



PRESS RELEASE

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On May 24, 2010, the Catfish Farmers of America (CFA) launched a website www.safecatfish.com attacking the integrity of catfish and pangasius imported from Vietnam. This amounts to unfair competition by the American catfish farmers against Vietnamese pangasius farmers and processors.

The Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers (VASEP) has strongly protested the false and misleading information about Vietnamese pangasius posted on the CFA website.

In fact, Vietnamese farmers no longer raise pangasius in floating cages in the Mekong River, but in earthen farming ponds which meet SQF1000 standards and other international standards for stringent hygiene and safety assurance. Currently, Vietnamese pangasius enterprises have developed an integrated production chain to ensure quality control and food safety “from-farm-to-table”. More and more pangasius farming areas in Vietnam have been granted Global GAP certifications, ensuring the cleanest and safest farming conditions. Vietnamese pangasius products, which have been exported to over 120 countries and territories in the world, meet the stringent quality standards in force in the EU, Australia, the US and Japan, etc...

The National Agro-Forestry-Fisheries Quality Assurance Department (NAFIQAD) - the Vietnamese Competent Authority in charge of food hygiene and safety of fishery products – reported that as a result of the frequent monitoring and observation since 2004 conducted by the Center for Environmental Monitoring under the Program for Environmental Monitoring and Observation for Aquaculture in the Mekong River basin, the parameters for water quality are within the threshold and meet the standards for fresh water fish farming.

Since 1999, NAFIQAD has deployed a program for inspecting toxic chemical residue in farmed seafood which has been working effectively. This program has been inspected and highly commended for its regulatory system and practical control functions by the competent governmental agencies in the EU, the US, and Canada that regulate seafood quality.

VASEP has also strongly protested the CFA’s redefinition of “catfish” to include Vietnamese pangasius and attempt to impose more restrictions for the entry of pangasius into the US. Ironically, eight years ago the CFA itself lobbied US Congress to pass the Farm Bill in 2002 which stipulated that only US catfish belonging to the *Ictaluridae* family can be labeled as “catfish”. Now, the CFA has reversed its position.

VASEP implores the CFA to redact the clearly false information about Vietnamese pangasius posted on its website, and cease its activities which violate the spirit and substance of trade agreements between the U.S. and Vietnam. Only objective and accurate information should be used by the CFA in order to ensure US consumers’ legitimate rights and not to cause adverse impacts to good relations between our two countries.

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