

Guidelines for the Import of Ornamental Fishes into India

1. Preamble

The global trade of ornamental fishes including accessories and fish feed is estimated to be worth more than USD 15 billion with an annual growth of 8%. Around 500 million fishes are traded annually by 145 countries, of which 80-85% are tropical species. Domestic market for ornamental fish in India is much promising. At present, the demand for quality tropical fish far exceeds the supply. The domestic market for ornamental fishes in India is estimated at Rs 20 crores and the domestic trade is at growing annual rate of 20%. Availability of considerable number of indigenous ornamental fish of high value in the country has contributed greatly for the development of ornamental fish industry in India. However there is a great demand for exotic fishes due to its variety of color, shape, appearance, etc. It has been estimated that more than 300 species of exotic variety are already present in the ornamental fish trade in India and still there is great market demand for exotic fishes.

Introduction of exotic aquatic species will have some impacts like genetic contamination, disease introduction and ecological interaction with possible threat to native germ plasm. In the wake of trade liberalization under World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement, India is required to equip itself and to minimize the ecological and disease risk associated with the likely increase in species introductions. Out break of exotic disease in many cases can be traced to movement of exotic fish into new areas: examples are Koi herpes virus disease and Epizootic ulcerative syndrome. With expected increase in the international trade in ornamental fish and other products in coming years there is likelihood of increased negative impact on native fauna. In this contest it is absolutely necessary to make guidelines and regulations for introduction of exotics aquatic ornamental animals for effective control and management of species introduction.

The Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DAHDF), Ministry of Agriculture has formulated these guidelines in consultation with National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (NBFGR), Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) and Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA).

2. Definitions

Accidental escape means escape of aquatic organisms into the natural water body unknowing by the importer/hobbyists

Aquatic animals means all life stages (including eggs and gametes) of fish, molluscs and crustaceans originating from aquaculture establishments or removed from the wild, for farming purposes, for release into the aquatic environment or for human consumption

Biohazard means an organism, or substance derived from an organism, that poses a threat to (primarily) animal/human health. This can include medical waste or samples of a microorganism, virus or toxin (from a biological source) that can impact animal/human health.

Biosecurity means in general terms, is a strategic and integrated approach to analyzing and managing relevant risks to human, animal (including aquatic), plant life and health and associated risks to the environment (FAO, 2007).

Certifying official means a person authorised by the Competent Authority to sign health certificates for aquatic animals.

Consignment (also termed “shipment”) – a group of live aquatic animals described in an aquatic animal import health standard, an international health certificate, a health certificate and/or in a permit to import or export.

Competent Authority means the Authority responsible for Aquatic Animal Health as may be notified by the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.

Exporting country means a country from which aquatic animals or aquatic animal products, biological products or pathological material are sent to a destination in another country.

International trade means import, export or transit of aquatic animals, aquatic animal products, biological products and pathological material.

Import permit means the license issued by the competent authority for importing aquatic organisms/aquarium accessories for importer.

Importer means person/company importing aquatic organisms /aquarium accessories from outside the country.

Invasive species means non-indigenous species (e.g. plants or animals) that adversely affect the habitats they invade economically, environmentally or ecologically.

OIE-listed diseases mean diseases that are referred to in Chapter 1.2.3. of the Aquatic Code. (Synonym: diseases listed by the OIE.)

Ornamental fish is often used as a generic term to describe aquatic animals kept in the aquarium hobby, including fishes, invertebrates such as corals, crustaceans (e.g., crabs, hermit crabs, shrimps), mollusks (e.g., snails, clams, scallops), and also live rock.

Pre-quarantine certificate means health certificate issued by an exporting country's Competent Authority attesting to the health status of a consignment of aquatic animals.

Quarantine means maintaining a group of aquatic animals in isolation with no direct or indirect contact with other aquatic animals, in order to undergo observation for a specified length of time and, if appropriate, testing and treatment, including proper treatment of the effluent waters.

