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EU lifts Benin shrimp ban

Cotonou, Benin, 1 February 2005



On 1 February 2005, the Government of Benin announced the lifting of the ban on shrimp exports to EU

In July 2003, a ban was placed on the export of shrimp from Benin to the European Union. In August 2004, EU representatives in Benin requested EU headquarters that the auto-suspension status be reviewed. An EU mission was in Benin by the end of 2004 and carried out their evaluation. They recommended that the auto suspension be lifted. On 1 February 2005, the Government of Benin announced the lifting of the ban.

The story of the lifting of the export ban goes back to early 2003 when the focus of the EU - UNIDO - UEMOA Quality Programme was extended to fish. Initially, the focus was on food processing. The Programme, launched in September 2001 as part of the UNIDO Trade Capacity Building Initiative, assists with the establishment and / or strengthening of institutional and human capacities in:

laboratory accreditation; the development of product and material testing laboratories (chemical, microbiology etc.) according to international standards; standards formulation, adoption and dissemination; the development and implementation of quality policies; instituting quality awards; and the development of consumer protection laws and associations.

The situation analysis of the UEMOA countries undertaken at the beginning of the programme revealed that none of the eight UEMOA countries had accreditation bodies, and the quality and conformity assessment infrastructure that did exist was in a precarious situation. Testing laboratories did not comply with international standards and health and safety regulations. Only one laboratory was accredited to [ISO 17025](#). Most companies in the region did not follow any production standards and only 23 of them (all located in only three of the eight UEMOA countries) were certified to ISO 9001. There was no regional harmonization of standards. Standards bodies in six countries were encountering functional problems and could not provide local industry with access to international standards. Needless to say, a culture of quality was missing in the region. The auto-suspension in July 2003 of shrimp exports from Benin to the EU underscores the consequences of these shortcomings.

The lifting of the ban was due to a large extent to the work carried out during 2003 and 2004, which included: training of the inspectors of the Benin Fish Management and Breeding Authority in the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points ([HACCP](#)) approach to food safety; training of managers and establishment of HACCP in fish exporting plants; upgrading of three laboratories: the Lab. Des Sciences du sol, Eaux et Environnement; the Lab. National de la Sante Publique; and the Lab. De la Direction de l'Alimentation et de la Nutrition Applique laboratories.

A recent survey reported that the shrimp sub-sector in Benin, the main export affected by the ban, recorded a deficit of 1.6 billion CFA (Euro 2.4 million) following the halt in exports to Europe. Some 90,000 people are involved directly in the fishing industry in Benin; 9,000 in shrimp export. It has been estimated that indirectly 350,000 livelihoods depend on the fish industry.

By January 2006 the EU will require that laboratories in fish exporting countries have to be accredited and the EU-UNIDO-UEMOA team is working hard to see that at least one laboratory achieves that status by the end of 2005.

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