



MOAC Faces Challenges on Trade after Covid – 19 Preventive Measures Need to be Strengthened in All Dimensions



It is not possible that COVID – 19 virus would penetrate into the tissues of poultry, shrimp, fish, egg or even fruits and vegetables. Contamination is most likely caused by direct contact with infected persons or from inhalation of virus floating in the air. In case of Thai durian found to be contaminated by the virus, it was subsequently proved not to cause by Thai supply chain.

Mr. Thongplew Kongchan, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC) said that trade challenges after COVID are very crucial. There will be a lot of rules and regulations imposed by importing countries to follow. The main concern would be the enforcement of even more restricted safety measures. MOAC needs to strengthen its preventive measures in all aspects of agricultural production. These will ensure confidence in quality and safety of Thai agricultural commodities among domestic and international consumers.

Starting from the production, the farmers themselves shall properly manage their farming practice. Farm areas must be thoroughly cleansed. There shall be measures and surveillance programs established for produce packing houses, workers and transporters. Sanitizers must be applied from

orchards through to transportation system. Local government officers shall be assigned to station in the area. Inspectors from Department of Agriculture (DOA) will monitor at packing facilities to ensure compliance with respective measures. GAP (Good Agricultural Practice) certificates and pest control programs will be verified prior to issuance of Phytosanitary Certificates. The principles and guideline of World Health Organization (WHO) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) must be strictly followed.

For livestock, Department of Livestock Development (DLD) will cooperate with Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), concerned local government authorities and processors to ensure the implementation of COVID – 19 measures in meat processing facilities. Health and safety must be effectively controlled. Samples are drawn for monitoring purposes. If there is a risk of contamination, DLD will immediately prohibit the distribution and export. In a factory with defined boundary, if a worker is found infected, he or she shall be immediately segregated and quarantined in a designated area. This Bubble and Seal measure is applied to intensify the monitoring program in order to contain the virus and prevent possible contamination.

For fishery products, Department of Fisheries (DOF) has tightened its inspection and sanitary control starting from fishing vessels. Aquaculture must comply with Good Aquaculture Practice (GAP). Fishery products for export shall be controlled for quality and safety throughout the production chain, from raw material at plants, processing through to packing in accordance with Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP). These will ensure the quality control system of the plants and products are meeting international standards.

DOF has collaborated with fishery manufacturers in establishing measures to control the spread of COVID – 19 among workers. Concerned and necessary MOPH guideline as well as Bubble and Seal principles are adhered to.

The control activities are not only applied to products exported to China, but also to all other markets. The case detected and warned by China is a lesson to be learnt and further analyzed to identified appropriate solutions. Future problems shall be determined to prepare for adverse effects in advance.

Mr. Thongplew also mentioned that he has instructed the Offices of Agricultural Affairs to collaborate with Offices of Commercial Affairs to assure concerned authorities in their respective foreign countries of Thailand's manufacturing standard and control programs. Thai agriculture commodities are absolutely free from COVID-19 from farm to fork. There has been no detection of COVID-19 contamination so far. He urged the processors to strictly monitor, control and prevent the contamination even more. If contamination is detected during processing, MOAC and concerned agencies from MOPH, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Labor as well as the processors shall collaborate to trace back and identify the root cause of the problem. Corrective actions shall be implemented immediately.

“From now on, random inspection for products for export will be increased to exceed the rate specified in the protocol of each individual country. For example, a sampling rate of 3% for longan as imposed by China will be voluntary increased to 10%. This is to ensure importer and consumer's confidence. Who was to blame for the past (COVID – 19 infection) incident? The issue shall not happen again.” Mr. Thongplew concluded.

These are challenges to be faced by MOAC in order to strengthen the preventive measures for contamination in agricultural system as a whole. The goal is to maintain the global export markets of Thai agricultural commodities in a sustainable manner in the future.

Source: <https://siamrath.co.th/n/274678>

Tentative translation by Office of Agricultural Affairs, Washington D.C.

October 2021