

"Cheap price is already the problem!"

That is a comment of Jean-Charles Diener - Director of OFCO Sourcing Vietnam (an enterprise supplying seafood from Vietnam to international markets) about Vietnam pangasius.

Could you please briefly introduce about OFCO Sourcing Company and yourself?

OFCO provides services to worldwide seafood buyers on their purchase from Vietnam and we promote Vietnamese seafood worldwide. We do not trade seafood but we offer consultancies and inspection services. We also support Vietnamese seafood suppliers to promote and export their product and OFCO Database (www.ofcodatabase.info) is the perfect example. On OFCO Database, Vietnamese suppliers can register their company, upload pictures of their product and correspond (/chat) directly with potential buyers. OFCO Database is the best way for Vietnamese seafood suppliers to find and to be found by buyers!

Do you like Vietnam Pangasius? Why?

I liked Pangasius since the first time I discover this species 14 years ago... That is the perfect farmed species for the world today.

Worldwide demand for animal protein should increase by 70% from now to 2050 according to FAO latest information and traditional farming can't supply this fast increase demand.

Fish farming is "THE" solution and Pangasius with its low negative environmental impact is actually the best candidate. Insect farming present also some great advantages but culturally not widely accepted as food.

How do you appreciate about quality and price of Vietnam Pangasius in the European market in particular and the world market in general?

I do not appreciate it!

The quality is slightly but constantly reducing since two years and the prices are too cheap for European but also for many countries in the world. Seafood buyers

themselves are losing interest buying Pangasius because it's too cheap and their possible margin is not significant enough. The actual cheap prices are not, as many suppliers still believe, the solution to impose Pangasius to the world and the correct response to fight the bad propaganda! Paradoxically, with higher prices, the market for Pangasius should expand.

Species like Pangasius can be the solution to many worldwide problems but because of Pangasius inherent qualities, this fish competes too strongly against other seafood. To fight back, fisheries industry around the world develop bad and false propaganda to beat Pangasius whereas Vietnamese suppliers compromise on quality to reduce even further the price to become more aggressive on the market thus creating an unhealthy competition. This has become a "cycle" that must stop and Vietnamese suppliers must find efficient responses to these propaganda and rebuild the reputation of Pangasius.

Why Vietnam Pangasius must to face the trade barriers and smear campaigns consecutively from many countries? Is this due to the low price in the market?

Yes, the low price is one of the main problems and without better cooperation in Vietnam between seafood processors themselves and with VASEP, the situation won't improve.

Also, Vietnamese processor should improve their sales strategy: Pangasius farming and processing are very good but the sale is not.

Pangasius is a great item and probably the best fish in the world for several aspects. But if nothing is done quickly, the quality of this fish itself will achieve to destroy its reputation and kill its enormous



Vietnamese processor should improve their sales strategy

Photo: Minh Sang

potential. Vietnam should be more careful and united to protect better the future of this great Pangasius industry.

Could you point out to the reasons why Vietnam Pangasius holds 90 percent of global market share, but does not have rights to decide selling prices as well as markets?

The market decides the price and so, Vietnamese Pangasius same as all products "should" depend of the worldwide trend. But if Vietnam can't alone decide the selling price for Pangasius as you suggest; neither the worldwide trend for white fillet does it which is not normal. Vietnamese Pangasius seems 'out of the worldwide market' and prices are lower that it should be which create all this tension around Pangasius that we observe.

Vietnamese suppliers should fix the market price according to the worldwide trend for white fish fillet and not just try to get cheaper that their direct neighbor!

With so many companies offering Pangasius and the lack of communication between them plus the actual confusion regarding Pangasius standard and specification, Vietnamese suppliers can't apparently fix this price alone. Association as the VASEP should help to fix the "correct price"

which should after be imposed by the government.

What measures should be carried out in the coming times to help Vietnam Pangasius enhance its image in the world markets?

There are three steps that I believe essential to restore the image of Pangasius industry:

1. Fix a minimum export price

Vietnamese should stop reducing the price, because the very cheap price is already the problem!

2. Be more confident with Pangasius product and develop efficient marketing strategy

Pangasius fillet can be a very good product and Vietnamese should be confident with their product!

3. Increase the nutritional quality

Pangasius is sold in most of the markets around the world despite the poor nutritional quality of Pangasius fillet!

For these three steps to happen, Vietnamese seafood exporters must find a representative, an ambassador for Pangasius, who have the strong motivation, authority and fund to push the idea through.

Thank you!

Conducted by HONG THAM

>> "Pangasius is a great item and probably the best fish in the world for several aspects", Jean-Charles Diener said.