



PAKISTAN:

EU markets resume imports of fishery products from Pakistan: A boost for fish and seafood exports

Context

Pakistan is endowed with fishery resources that have an immense potential to contribute to economic growth, and largely untapped possibilities for value added fishery products. The fishery sector has been the primary source of rural income for generations and currently directly employs over one million people. Fish and fishery products are also an important source of export revenue, the European Union (EU) being an especially important market.

However, the fishery sector suffered a major setback in 2007 when the EU identified numerous contamination risks in the fishery supply chain. As a result, a ban was imposed curtailing fish and seafood exports from Pakistan. The primary reasons cited were inadequate hygiene and food safety, in particular the lack of traceability records, cold chain deficiencies in seafood production, as well as unhygienic conditions on fishing vessels.

Main approach

To help revive Pakistan's fishery exports, UNIDO is implementing two successive trade-related technical assistance programmes (TRTA I and TRTA II), funded by the EU, which include activities aimed at improving hygiene standards, quality management and traceability along the fishery supply chain.

The project assisted the Marine Fisheries Department (MFD) — the competent authority for seafood exports — in applying Sanitation Standard Operating Procedure (SSOP), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), and cold chain procedures along the supply chain. In addition, the project trained processing plant technicians and inspectors of the Karachi Fisheries Harbour Authority in maintaining traceability records and implementing HACCP plans. Fishermen, boat owners and mole-holders have also been trained in hygienic handling of the catch, renovation of fishing vessels and the use of potable water for icing.

Furthermore, to ensure compliance with the appropriate procedures and guidelines, the project developed a comprehensive inspection manual in collaboration with the MFD to monitor fishing and freezer vessels, as well as the processing and storing of fish and fishery products in accordance with standard food safety and hygiene norms.

Impact and results

Over 2,000 Pakistani fishing boats and trawlers were upgraded at the owners' cost to ensure compliance with hygiene standards. The project also helped improve the management capacity of fish harbour facilities and install traceability scanning systems in processing plants to conform to EU traceability requirements. In parallel, following TRTA recommendations, the Government invested more than USD 800,000 in the renovation of fish auction halls and fishing vessels to improve quality control.

As a result of these improvements, on 12 March 2013, the EU lifted the six-year import ban on fishery products from Pakistan and, as an initial step, resumed imports from two seafood companies. Roughly 80 consignments were shipped to various EU destinations since March 2013, valued at USD 8 million. Exports to non-EU international markets have increased as well.

Three additional processing plants are on their way to obtaining EU approval, which will result in substantial gains from fishery exports over the next two to five years. The revitalized fishery sector will improve the livelihoods of Pakistani fishermen and significantly contribute to the country's overall economic growth.

At a glance

Project title: Trade-related technical assistance programme (I and II)
Donor: European Union
Budget: EUR 11,395,000 (TRTA II extended)
Thematic areas: Food safety, fisheries development, laboratory accreditation, metrology, quality, standardization, testing
Other technical areas: Trade policy, intellectual property rights