EC Denies Unfairly Blocking Products

The European Commission has denied imposing unfair trade barriers on Thai seafood and poultry exports, claiming that it has shown readiness to work with Thailand to overcome any problems. The EC also denied that the EU was discriminating against Thai products in favor of those from other countries.

From Thai side it has been suggested that the Thai government should take the EU's reduction of tariff privileges for Thai shrimps to the World Trade Organisation Thai shrimps were now taxed at 12%, compared with 4.2% on shrimps from India, Indonesia and Vietnam. No tax is imposed on shrimps from Ecuador.

EC and Thai officials will have a two-day meeting starting on 5th September 2002.

(Bangkok Post from www.foodmarketexchange.com 26th August 2002)

Thai Government Warns Farmers Against Veterinary Drug Use

Worried about losing access to major overseas food markets, Thailand's Public Health Ministry issued a stern warning Thursday to farmers against using banned veterinary drugs. Earlier this year, the European Commission made it mandatory to test for antibiotic residues in shrimp and poultry imported from Thailand and in shrimp from Vietnam and Myanmar, which could result in a ban. Frozen chicken and shrimp exports are a major earner for Thailand, which earns around 100 billion baht (dlrs 2.4 billion) a year as the world's top frozen shrimp exporter.

The European Commission's move came after nitrofuran - a veterinary drug considered dangerous to human health - was found in shrimps imported to European Union countries from Vietnam, and in shrimps and poultry from Thailand. After an inspection tour of a shrimp farm, Thai Health Minister Sudarat Keyuraphan warned farmers against using eight banned drugs and said traders of the banned substances risked two years in prison and a 20,000 baht (dlrs 476) fine.

The banned drugs are chloramphenicol, dimetridazol, ronidazole, furaltadone, furazolidone, nitrofurantoin, nitrofurazone and nitrovin. The drugs are banned by the Commerce Ministry. All were popular drugs used to prevent or treat infections in farm animals.

US Project to Breed Major Changes for Shrimp Farms in Vietnam

Vietnam has begun work on a VND76 billion (US$5 million) shrimp breeding project in Hai Phong's coastal communes promising new jobs and improved working conditions. The 10-year project, in Tien Hung and Dong Hung communes, will create 1,000 jobs and increase Hai Phong's export turnover to 2,000 tonnes of shrimp per year.

Speaking at a ceremony last week, ATI Director Dinh Duc Huu, an American-Vietnamese, said ATI would invest in the entire process from breeding through to exporting products to the US market. Also at the ceremony, former Deputy PM, Nguyen Cong Tan, said the project would be a model for the rest of Vietnam in high-profit shrimp breeding. The director of ATI's Aqua-Culture Cultivation Projects, Trinh Ngoc Huan, said ATI will apply intensive-farming methods to breed export quality tiger prawns.

The 846 ha project will be carried out in two phases. The first, 2002-2006, will build up infrastructure, improve 400 ha of water-surface for intensive shrimp breeding, dam up dykes and plant trees. The second phase, 2007-2012, will expand the breeding to 646 ha. The company will also build an irrigation system and other facilities for workers. ATI also intends to build a processing plant for shrimp export to the US.

The district, next to the Thai Binh River estuary, is enriched from annual silt buildup. However, some farmers in the area are not so happy with the new venture. Nguyen Hung Van, a shrimp breeder in Tien Hung Commune who received a compensation package from ATI for his land, plans to start again on Cat Ba Island.

(Asia Pulse Pte Limited, 15th August 2002)

Shrimp Market Set to Open at Farmers' Co-Operative in Southern Thailand.

A central market for shrimp will start operating at Surat Thani Co-operative on Sunday and open a new marketing channel for farmers in southern Thailand. The market will complement those now operating in Pak Phanang in Nakhon Si Thammarat and Maha Chai in Samut Sakhon. It will be operated by a group of shrimp farmers in Surat Thani who are leasing the co-operative's office as their headquarters for the next three years.

Suraphol Prathuegntham, the president of Thai Marine Shrimp Farmers' Association said the new market would provide a hygienic trading environment and have transparent management. The market operator would not be involved in trading. Instead, it would earn a 1.5 percent commission on sales and charge two baht per kg for sorting shrimps. Farmers will be provided with ice to keep their shrimps cold at no additional charge.

