

U.S. shrimp imports surpass 2004 levels, breaded shrimp from China surges

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS by John Sackton ? Nov 14, 2005- Shrimp usage in the U.S. continues to grow, with the latest import figures showing that total U.S. shrimp imports through September have now surpassed their 2004 levels.

As of the end of September, U.S. imports of shrimp of all types stood at 798,015 tons, 4.4% above the comparable figure from 2004. Despite the problems of import duties, shrimp consumption and imports continue to grow. It now appears that the total shrimp imports for the year will surpass the 1.14 million tons of 2004.

However, major changes have occurred in terms of the types and origins of shrimp being imported. A brief rundown follows:

Black Tiger shrimp: imports are up by 7%, in shell on and 11.9% in peeled raw categories over 2004. Vietnam and India continue to be the largest producers, with Vietnam shipping 28.2 thousand tons, up 22%, and India shipping approximately the same amount as last year, around 21.8 thousand tons.

Thailand has been primarily shipping shell on black tiger, with shipments up 53% year to date, to 27 thousand tons, vs. 17.7 thousand tons last year at this time.

White shrimp: Imports continue to trail their levels of 2004, currently down 4.9% for shell on shrimp. Total shell on white shrimp imports are 243 thousand tons, vs. 255.6 thousand tons last year at this time, for a decline of 4.9%.

For peeled white shrimp, however, volumes are almost the same, 132.1 thousand tons vs. 133.7 thousand tons in 2004.

One note is the situation with breaded shrimp. As all observers predicted, there has been a massive switch to breaded shrimp from China, due to the absence of duties. Breaded shrimp from China went from 10.7 thousand tons in 2004 to 48.3 thousand tons in 2005, an increase of 350%. The total imported breaded shrimp category tripled, from 22,647 thousand tons at this time in 2004, to 66,918 tons in 2005.

The breaded shrimp market has not dramatically expanded, so it is only logical to conclude that most of this increase represents the loss of domestic production, and the accompanying jobs.

Finally, the total volume of shrimp consumed in the U.S. will also be impacted by the final total of landings from the Gulf. Although a lot of infrastructure was destroyed in Louisiana due to the hurricanes, freezer boats that survived have been out fishing since then, some of them landing to other ports. There is no Gulf shrimp quota, so at this point it is not clear how much the overall total landings will be at the lower end of the normal range. However, the lack of Gulf landings could be enough to hold U.S. shrimp volumes

steady in 2005, instead of the year to year increases that have been occurring every year since 2001.

Ca Mau province shows downside of huge increase in shrimp farming in Vietnam

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS [VNS] Nov 14, 2005- Ca Mau ? Shrimp farming in the southern province of Ca Mau has taken off to such an extent that the production boom has been called a phenomena.

At present, the majority of rice paddies in places like Dam Doi District have been completely rebuilt as shrimp-breeding lakes.

In farmers' daily chats, things like water quality, feed content and shrimp breeds have replaced talk of rice harvests and seedling transplants.

The new career as shrimp farmer has proven so attractive that local authorities have felt compelled to warn about the risks of the trade.

Achievements

In Dam Doi District, after five years of economic reforms, shrimp has become the mainstay of the local economy. Thanks to shrimp farming, the district's GDP has increased from 12 to 24 per cent a year and contributions to the State budget will reach nearly VND46.1 billion (\$3 million). 'Shrimp can bring three or four times as much profit as rice farming,' said the deputy chairman of the district People's Committee.

In this land of mangroves, it's obvious that residents have improved their lives. 'Previously, the entire area was rice paddies and we had to work very hard for little profit. In 2001, we decided to breed shrimp and our situation improved. Now, we have three hectares of shrimp farm, and we earn VND500 million (\$31,600) a year,' said Hai Hong Nhanh, owner of a large shrimp farm in Thanh Tung Commune.

But will it last?

'Shrimp breeding is not sustainable development,' affirmed the district deputy chairman.

Since 2001, the district has transformed 60,000ha of rice paddy and orchard into shrimp lakes. In order to access the water needed, locals break down sea-dams to allow salt water to rush into their ponds.

As a result, the rice paddy irrigation system is destroyed. What further compounds the problem is that water resource systems for shrimp farming have not yet been

implemented in full.

This unplanned transformation has led to the destruction of the area's fresh-water ecosystem and to the degradation of the environment.

It is even more of a problem when it is considered that the degraded environment is also harmful to the shrimp. Disease becomes rampant, and as a result of the broken sea dams, often the waters are over-salinated.

Some shrimp farmers are complaining that they can't repay business loans at the bank.

The local authorities are trying to find a solution to the problems. They understand that balance must be sought by developing both shrimp and rice, or through another cultivation model altogether. Sadly they said, it is impossible for Dam Doi to recover now. The whole district has become salinised.

Taking into account the problems in Dam Doi, Ca Mau should be regarded as a warning for other regions nation-wide. Ca Mau is learning the hard way that sustainable development plans are the only ones that will last.

Consumers want more seafood availability and 58% say they are eating more, says new study for ASMI

SEAFOOD.COM [Fish Factor] by Laine Welch - Kodiak Nov. 14, 2005- - Americans want more seafood at their favorite eateries, and they prefer that it comes from Alaska. Those were some of the findings in a survey of more than 1,000 Americans by the San Francisco based Hale Group. The survey, conducted for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, measured attitudes toward seafood at fast food and casual dining restaurants, and asked customers to rank popular brand names that would influence their ordering decisions.

"We definitely found out that consumers are looking for more seafood selections and they are very positive about Alaska seafood," said Claudia Hogue, ASMI Food Service director. In fact, respondents said the Alaska logo would increase their likelihood of ordering a seafood item by 77 percent.

In other findings: 58 percent said they are eating more seafood than they did two years ago, mostly due to the health benefits (64 percent). Fully half of those polled said they are trying to eat less beef, pork and chicken. Sixty percent said they eat most of their seafood in restaurants. Eighty five percent said Alaska salmon is a great source of omega three fatty acids, 84 percent said Alaska seafood comes from clean, pure waters and 79 percent said it was wild. Other words used to describe Alaska seafood included natural, pure, and high quality. Interestingly 41 percent felt Alaska seafood was endangered.

Those polled were happier with the seafood choices at casual restaurants than at fast food eateries. A whopping 81 percent said they want more seafood options at fast food restaurants, notably grilled fish items. "Healthy menu items is a big topic, and the more seafood choices the better," Hogue said, adding that ASMI will provide the survey information to restaurant chains and other users. "We're hoping this will help decision makers add more Alaska seafood to their menus and promote it as Alaska, because it really means something to consumers," she said.