International aquatic animal health certificate means a certificate issued by a member of the personnel of the Competent Authority of the exporting country, certifying the state of health of the aquatic animals, and a declaration that the aquatic animals originate from a source subjected to official health surveillance according to the procedures described in the OIE Aquatic Manual.

Quarantine officer means a technically competent person authorized by the Competent Authority for purposes of inspecting and certifying compliance with the health requirements of the Competent Authority concerning the import and export of live aquatic animals.

Quarantine period means a minimum period of quarantine, typically as specified in an aquatic animal import health standard or other legally binding document (e.g. national or state regulations).

Risk analysis means the complete process composed of hazard identification, risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.

Shipment means a group of aquatic animals or products thereof destined for transportation.

Surveillance means a systematic series of investigations of a given population of aquatic animals to detect the occurrence of disease for control purposes, and which may involve testing samples of a population.

Susceptible species means a species of aquatic animal in which infection has been demonstrated by natural cases or by experimental exposures to the disease agent that mimics the natural pathways for infection. Each disease chapter in the Aquatic Manual contains a list of currently known susceptible species.

3. Pre requisites

3.1. No import of the ornamental fish species shall be allowed if the fish species is found to fall in any or all of the following categories.

- a. Aquatic organism identified as dangerous as it:
 - Can cause injury to human beings (possess venomous spines/poisonous flesh/toxins/special defense mechanism).
 - Has possibilities of attacking and inflicting injuries to human beings and animals
 - Is a known vector or carrier of pathogens.
- b. Species as listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) or in the threatened list of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) or that of the exporting country's threatened list. However, if the source of the endangered fish is cultured and the exporting country's competent authority certifies it, then it can be permitted.
- c. Species under any other ban imposed on the import due to national legislation or international treaties/conventions.
- d. Invasive species exhibiting well documented deleterious impacts in India or other countries having environmental conditions similar to India.

If the request for import of a particular species is sought for the first time, risk analysis shall be carried out by the competent agency as standard protocols on the potential invasive species after introduction while application for permit is processed.

No import of ornamental fish is permitted without valid permit from Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries (DAHDF), MOA, GOI.

Only those exotic ornamental fish species listed in the permitted list would be allowed. (**Given in Annexure I**).

4. Mode of application.

4.1. The entrepreneur intending to import exotic ornamental fish shall apply in the prescribed format given in **Annexure II**.

4.2. The application seeking permit for import of an ornamental fish species shall be accompanied with color photographs of specimens of different sizes (one at the juvenile stage and another at adult stage) and should contain the scientific name of that species. The photograph should be of the specimens of the species from where the import is proposed and not from published or other sources. Without these, the application for permit shall be rejected.

4.3. In case male and female of the species have different phenotypic character, photograph of both sexes should be included.

4.4. The import permit issued

- Shall be valid for six months from the date of issue.
- Shall not be transferable.
- No amendments to the permit shall be issued.
- The issuing authority might consider one revalidation not exceeding maximum of three months provided such request for extension of validity is made to the issuing authority before the expiry of the permit with adequate justification.

5. Import of fish shall be allowed only through designated seaports/airports. **(Given in Annexure III)**

6. Packaging and Transport

6.1. The packaging shall facilitate easy inspection of the consignment by the Quarantine Officer at the port of entry.

6.2. The ornamental fish to be imported must be packaged in leak-proof bags, each bag containing only one species, must not be exceeded the standard stocking density. The bag must be transparent to enable proper inspection and identification of the aquatic animals and must not contain any extraneous matter, unapproved plant material, pests or unauthorized species.

6.3. Each bag must be placed within polystyrene boxes or cartons fitted with a plastic inner lining. Each box or carton must be clearly identified with label mentioning name and number of fish species and identification number of each box/carton. In case, any sedative/anesthetic has been used during transport, it should be clearly mentioned in the packaging list.