(Knight Ridder/Tribune Business News and Bangkok Post, Thailand 15th August 2002)

Shrimp Farmers Charged With Destroying Mangrove Forests

The continued economic crisis has driven thousands of local families to try their luck in shrimp farming here in place of the ailing shrimp company PT Dipasena Citra Darmaja (DCD). Their new livelihood, however, has cost the environment as they have cleared mangrove forests along the province's eastern coastal line for the ponds.

The clearing of the conservation area along the coast that has occurred for the past six months has resulted in extensive damage to the ecosystem and severe abrasion, particularly along the banks of
the Seputih river, the artery of Tulangbawang regency. A spokesman for PT Central Pertiwi Bahari (CPB), a company engaged in shrimp farming in the area, Kitono, said the number of traditional shrimp farmers had reached at least 4,000. The ponds, he added, have sparked fears not only of damage to the protected areas but of hazards to the company's business. "If their shrimps are infected by a viral disease, we are afraid it will affect ours." he said.

The US$600,000 provided by international donors to restore the National Park and the eastern coast of Lampung seems to have gone down the drain as the provincial administration has been unable to settle the land disputes nor curb rampant forest devastation in the province.

(World Sources, Inc. and Jakarta Post 12th August 2002)

Bangladesh Initiatives Shrimp Action Plan to Address Wild Shrimp Fry Collection

The DFID and Department of Fisheries of Bangladesh are currently conducting a six-month Shrimp Action Plan. The development of this plan follows an agreement between the Secretary, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and DFID that the enforcement of a shrimp fry collection ban will be held in abeyance pending a 6-month review. The review is exploring alternative models in which the resource and biodiversity are conserved and at the same time the livelihoods of the fry collectors are protected.

A detailed plan was developed by representatives from the Fourth Fisheries Project, the Aquatic Resources Development, Management and Conservation Studies of the Global Environment Facility, Department of Fisheries and Bangladesh Development Water Board. The activity plan establishes clear steps towards assessing a number of alternative models and their social, environmental, institutional and economic implications. This information would then provide a range of options that will be presented to the Secretary of Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock in September 2002. The development of the plan is underpinned by the following principles:

1. The need to establish measures that protect and conserve the bio-diversity and ecology of the areas that have historically been the focus of shrimp fry collectors;
2. engagement with people who rely upon fry collection as key source of their livelihood to explore improved methods of catch that would reduce immediate environmental damage;
3. To seek a better understanding of the livelihood opportunities of fry collectors, spatial and temporal differences in the geographical areas with a view to exploring alternative livelihoods options to fry collection.
4. To explore alternative models for the management of this particular wild fry resource.

For more information on the Bangladesh study, please contact Debbie Williams at dwilliams@fmsbd.org.

Tough Action After Antibiotic Found in Chinese Shrimp.

Japanese authorities have found an antibiotic, namely oxytetracycline (OTC), in a batch of live kuruma shrimp ("Penaeus japonicus") that was imported on July 29, 2002, from China. As a consequence, Japan will now test all shrimp imported from China for antibiotics. Japan's Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry found 2.3 parts per million (ppm) of OTC in the shrimp, which is more than 10 times the acceptable level of 0.2 ppm. According to the importer, the shrimp were kept in a tank for two days after capture. The circulation water in the tank was also used for flat fish and the Ministry thinks the antibiotic might have been mixed in with the water. In September 2002, because of changes to Japan's Food Sanitation Law, authorities will be able ban shrimp imports from problem countries.

(www.fis.com, Haruo Chiba, 9th August 2002)

This meeting will provide the latest information on current and projected shrimp supply and demand. It will also be an important opportunity for discussion on critical issues such as antibiotic residues and the potential anti-dumping case in the U.S.

More information is available on GAA web page (www.gaalliance.org/).

Seafood Imports Target of New Excise Tax in Louisiana.

Concerned about the threat of imported shrimp to its shrimp fishing industry, the Louisiana Legislature has passed an excise tax on imported shrimp. On whole shrimp, the tax will be assessed at 15 cents per 210 pounds; on shell-on tails, at 15 cents per 125 pounds; and on peeled shrimp, at 15 cents per 75 pounds. The funds will be used to regulate and monitor shrimp imports, including tests for chloramphenicol.

(www.worldcatch.com 2nd August 2002)

Prepared by NACA for the Consortium on Shrimp Farming and the Environment.