

Study Tour to Thailand on Experience sharing about tackling contamination and buyers compliance in the Shrimp Industry

Background: The sustainability of Bangladesh fisheries industry, one of the biggest sources of rural employment and poverty reduction and the second most important source of foreign exchange may be jeopardized if Bangladesh fails to consistently demonstrate that its export items fully comply with the international food safety conditions. Also, Bangladesh may lose its export market if it fails to expeditiously establish a credible traceability system for its fisheries items from farm to fork. Between 2005 and June 2009, 98 shrimp consignments had been under rapid alert from the EU; out of these, as many as 60 cases were rejected due to the contamination with metabolites of nitrofurans. These have caused serious economic setbacks not only to the concerned exporters, but also to the country as a whole. The situation has given rise to grave concerns among the shrimp industry stakeholders, including the Government. In the recent years, the Government seized the right of a few shrimp processing and exporting companies to process and export shrimp in partial fulfillment of the conditions imposed by EU in 2008. In April 2009 the exporters have voluntarily imposed ban on exporting prawn to EU market till November, 2009. GoB also agreed on the decision and decided to take several actions to mitigate the chances of contamination.

In this respect a National working Committee was formed by Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock (MoFL) and through the committee, Dr. Glenn Kennedy, a renowned food safety and contamination expert was hired to investigate into the problem. Based on the investigation and the study report by Dr. Kennedy, a “National Action Plan (NAP) to Combat Nitrofurans Hazards, develop Codes of Conduct and Traceability System” was developed with utmost priority. The national working committee organized a workshop to develop an “Action Plan” on June 11, 2009. The plan includes immediate, short term and long term actions with active supports from development partners, different stakeholders and various related private and public sector. Secretary, MoFL attended the workshop as Chief Guest and formally launched the plan. Accordingly it was finalized with Department of Fisheries (DoF) officers and committee members on June 29, 2009. Furthermore, some actions incorporated from the findings of workshop organized by SFIQC/BQSP held on July 04, 2009 at Khulna.

Experience sharing on taking practical measures against contamination from the other Shrimp Industries was one of the priority works of NAP. This activity was planned to be executed within November, 2009 as per the NAP timeline direction. In this regard DoF, Bangladesh contacted Thai Department of Fisheries in arranging a study tour on Experience sharing about tackling contamination and buyers’ compliance in the Thai Shrimp Industry. So based on the mutual agreement a study tour combining the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) delegation including MoFL and DoF members, development partners & Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters Association (BFFEA) members will be carried out from 9th to 13th of November, 2009.

Katalyst, as a development partner of NWC and as per the NAP obligation is supporting this trip along with BFFEA.

Objective of the tour: The objective of this study tour is to understand the experience of Thai frozen food industry in tackling contamination and other compliance issues through different remedial and preventive measures taken by the frozen food industry and the government.

Expected Outcome:

1. Understand the curative and preventive taken by Thai Govt. (Department of Fisheries) in tackling contamination issues, especially Nitrofurans problem.
2. Understanding initiatives of public, private bodies and academia to tackle buyers' compliance in frozen food export.
3. Find out the scopes and potential areas of collaboration between Thai & Bangladesh govt. in this respect.
4. Understand the checking back system of Thai department of fisheries on rejected consignments.
5. Find out if there is an overall national plan for this (formal/informal)
 - a. If yes, comparison with GoB NAP
 - b. If not, understand the alternative steps Thai govt. has taken.
6. Understand the traceability system, maintaining data base and all accreditation process Thai govt. took for its frozen food industry.