



Vietnamese Seafood Export Enterprises Under the Impact of Rules of Origin in the Vietnam-Eu free Trade Agreement: Development Principles and Solutions

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Abstract

The Vietnam - EU Free Trade Agreement officially took effect from August 1, 2020 and has had many strong impacts on the import and export of goods in general and seafood exports in particular of Vietnam. The rules of origin in this trade agreement are considered important content, determining whether Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises can enjoy the incentives of the agreement or not. In fact, the rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU Free Trade Agreement have had a significant impact on Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises, significantly changing the exploitation, processing and export activities of seafood enterprises. Through analyzing actual data and surveying active seafood exporting enterprises, the article focuses on assessing the general impacts of the rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement on Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises, pointing out the principles for developing Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises and proposing some solutions to contribute to the development of Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises under the impact of the rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement.

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1. Introduction

In the context of growing liberalization, the emergence of free trade agreements is becoming more and more popular and has a strong impact on the international trade activities of many countries. The Vietnam - EU Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) is the first new generation free trade agreement between Vietnam and the EU. This is a comprehensive trade agreement and has a strong impact on the economic interests of both Vietnam and the EU. In particular, the rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement are considered to have the strongest impact on Vietnam's seafood exports. When the agreement comes into effect, Vietnamese exporting enterprises will enjoy many great incentives from the rules of origin. However, to enjoy these incentives, meeting the standards of the rules of origin is not an easy task for Vietnamese seafood enterprises today. The question is, what principles do Vietnamese exporting enterprises need to follow to take advantage of the preferential rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement? What are the effective solutions to contribute to the development of Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises in the context of the implementation of the EVFTA? The article will focus on clarifying these issues.

2. Overview and research method

2.1. Overview of research situation

Trade liberalization is a trade policy that originated in the 18th century in England and has been increasingly accepted by many countries around the world. Initially, trade liberalization was seen as a measure for developed countries to expand their markets abroad and strengthen their position in the world market. Since World War II, the trend of expanding specialization and international cooperation has grown strongly, trade liberalization has been responded to by many countries and has become an inevitable trend in the development of international trade of countries (Dani Rodrik, 2018). The strong development of trade liberalization inevitably leads to the birth of a series of free trade agreements. Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are agreements between two or more countries designed and signed to reduce or eliminate certain barriers to trade and investment, and to

facilitate the development of stronger international trade relations between countries (Swarnali Ahmed Hannan, 2016). The more the world economy in general and international trade in particular develop, the more trade agreements with more open designs and more diverse contents.

Rules of Origin (ROO) are criteria applied to determine where a product is produced. According to Stefano Inama and Pramila Crivelli, 2018, rules of origin are fundamental to trade laws because there are a number of measures that lead to discrimination between exporting countries: quotas, tariffs, preferences, anti-dumping measures, countervailing duties, etc. In the process of implementing agreements, rules of origin are extremely necessary criteria for businesses participating in international trade activities, understood as a set of necessary criteria to ensure the identification of the origin of goods (Kiyoyasu Tanaka, 2021).

The Vietnam - EU Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) is the first new generation free trade agreement that Vietnam has signed with the EU (Nguyen Thu Hanh, 2014). This is an agreement with extensive and comprehensive commitments, strongly affecting Vietnam's exports in general and Vietnam's seafood exports in particular (Nguyen Thi Hoai Thu, 2022). Since the EVFTA came into effect, Vietnam's seafood industry is considered to be the industry that has benefited the most, from market expansion, increased export turnover, and diversification of seafood export products.. (Chu Tien Minh, 2022).

Fisheries enterprises are enterprises and cooperatives that exploit marine and inland aquatic products; raise marine and inland aquatic products; produce breeds; process and preserve aquatic products and fish products (Mai Thi Dieu Hang, 2022). Seafood exporting enterprises include enterprises whose business activities are related to the production, purchase and sale and export of products from aquatic resources; processed aquatic products such as dried fish, dried squid, fresh shrimp, fresh squid, kaolin, fish sauce, fish sauce and other related products. Seafood exporting enterprises include: aquatic exploitation enterprises and aquatic product exporting enterprises. According to UNCTAD (2017), seafood exporting enterprises play an important role in the socio-economic development of each country. However, due to the industry's characteristics that depend heavily on geographical location and climate characteristics, most seafood exporting enterprises in countries around the world, especially developing countries, are small and medium-sized enterprises with small capital (Béné *et al.*, 2010). According to information from VTV Vietnam News Department, up to 80% of Vietnamese seafood enterprises are small and medium-sized enterprises with small capital, depending largely on bank loans. This causes certain difficulties for seafood exporting enterprises in investing in equipment to improve the quality of exported seafood as well as improve their competitiveness in the international market. Therefore, research on the principles of developing Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises under the impact of the rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement is still a gap that needs to be continued for future research.

