

BFAR ADMINISTRATIVE CIRCULAR NO. _____

Series of _____

Subject: Rules and Regulations on the Importation of *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* (Giant Freshwater Prawn) for Aquaculture

WHEREAS, *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* (commonly known as Giant Freshwater Prawn or "Ulang") is among the most popular freshwater prawn species for aquaculture in tropical and subtropical regions worldwide;

WHEREAS, the promotion of this species through technology demonstrations, training, and information campaigns has significantly increased local demand for post-larvae (PL) stocking;

WHEREAS, despite the rising demand, the industry continues to face constraints, including the limited supply of post-larvae and lack of high-quality wild broodstock, thereby hampering the growth and productivity of *M. rosenbergii* aquaculture;

WHEREAS, most broodstock currently used in hatcheries are still obtained from the wild, raising concerns over sustainability and quality;

WHEREAS, importation of *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* may introduce new, emerging and economically important emerging diseases;

WHEREAS, allowing the importation of this species under strict regulations will support hatchery development, enhance the supply of post-larvae, increase aquaculture production, and contribute to the overall development of the country's fisheries sector;

WHEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing, the importation of the *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* is hereby allowed and shall not be governed by Fisheries Administrative Order No. 207 s. 2001. The DA through BFAR, hereby promulgates the following regulations and guidelines for the importation of *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* for aquaculture production.

SECTION 1. Definition of Terms. For purposes of this Circular, the following terms shall mean:

- a. **Aquaculture** – fishery operation involving all forms of raising *Macrobrachium rosenbergii*, including breeding and growing in designated culture facilities.
- b. **BFAR** – refers to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.
- c. **Broodstock** – a group of mature individuals used in aquaculture for breeding purposes (FGMO 004 s. 2023).
- d. **Certificate of Compliance (CoC)** – a document issued by BFAR to an accredited *M. rosenbergii* aquaculture facility certifying compliance with minimum biosecurity standards or Good Aquaculture Practices (GAqP).
- e. **Competent Authority** – an agency mandated by law to implement and supervise Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, regulations, or standards.
- f. **Genetically Altered Strains** – *M. rosenbergii* stocks that have been genetically modified or selectively bred beyond their natural genetic state.
- g. **Hybrid** – an organism resulting from the crossbreeding of two different species, strains, or genetic lines.
- h. **International Health Certificate** – a written guarantee issued by a competent authority in the country of origin certifying that fish or fishery/aquatic products were handled, processed, and packed hygienically, and are free from hazards that may pose risks to human or aquatic animal health.
- i. **Juvenile** – any prawn that is no longer a larva but not yet sexually mature. In aquaculture, this refers to animals larger than post-larvae, suitable for stocking in grow-out ponds.
- j. ***Macrobrachium rosenbergii*** – also known as the Giant Freshwater Prawn or “Ulang,” the largest species in the *Macrobrachium* genus, widely cultured for aquaculture.
- k. **Production Facility** – the physical locations and structures used for breeding, raising, and harvesting *M. rosenbergii* under controlled conditions (e.g., hatcheries, nurseries, and grow-out farms).

- l. **Post-Larvae (PL)** – Prawn fry that have undergone 11 larval stages and are ready for freshwater rearing (PNS/BAFS 281:2019).
- m. **Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance (SPSIC)** – document issued by the concerned DA bureau or agency prior to importation to ensure that the products being imported meet SPS measures to protect human, animal or plant life or health, ensuring that the agricultural and fishery products are safe for consumers, and to prevent the spread of pests or diseases among animals or plants. Such document also prescribes the pre-entry conditions to be complied with by the exporting country and the post-entry conditions for the maintenance of quality and suitability of the product for the intended purposes.
- n. **Specific Pathogen-Free (SPF)** – a condition where a stock is certified free from specified disease organisms for at least two (2) consecutive years, as determined by the IRA Panel.

SECTION 2. Scope. This Circular shall apply only to the importation of Specific Pathogen-Free (SPF) *M. rosenbergii* in the form of post-larvae, juvenile, and/or broodstock. The importation thereof shall be subjected to this Circular and all existing laws and regulations governing live aquatic animal imports.

SECTION 3. Import Risk Analysis (IRA) Panel. BFAR shall create an IRA Panel to assess biosecurity, health status, and management practices of breeding facilities in the country of origin. The panel shall conduct on-site inspections, with expenses following existing foreign inspection mission regulations. The panel shall be chaired by the BFAR Assistant Director for Technical Services, with members from:

- a) Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Division (IFAD)
- b) National Shrimp Production Program (NSPP)/HIPON
- c) Fisheries Inspection and Quarantine Division (FIQD)
- d) National Fisheries Laboratory Division (NFLD)

SECTION 4. Certificate of Compliance. BFAR shall issue a Certificate of Compliance to *M. rosenbergii* production facilities that meet biosecurity and operational requirements.

SECTION 5. Licensing of Importers. All importers of post-larvae, juvenile, and/or broodstock must secure a License to Operate as Importer (LTOI) from BFAR.

