within one year from the effectivity of the FAO. For vessels weighing 30 GT or more, VMS must be installed immediately as required by FAO 260.

Under Section 119 of Republic Act 10654 or the Amended Fisheries Code, non-compliance to the VMM or violations such as intentionally tampering with, switching off or disabling the VMS may result in administrative or criminal liability. FAO No. 266 will take effect fifteen (15) days after it has been published.

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