

Pangasius the 'plat du jour' in schools

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A Vietnamese company will increase sales of a new breaded pangasius product to French school catering in 2010, and is ready to push into retail chains across Europe.

Pangasius prepared in the traditional French "meuniere," or breaded style, is being served in French schools across the country, supplied by Vietnamese firm OFCO, which plans to triple its shipments by mid-2010.

"We are selling over 10 metric tons per month but we should quickly, by middle of 2010, reach around 30 metric tons per month for this market," Director Jean-Charles Diener told **IntraFish**.

The company is ready to sell the breaded product into both catering and retail sectors in the United Kingdom, Diener said, and the firm is eyeing listing the product in the German market, though said the formula may need to be altered to suit the German market. This would be a second step after the push into the U.K.

OFCO, a supplier and processor of pangasius, sole, clams and shrimp among other species, began sending Vietnamese pangasius fillets to France in early 2009 to be processed by the wholesaler firm.

Production switched back to Vietnam for both pangasius and sole products, meaning the firm keeps the added value of the breaded product.

Expandable output

The company could "easily produce 60 metric tons per month" if demand within school catering increases, Diener said. Beyond this, for instance if the product went into mass catering or retail in France or elsewhere, "we will have to invest in more equipment."

Pangasius products are growing solely in France, but introducing the fish into schools could give the sector a boost and attract a younger audience.

Young's Seafood introduced the United Kingdom's first branded, value-added pangasius product in the second quarter of 2007, basa Goujons with lime and ginger. Since then the firm has released a battered pangasius fillet as part of its "Chip Shop" range.



The breaded product could hit retail stores in the United Kingdom and Germany in future.

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