

China promises to step up inspection of seafood for residues

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS [AFX News Limited] - August 23, 2005 - BEIJING, China promised to step up inspections on fish and other seafood after Hong Kong found eel imports from China contained a banned suspected carcinogen, the China Daily reported.

Hong Kong recently discovered eight kinds of freshwater fish imported from China contained the industrial dye malachite green, a toxin widely used as a disinfectant on fish farms which has been shown to cause cancer in rats.

China Daily said the chemical could cause cancer and birth defects.

The southern province of Guangdong, neighboring Hong Kong, has recalled all eel products after the harmful chemical was found in the fish, which originated in neighbouring Guangxi and Fujian provinces.

Authorities have already started inspecting fish exports to Hong Kong in Shenzhen city, just across the border from Hong Kong, Huang Weiming, a senior official at the provincial Administration of Quarantine and Inspection, was quoted as saying.

No trace of the harmful chemical has been found on 30 fish farms already inspected but authorities will continue with a province-wide check, he said.

Hong Kong's health secretary York Chow said Monday that China, which produces 90 pct of the world's supply of farmed eels, often fails to inform the territory of dangers in food supplies.

Hong Kong officials have since met their Chinese counterparts to discuss strategies to improve the communication on food safety and the improvement on safety of fish exported to Hong Kong, China Daily said.

The current notification mechanism on food safety covers only meat but not fish because it was considered a low risk area.

The latest food scare in Hong Kong, which came after an outbreak of a deadly pig-borne disease that left 40 people dead in China, has prompted supermarkets and restaurants across the city to halt sales of eels.

Despite the scare, the Hong Kong government said it did not plan to ban imports of fish from China, although the government told the public to avoid eating eels and eel products from the mainland.

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Global Aquaculture Alliance and NFI begin to gingerly respond to basa seizures

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS [Global Aquaculture Alliance Release] Aug 23, 2005- Several southern U.S. states have banned or limited all seafood from Vietnam following United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) detention action against two Vietnamese firms whose basa products were found to contain residues of florquinolone antibiotics.

Although the Global Aquaculture Alliance is opposed to the use of such nonapproved antibiotics, which can result in human health concerns and product detention in the marketplace, it also opposes the use of what may be overly broad emergency rules as an artificial trade barrier to hinder the flow of seafood from certain regions.

'The states' actions should be more fully targeted toward the offending importers, not the entire Vietnamese seafood sector,' GAA President George Chamberlain said. 'They should also be more balanced with similar actions against other protein imports, such as poultry, beef, and pork.'

Floroquinolones are broad-spectrum antibiotics used to treat urinary tract infections, gastrointestinal problems, and other illnesses in humans. They are not approved for use in aquaculture, but were until recently used in the poultry industry to control disease and improve growth.

In an emergency order that is more restrictive than federal guidelines for the antibiotics, the state of Alabama is holding all Vietnamese seafood pending approved testing for fluoroquinolones and may seize adulterated product. Louisiana has stopped the sale of hundreds of tons of seafood from Vietnam intended for retail and restaurant sales. Mississippi has ordered retail establishments not to sell basa produced by the companies targeted by FDA.

The National Fisheries Institute (NFI) has indicated Florida also may enact a restrictive emergency ruling due to concerns about the mislabeling of basa as grouper in the state. While the U.S. Congress is out of session, a representative from Arkansas is calling for a nationwide ban on all basa.

NFI does not expect Congress to single out basa for increased testing. However, the increased focus on imported seafood could lead to further emergency rulings in other states.

In cooperation with NFI, the Global Aquaculture Alliance is informing members, affiliates, and international aquaculture producer associations regarding these concerns. It plans to continue alerting producers and others of similar market-related issues in an effort to assure seafood safety and prevent detentions and other trade problems.

Baltimore Sun Editorial: Bush Administration weakening of fisheries rules means extinction for water

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS [The Baltimore Sun] Editorial comment - August 23, 2005

Wiping out watermen

THE INDIVIDUAL waterman seems headed in the same direction as the family farmer and may well reach extinction first.

