

Breaded Pangasius fillet with a European twist from OFCO



Developing a high-value product for export is an important demand that must be taken into serious consideration.

OFCO Sourcing Ltd. – is a French-owned trading company with its head office located in Ho Chi Minh City is a member of Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers (VASEP). One of its major arms aside from Quality Control is sourcing seafood export suppliers from Vietnam to

Cephalopods, etc. but the company's two main products are the Pangasius fillet and the Black Tiger Shrimp.

A few years ago, OFCO Sourcing **became not only as a bridge between** Vietnam seafood exporters and the overseas importers but also did a thorough analysis on the European seafood demand and now

overseas market - among them are the European countries, the company's main market.

From 1999 onwards, OFCO Sourcing had succeeded in marketing frozen Pangasius fillet to EU. The Company has established long-term business and stable relations between importers and distributors to this market and that of Asia.

The Company's aim is to promote Vietnam seafood transaction to Europe and offer expert advises to overseas market and to support Vietnamese factories in exporting their products worldwide.

OFCO Sourcing trade seafood items such as frozen Pangasius fillet, Shrimps, Clams,

sells Vietnam seafood to this essential market.

During a meeting with a journalist from "Thuong Mai Thuy San" a Seafood trading magazine, "Mr. Jean Charles Diener", Director of the company mentioned that OFCO Sourcing has succeeded in developing a new item – the Breaded Pangasius fillet with a European taste. This new product has been widely accepted by the French market and that the company has been given a go-ahead signal to proceed and produce in large quantities.

During the Vietnam Vietfish 2009 exhibit, OFCO Sourcing was very proud and introduced this new product during the fair and got good feedback from both customers and suppliers alike.

According to Mr. Diener, his company invested in a lot of time and money in order to create this new product that can satisfy the European palate and have succeeded with this kind of food which is easy-to-cook for the home. OFCO Sourcing tried-out many samples in France and after a few months, the company came up with a formula to produce a homogeneous product Originally, OFCO Sourcing did the breaded Pangasius fillet in France in order to stabilize and test the newly found formula and all of its technical processes. And after, in order to produce in big volumes and have a competitive production cost, OFCO Sourcing established the final processes with the factories here in Vietnam and ordered these factories to produce in large quantities.

Mr. Diener said the successful development of this new item came from his long-term experience and expertise in the seafood industry in Vietnam and his learning about the European taste. The Pangasius portion and fillet or even the breaded fillets are popular and a favorite food for all kinds of people from all walks of life, in the restaurants or on the streets. And Mr. Diener recognizes that Pangasius is a very suitable fish for these kinds of products.

Following his point that the strength of this fish needs to be promoted and reclaimed because of it being a boneless white-meat with a firm texture especially with a light smell and flavor can easily satisfy many cooking processes such as in a mixture of spice and starch... At the same time it is easy to cook, fry, grill, skewer, or even cook in microwave ovens... that suits well with the industrialized lifestyle in EU. Hence, OFCO Sourcing is determined to develop this item and most importantly the company's product had a real European flavour and style.

Mr. Diener also mentioned that the ingredient of the outside breading and the way how the breading was done in order for it to be stable and have a nice shape are the key factors for this new item since this is a pre-fried product.

Another factor that contributed to this great success is how OFCO Sourcing tried its very best to market and sold this new item in France. Even we could not know exactly the details of the said activity but we should learn how OFCO Sourcing spent a few months and did a lot of measures in order to convince and prove to the customer of the quality, food safety, sanitary in both farming and processing as well as the ideal



characteristics of the Pangasius fillet as one to replace the other white-meat fishes for breaded foods.

Mr. Diener believed that: “we have developed this product and if we continue to do well and have a good quality, then the rate of success is very high, because we have already seen this same situation in the Black Tiger Shrimp from Vietnam.”

Mr. Diener thought that Vietnamese factories would have saved a lot of money by doing more advertisement about their products. During 2008, OFCO Sourcing had invited some journalists from Europe to visit Vietnam as the magazine of “*Seafood International; Produit de la Mer; Conxemar;...*” in order to know and learn more about Vietnam's seafood and its real situation. Those magazines have agreed to fast track the trading for Pangasius. The investment of money, time and effort from OFCO Sourcing has brought effective and efficient results in marketing and advertising the product. OFCO Sourcing confirmed: “we have sold more products right after those activities.” However, Mr. Diener believed that controlling the quality and ensuring a

stable product are the two most important factors of being a supplier such as OFCO Sourcing.

I should think that the exporting volume is over 640.000 MT (2008) and most of them frozen fillet, but still production processes has more room to increase its quality standard. The successful OFCO Sourcing product advertisement are very significant in raising the quality and price as well as take full advantage of available materials and provide employment to the people. Furthermore, it is also a method to prevent the dumping rate of Pangasius fillet from Vietnam to EU.

Besides the breaded Pangasius with a European flavour, next year OFCO Sourcing has already devised a plan to develop the Vietnam White Shrimps to the European market. Promoting this new item and strengthening its advertisement to get large quantity orders is the next promising success for OFCO Sourcing and continuously be a part of the Vietnam Seafood's future.