6.4. **Documents accompanied:** The consignment must be accompanied by relevant documents including case history paper and photograph of species, copy of import permit, copy of quarantine certificate and other documents issued by the transport authority of exporting country.

6.5. Importer must make all reasonable efforts to expedite the clearance of the consignment and its transport to destination.

6.6. **Trans-shipment:** In case of trans-shipment the consignment should be held in a sterile area of the trans-shipment point.

7. Quarantine

7.1. Every species of ornamental fish imported into the country shall have to be subjected to the quarantine procedures in a quarantine facility accredited by the Competent Authority.

7.2. The imported ornamental fish shall be accompanied by an import permit issued by the Ministry of Agriculture along with pre-quarantine certificate issued by the competent authority of exporting country stating that the farm (from where the consignment is exported) is covered under their national aquatic animal health surveillance or a pre-quarantine certificate showing status of OIE and NACA listed diseases (**Annexure IV**) of the farms and exporting country.

7.3. On arrival of the consignment, accompanying pre-quarantine certificate should be verified and imported species should be rechecked at the quarantine facility and certificate of quarantine would be issued by designated authority.

7.4. Upon clearance from the port of entry, the consignment shall be transferred immediately to the accredited quarantine facility as indicated in the letter of permit (**Format is given in Annexure V**).

7.5. On receipt of consignment at quarantine facility, the species should be subjected to quarantine protocol prescribed for particular species.

7.6. The imported fishes would undergo quarantine in approved quarantine premises as follows.

- a) Gold fish – 21 days.
- b) Other ornamental fishes – 15 days

7.7. After satisfactory completion of quarantine, the consignment should be released to the importer with quarantine certificate.

7.8. Direct sale of imported broodstocks in the domestic market shall not be allowed and only F1 and F2 progeny shall be released for domestic or international market.

8. Penalties for violations

8.1. The importer shall keep in mind the biosafety, biohazards and economic interest of the nation. Any biosafety and other related hazards arising out of release of the imported fish into the natural waters entirely the responsibility of importer/importing organization/indenter and should be liable to be proceeded against with the accordance with the relevant rules of Government of India.

8.2. In case, the consignment does not pass quarantine, the entire consignment shall be destroyed at importers cost as per the prescribed protocols.

8.3. If during the course of inspection, it comes to the notice of the Competent Authority that the importer willfully suppressed certain important information/deliberately furnished wrong information or that the species sought to be imported and the one actually imported are not the same or that the species sought to be imported and the one actually imported are not the same or that the imported specimens also consist of species for which approval has not been obtained, the import permit shall be cancelled forthwith and all the specimens imported destroyed without any notice to or permission of the importer.

8.4. The importer shall take abundant care to prevent any accidental escape and willful release of the exotic ornamental fish into natural waters. In spite of this in the event of accidental escape/ willful release of fish into natural waters, the matter should be reported to the competent authority and the nearest quarantine centre.

9. Post quarantine Inspection: The CA shall have right to carry out the post quarantine inspection of hatchery, rearing facility and farms of the importers to confirm the specified norms for assuring the imported fishes are used for the purpose for which they are imported; and to look at the magnitude of multiplication and horizontal spread of the imported fish species. The importer shall submit quarterly status report on transport, breeding, rearing and retail etc. within the after the import.