SECTION 6. Issuance of SPSIC

- 6.1 No importation shall be allowed without a valid SPSIC.
- 6.2 Applications must be filed via the DA Trade System at least five (5) working days prior to shipment.
- 6.3 Documentary requirements include:
 - 6.3.1. International Health Certificate from country of origin
 - 6.3.2. Proforma/Commercial Invoice
 - 6.3.3. Laboratory Test Results as certified by competent authority of the Country of Origin
 - 6.3.4. Other relevant travel documents as required

SECTION 7. Importation Requirements

7.1 Pre-border Controls

- 7.1.1 Certificate of Compliance from BFAR
- 7.1.2 Breeding facility accreditation by foreign Competent Authority
- 7.1.3 Two-year disease-free certification for diseases as identified by the IRA Panel
- 7.1.4 Endorsement of breeding facility by foreign authority to BFAR
- 7.1.5 Facility inspection by the IRA Panel from the source country of importation

7.2 Border Controls

- 7.2.1 Verification of SPSIC and supporting documents at port of entry
- 7.2.2 Transport of shipment directly to BFAR-accredited facility

7.3 Post-border Controls

- 7.3.1 The imported *M. rosenbergii* shall be confined in the designated quarantine facility of the importer for the prescribed quarantine period by BFAR.
- 7.3.2 BFAR Technical Staff shall conduct post arrival inspection and monitoring of the imported *M. rosenbergii* and collect samples for laboratory tests by BFAR laboratories for concerned diseases during the prescribed quarantine period.
- 7.3.3 All the imported *M. rosenbergii* shall be confined to the quarantine area and shall be only be released if the laboratory tests showed negative results for concerned diseases
- 7.3.4 If the samples showed positive results for the concerned diseases, all imported stocks shall be destroyed sanitarily and in accordance with the existing rules, regulations and standards on destruction for disease control.

SECTION 8. Broodstock Development. BFAR shall recommend and in collaboration with NGAs, academe, NGOs, and private sector the conduct of research and development

to establish local SPF/SPR/SPT broodstock capability and other important areas for development for breeding and production of *M. rosenbergii*.

SECTION 9. Prohibitions. All import restrictions on live shrimp under FAO 207, series of 2001, shall remain in force, except as specified in Section 2 of this Circular.

The importation of post-larvae, juvenile, and/or broodstock of *M. rosenbergii* shall be in accordance with this Circular. Any violation of the provisions of this Circular shall be penalized in accordance with Section 105 of the Fisheries Code, as amended, embodied in Section 8 hereof.

- A. Importing of post-larvae, juvenile, and/or broodstock of *M. rosenbergii* without SPSIC or beyond its validity and other violations pertaining to the issuance of SPSIC or analogous to acts of smuggling, such as but not limited to:
1. recycling, tampering, modifying, altering, and forging the signatures in the SPSICs;
 2. selling, transferring, and conveying of SPSIC;
 3. using SPSIC of persons, natural or juridical, other than those specifically named in the SPSIC;
 4. using fake, fictitious or fraudulent import permits or shipping documents ;
 5. misdeclaration ;
 6. submission of any falsified document for Licensing as Importer or for the issuance of a SPSIC ;
 7. providing false information in the application form or in any of the accompanying documents to the application or submission of forged documents;
 8. unloading, transporting, storing, and trading of post-larvae, juvenile, and/or broodstock of *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* products without the necessary clearance/permits and documents as required under this Circular; and
 9. Importation of species other than *Macrobrachium rosenbergii*, hybrids, and other genetically altered strains.
- B. Acts which jeopardize biosecurity and food safety, such as but not limited to:
1. violating relevant SPS and biosafety rules and regulations or any conditions imposed in the SPSIC; and
 2. failure to comply with quarantine and biosecurity measures and inspections provided in this Circular.
- C. selling or diverting imported post-larvae, juvenile, and/or broodstock of *Macrobrachium rosenbergii* for purposes other than what is stated in the SPSIC or diverting it to facilities other than the certified production facility declared in the SPSIC;
- D. other acts similar or analogous to the foregoing.

Only shrimp farms certified by BFAR shall be allowed to culture SPF *M. rosenbergii* post-larvae, juvenile, and/or broodstock coming from accredited breeding/hatcheries from the source country.

SECTION 10. Penalties. Upon a summary finding of administrative liability, the offender shall be punished with an administrative fine of five (5) times the value of the species or Three hundred thousand pesos (P300,000.00) to Five hundred thousand pesos (P500,000.00), whichever is higher, and forfeiture and/or destruction of the species.

Upon conviction by a court of law, the offender shall be punished with eight (8) years of imprisonment and fine of twice the administrative fine, forfeiture and/or destruction of the species: Provided, That offenders shall be banned from being members or stockholders of companies currently engaged in fisheries or companies to be created in the future.

In the absence of the original copy of the International Health Certificate from the country of origin and SPSIC, the shipment shall be confiscated and disposed of by the competent authority in accordance with existing regulations on confiscation and disposal at the expense of the importer.

SECTION 11. Separability Clause – If any portion or provision of this Circular is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other portion or portions thereof, which are not affected thereby, shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 12. Repealing Clause – All orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Circular are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 13. Effectivity – This Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette and/or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation, and fifteen (15) days after its registration with the Office of the National Administrative Register.

ISSUED this ___ day of ____, 2025 at Quezon City, Metropolitan Manila, Philippines.