Both are being done in by huge industrial-style competitors that benefit from economies of scale. In the case of the watermen, though, the damage is even greater because giant fishing concerns are also wiping out the product.

In fact, the Bush administration has conceded the collapse of wild fish populations in U.S. coastal waters, with a proposal that fish farming be permitted in the zone from three miles to 200 miles offshore where most commercial fishermen have traditionally plied their trade. Plus, the proposal is designed in such a way - with no environmental safeguards - to ensure that whatever wild fish remain will be killed off in the process.

There is a better alternative to surrendering to this defeatism. But it requires the foresight and the ability to stand up to commercial concerns that think only of short-term profits no matter what the cost.

Stiff curbs on overfishing - locally, nationally, globally - could still reverse the trend for those species that remain, perhaps even including the self-employed waterman.

The devastation under way beneath the sea's surface is staggering. During the past 30 years, when the size and number of commercial fishing vessels grew dramatically, fish stocks declined at an even more impressive rate. The Atlantic cod, for which Cape Cod is named, is all but wiped out.

Further, large scale fishing can destroy marine habitats when, for instance, draggers scrape the ocean floor; and massive sweeps can be indiscriminate in killing species other than the one being fished.

The political difficulty of imposing fishing curbs was underscored when Virginia officials warned their state may balk at last week's decision by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to impose catch limits on menhaden. The bait fish is netted exclusively by a protein firm that employs 250 workers in the state.

Of eight such regional regulatory commissions in the country, only the one that oversees Alaska has been a successful manager of its fisheries - a feat attributed to fishing limits automatically imposed when a population declines below its target level.

Instead of moving to copy a program that works, the administration is proposing instead to weaken the authority of the regional commissions and to water down the definition of overfishing - all with the notion of sparing the fishing industry any pain.

And, if the fish disappear? No worries, the administration says. Fish farms will rise up to replace them. Trouble is, fish farms are polluters that require more wild fish for feed than they produce for the dinner table. They may soon be all that's left, but they should at least be properly managed to limit their environmental damage.

Overfishing is a problem throughout the world. But the United States is not exactly leading by example if it can't even save the individual waterman - the main species in whose interest it claims to act.

Philippines clears way for Vannamei shrimp imports, brood stocks may be available after one growth c

SEAFOOD.COM NEWS [BusinessWorld] August 23, 2005 ,by Beverly T. Natividad - Manila- The commercial culture and production of the non-native shrimp variety, Vannamei, may be under way as the government allows the initial importation of Vannamei brood stocks.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has resolved to allow the importation of the Pacific White shrimps, scientifically known as *Litopenaeus vannamei*, to determine if it is safe to culture for commercial production locally and overseas.

'The experimentation by the BFAR will resolve finally the Vannamei pros and cons,' said BFAR director Malcolm I. Sarmiento, Jr.

He said that under fisheries administrative order no. 207 issued in 2001, the government banned the importation of Vannamei fry due to concerns that the foreign stock could infect the local variety with the Taura syndrome virus.

But Mr. Sarmiento said that in recent years, stronger strains have been developed in the United States to produce pathogen-resistant shrimp varieties.

With this development, he said, they wanted to resume experimentation using shrimp brood stocks certified by the United States as pathogen-free.

'The Philippines is now conducting experiments to know whether [the vannamei shrimps] are safe to breed, grow and import. We will make sure that the experiments will have ideal and sanitary conditions because the experiments failed before due to

poor hygienic conditions and feeding regimes,' said Mr. Sarmiento.

He added that the BFAR will wait for about six months, or about one cycle, to grow to the brood stocks before it rules on the commercial production of the Vannamei.

Fisheries and Aquaculture Board president Lourdes R. Tanco noted how the shrimp productions in neighboring countries had soared with the culture of Vannamei effectively lowering local prices.