Indicative List of ornamental fishes to be considered for import

Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name
1.	Tinfoil Barb	<i>Puntius schwanenfeldi</i> / <i>P. orphide</i> / <i>P.daruphani</i>
2.	Tiger Barb	<i>Puntius tetrazona</i> / <i>P.partipentazana</i>
3.	Black Ruby Barb	<i>Puntius nigrofasiatus</i>
4.	Clown Barb	<i>Barbodes everetti</i>
5.	Longfin Rosy Barb	<i>Barbus conchoniuis</i>
6.	Fliament Barb	<i>Barbus conchoniuis</i>
7.	Scissortail Rasbora	<i>Rasbora trilineata</i>
8.	Yellowtail Rasbora	<i>Rasbora dusonensis</i>
9.	Redtail Rasbora	<i>Rasbora borapetensis</i>
10.	Dwarf Rasbora	<i>Rasbora maculata</i>
11.	Harlequin Rasbora	<i>Rasbora heteromorpha</i>
12.	Green Line Rasbora	<i>Rasbora beauforti</i>
13.	Slender Gold Rasbora	<i>Rasbora einthovenii</i>
14.	Golden Line Rasbora	<i>Rasbora agilis</i>
15.	Zebra Barb	<i>Rasbora pauciperforata</i>
16.	Redtail Black Shark	<i>Labeo bicolor</i>
17.	Rainbow Shark	<i>Labeo erythrurus</i>
18.	Albino Rainbow Shark	<i>Labeo frenatus</i>
19.	Black Shark	<i>Labeo chrysophekadion</i>
20.	Silver Shark	<i>Balantiocheilos melanopterus</i>
21.	Blood Parrot Cichlids	<i>Cichlasoma synspilum</i>
22.	Texas Cichlid	<i>Cichlasoma carpinte</i>
23.	Emerald Cichlid/Parrot Fish	<i>Cichlasoma temporalis</i>
24.	Convict Cichlid	<i>Cichlasoma nigrofaciatum</i>
25.	Trout Cichlid	<i>Cichlasoma citrinellum</i>
26.	Peacock bass	<i>Cichlasoma ocellaris</i>
27.	Firemouth cichlid	<i>Cichlasoma meeki</i>
28.	Red terror	<i>Cichlasoma festae</i>
29.	Green terror	<i>Aequidens rivulatus</i>
30.	Dwarf Cichlid	<i>Apistogramma luelingi</i>
31.	Flower horn	<i>Amphilophus labiatus</i>
32.	Pearl Gourami	<i>Trichogaster leeri</i>
33.	Moonlight Gourami	<i>Trichogaster microlepis</i>
34.	Blue Gourami	<i>Trichogaster trichopterus</i>
35.	Dwarf Gourami	<i>Trichogaster lalius</i>
36.	Thick-lipped Gourami	<i>Trichogaster labiosa</i>
37.	Snake Skin Gourami	<i>Trichogaster pectoralis</i>
38.	Giant Gourami	<i>Osphronemus goramy</i>
39.	Gold fish	<i>Carassius auratus</i>
40.	Red Oranda	<i>Carassius auratus</i>
41.	Red Cap Oranda	<i>Carassius auratus</i>
42.	Blue Oranda	<i>Carassius auratus</i>
43.	Red Ryukins	<i>Carassius auratus</i>
44.	Red & White Ryukins	<i>Carassius auratus</i>
45.	Celestial Gold	<i>Carassius auratus</i>
46.	Pearl Scale Gold	<i>Carassius auratus</i>

