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## Surge in steel section imports hurt Philippines local firms

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The Philippines Tariff Commission has affirmed steel angle bar manufacturers' claims that the volume of imports surged in 2004 to 2007 and that local production fell in the same period.

A staff report released late last week showed that locally made bars were identical to their foreign made counterparts and were therefore competing against each other contrary to importers' claims in an earlier position paper.

The report was released prior to a hearing on whether to slap higher duties on imported bars to protect local manufacturers. The Tariff Commission will be submitting its recommendations based on the hearing to the Trade department by mid June. The hearing was spurred by local manufacturers' Cathay Metal Corporation, Dragon Asia Rolling Mills Inc and Lunar Steel Corporation, petition that a fee of at least PHP 14,000 per tonne be imposed on imported steel angle bars as these were said to have eroded Philippine producers' share in recent years.

Already, the tariff on the bars from Association of Southeast Asian Nations members stands at 3% while those imported from elsewhere are slapped with a 7% duty.

Tariff Commission report stated that "Imported angle bars and locally produced angle bars falling under certain sizes are identical considering they are made of the same material, have the same description, serve the same purpose, cater to the same end-users and are classified under the same tariff headings. Both products are considered like product."

The Tariff Commission report went on to state that steel angle bar imports roughly doubled in 2004 to 338 tonnes from previous year's levels, then grew by 359% in 2005, 880% in 2006 and 205% in 2007 before falling by nearly a third last year to 31,847 tonnes. The report also stated that imports were eroding local manufacturers' market share which stood at 99.83% in 2003 and then fell to 49.06% in 2008.

(Sourced from [www.bworldonline.com](http://www.bworldonline.com))

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