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Mobile app to help Pinoy fishermen document, measure catch

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The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Manila-based Futuristic Aviation and Maritime Enterprise Inc. (FAME) have launched a new partnership in using technology that will enable Filipino fishermen to trace and document their catch through a mobile application, and measure them to comply with national and international market requirements.

The technology promotes sustainable fisheries and boosts livelihoods in southern Mindanao. The measurements will help them be compliant with national and international market requirements for ensuring that consumers receive legal, eco-friendly and properly labeled seafood products.

USAID and FAME on Thursday began installing transponders on the vessels of over two dozen smallscale fishermen from the municipalities of Glan, Kiamba and Maasim in Sarangani province. Complying with these standards will allow the fishermen to reach new markets and earn more money.

The project, which is managed out of USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) in Bangkok, Thailand, also promotes fishers' safety by providing connectivity while at sea, allowing them to better communicate back to the shore and permitting fishers' families to track their locations in real time. This technology is out of reach for most vessels due to high costs and limited connectivity.

"We are pleased to partner with innovative, entrepreneurial, and homegrown companies like FAME that are meeting the needs of fisheries managers while also promoting prosperity and sustainability in the international seafood trade," USAID-RDMA Bangkok director Richard Goughnour said.

FAME is a private company and a leading provider of small-scale vessel trackers and monitors in the Philippines. FAME's technology is designed to increase the safety of air and sea travel with technology that is compact, low-cost and easily deployable.

"For many years, vessel-tracking technology has had numerous benefits for governments and nongovernment organizations, with far fewer direct and tangible benefits for fishers themselves. FAME has worked hard to incorporate features into our transponders that benefit the fishers who use them," FAME chief executive officer Arcelio Fetizana said.

The USAID is implementing this project through its five-year, P1.04-billion (\$20-million) USAID Oceans project, which, in partnership with the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center, promotes sustainable fisheries, combats illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and conserves marine biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. This initiative in the Philippines is part of the project's broader work to develop and test new technology that can benefit fishers throughout Southeast Asia, where marine ecosystems provide food and income to more than 200 million people.