47.	Bubble Eye Gold	<i>Carassius auratus</i>
48.	Clown Loach	<i>Botia macracantha</i>
49.	Orange -finned Loach	<i>Botia modesta</i>
50.	Skunk Loach	<i>Botia morleti</i>
51.	Dwarf -chained Loach	<i>Botia sidthimunki</i>
52.	Silver Loach	<i>Botia lecontei</i>
53.	Zebra Loach	<i>Botia striata</i>
54.	Blue Loach	<i>Botia rubripinnis</i>
55.	Guppy	<i>Poecilia reticulata</i>
56.	Molly	<i>Poecilia latipinna</i>
57.	Sword Tail	<i>Xiphophorus helleri</i>
58.	Platy	<i>Xiphophorus maculatus</i>
59.	Koi Carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>
60.	Fire Goby	<i>Nemateleotris magnifica</i>
61.	Fighting Fish	<i>Betta splendens</i>
62.	Short Tail	<i>Betta imbellis</i>
63.	Blue Betta	<i>Betta smaragdina</i>
64.	Butterfly Fish	<i>Chaetodon ephippium/ C.ornatissimus</i>
65.	Orange Clown Fish	<i>Amphiprion percula</i>
66.	Fire Clown Fish	<i>Amphiprion melanopus</i>
67.	Damsel Fish	<i>Abudefduf bicolor</i>
68.	Twotone Tang	<i>Zebrasoma scopas</i>
69.	Blue Powder Tang	<i>Acanthurus leucosternon/ A. triosegus</i>
70.	Angel Fish	<i>Pterophyllum scalare</i>
71.	High Fin Sucker	<i>Myxocyprinus asiaticus</i>
72.	Black Ghost	<i>Apteronotus albifrons</i>
73.	Oscar Cichild	<i>Astronotus ocellatus</i>
74.	Discus	<i>Symphysodon discus/S.aequifasciata</i>
75.	Blue Discus	<i>Symphysodon aequifasciata axelrodi</i>
76.	Phantom Tetra	<i>Hyphessobrycon megalopterus</i>
77.	Bleeding Heart Tetra	<i>Hyphessobrycon erythrostigma</i>
78.	Black Neon Tetra	<i>Hyphessobrycon herbertaxelrodi</i>
79.	Lemon Tetra	<i>Hyphessobrycon pulchripinis</i>
80.	Rosy Tetra	<i>Hyphessobrycon ornatus</i>
81.	Serpae Tetra	<i>Hyphessobrycon serpae</i>
82.	Gold Spotted Tetra	<i>Hyphessobrycon griemi</i>
83.	Cardinal Tetra	<i>Paracheirodon axelrodi</i>
84.	Neon Tetra	<i>Paracheirodon innesi</i>
85.	Green Neon Tetra	<i>Paracheirodon simulans</i>
86.	Red Parrot	<i>Hoplarchus psittacus</i>
87.	Yellow Face Angelfish	<i>Pomacanthus xanthometopon</i>
88.	Royal Angelfish	<i>Pygoplytes diacanthus</i>
89.	Elegant Firefish	<i>Nemateleotris decora</i>
90.	Sunset Anthias	<i>Pseudanthias parvirostris</i>
91.	Humphead Wrasse	<i>Cheilinus undulatus</i>
92.	Yellowtail Emperor	<i>Lethrinus crocineous</i>

Format of Application for importing the ornamental fish

- 1.0 Name of the fish (common name/s) :
- 1.2 Scientific name :
- 1.3 Name of the country where from the species is proposed to be imported:
- 2.0 Source of origin (Wild/cultured):
- 3.0 Purpose of the import (Breeding/ direct selling etc.):
 - 3.1 Import details :
 - 3.2 Life stage to be imported (Juvenile/immature/ adult/ Brood stock):
 - 3.3 Quantity/ Size of import :
 - 3.4 Average weight (g) :
 - 3.5 Average length (cm) :
- 4.0 Biological profile of the species:
 - 4.1 Maximum size (cm) :
 - 4.2 Maximum weight (g)
 - 4.3 Natural habitat
 - 4.3.1 Adult :
 - 4.3.2 Juvenile :
 - 4.3.3 Spawn :
 - 4.4 Temperature requirement for different stages:
 - 4.5 Whether migratory in nature :
 - 4.5.1 If yes, whether for breeding/feeding :
 - 4.6 Breeding
 - 4.6.1 Bisexual/hermaphrodite :
 - 4.6.2 Oviparous/viviparous :
 - 4.6.3 Age at maturity :
 - 4.6.4 Period/time of breeding :
 - 4.6.5 Periodicity of breeding :
 - 4.6.6 Fecundity :
 - 4.6.7 Breeding habitat :
 - 4.6.8 Temperature requirements :

- 4.7 Feeding habits (Herbivorous/carnivorous/omnivorous):
- 4.7.1 Natural food items
- 4.7.1.1 Larvae :
- 4.7.1.2 Juvenile :
- 4.7.1.3 Adult :
- 4.8 Genetic profile
- 4..8.1 If developed – Originals/ Stocks used for the development:
- 4..8.2 Genetic mechanism used for developing (Selection/hybridization/
genetic engineering)
- 5.0 Earlier import details:
- 5..8.1 Approval No. and Date (issued by the Ministry):
- 5..8.2 Details of License issued by DGFT
- 5..8.3 Year of import:
- 5..8.4 Number of permitted species:
- 5..8.5 Total number imported:
- 5..8.6 Number of fish imported against each permitted variety:
- 5..8.7 End use of the imported varieties in details:
- 6.0 Are the imported ornamental fish meant for export/internal market:
- 7.0 Name and Address of the firm/person importing the fish :
- 8.0 The place/Hatchery where the imported fish will be kept:
- 9.0 Whether quarantine facility is there or not:

Date

Signature of importer

Seal

Essential enclosures:

1. Photographs of organisms to be imported (The photograph should be of the specimens of the species from where the import is proposed and not from published or other sources).
2. Address of hatchery/Farm where the fish will be maintained after importing

Instructions for filling proforma:

1. For each species use a separate proforma
2. No column should be left blank. If information is not available fill N.A. and if the item is not relevant, N.R.

Designated seaports/airports for import of exotic ornamental fish

- East coast – Chennai
- West coast – Mumbai

(At present only two ports designated for import and this may increase later such as Kolkatta, Kochi and Delhi)

OIE listed aquatic animal diseases (OIE, Code 2012)

Diseases of fish

- Epizootic haematopoietic necrosis
- Epizootic ulcerative syndrome
- Infection with *Gyrodactylus salaris*
- Infectious haematopoietic necrosis
- Infectious salmon anaemia
- Koi herpes virus disease
- Red sea bream iridoviral disease
- Spring viraemia of carp
- Viral haemorrhagic septicaemia.

Diseases of mollusks

- Infection with abalone herpesvirus
- Infection with *Bonamia ostreae*
- Infection with *Bonamia exitiosa*
- Infection with *Marteilia refringens*
- Infection with *Perkinsus marinus*
- Infection with *Perkinsus olseni*
- Infection with *Xenohaliotis californiensis*.

Diseases of crustaceans

- Crayfish plague (*Aphanomyces astaci*)
- Infectious hypodermal and haematopoietic necrosis
- Infectious myonecrosis
- Necrotising hepatopancreatitis
- Taura syndrome
- White spot disease
- White tail disease
- Yellow head disease.

Yellowhead disease **Diseases of Amphibians**

- Infection with *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*
- Infection with ranavirus

Annexure V

No.....

Government of India
Ministry of Agriculture
Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries

Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi

Dated the

To

Name and address of the company

Subject: Proposal for import of live ornamental fish – approval – regarding.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to your proposal/application (Ref. No...&.date) regarding permission for import of live ornamental fishes and to convey the approval of this Ministry for import of the following ornamental fishes by you/ your company from (Name of the exporting country) as per the description and quantity mentioned in the table below subject to the conditions as contained in the enclosed Guidelines for import of ornamental fishes.

Sl.No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Quantity in number

The permission is granted for a period of one year from the date of issue of the import license by the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT). The approval is not transferable and no amendments to the approval shall be issued.

This issues with the approval of the Chairman of the National Committee for Introduction of Exotic Aquatic Species in Indian Waters.

Encl: *Guidelines for import of ornamental fishes.*

Yours faithfully,

Signature of the issuing officer with seal

Copy for information to:

1. Secretary (Fisheries), Govt.....
2. Director (Fisheries), Govt.....
3. Director, National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resource (NBFGR), Lucknow.
4. Director General of Foreign Trade (Import Licensing Unit), Dept. of Commerce, Udyog Bhawan, New Delhi
5. Trade Division, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Krishi Bhawan