2.2. Research method

The main research method of the article is qualitative, combined with statistics, description, and analysis of

secondary data to assess the general impact of the rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement on Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises. The author also collects non-experimental data through a system of questions in the questionnaire and survey. Specifically:

- Regarding the content of the survey: the questionnaire for the survey will be designed around the assessment of the impact of the rules of origin in the EVFTA agreement on seafood export activities, thereby proposing solutions to develop Vietnam's seafood exports in the coming time.
- Regarding the number of questionnaires, the author conducted 200 survey forms corresponding to 2 groups of Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises, including aquaculture and seafood exploitation enterprises for export and seafood exporting enterprises.
- Regarding the principles of constructing the survey form: the questions are clearly constructed, emphasizing important keywords. The questionnaire is designed with 2 forms corresponding to 2 groups of surveyed enterprises. The collected results are reliable practical data that help the author assess the impact of the rules of origin in the EVFTA agreement on Vietnam's seafood exports. On that basis, build a set of principles for developing Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises under the impact of the rules of origin in the EVFTA agreement.

3. Results

3.1. General assessment of the impact of rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement on Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises

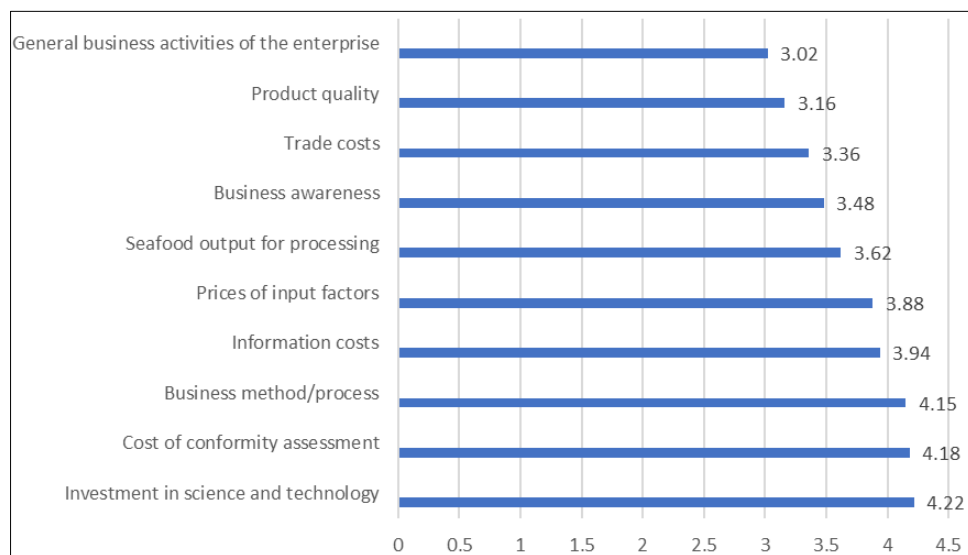
3.1.1. Impact on fishing and aquaculture enterprises

The EVFTA trade agreement is considered to bring the greatest benefits to the seafood industry in general and to seafood exporting/exporting-serving enterprises in particular. In particular, the rules of origin in this agreement are the most important factor helping seafood enterprises to make the most of the incentives brought by EVFTA. The rules of origin have a significant impact on the total seafood export output, seafood import-export turnover, the structure and types of seafood exports as well as having certain impacts on the operations of seafood exporting enterprises. Therefore, in order for enterprises to benefit from the incentives brought by EVFTA, seafood enterprises in general need to be well prepared and make great efforts to meet the regulations of the rules of origin. Due to the goal of meeting the demand from import markets, Vietnamese aquaculture, exploitation and seafood processing enterprises often focus on a number of key products such as shrimp, pangasius, tuna, mollusks, crabs, etc. Although the EU market promises a lot of development potential for Vietnam's seafood exports, this is a demanding market. Therefore, in order to serve the export of seafood products to this market, especially to meet the requirements of the rules of origin in the EVFTA agreement, Vietnamese aquaculture, exploitation and seafood processing enterprises must pay attention to basic issues such as: traceability of origin, quality standards of exported seafood, ensuring requirements for controlled fishing declaration; ensuring environmental requirements during seafood processing; ensuring requirements for raw materials for aquaculture and ensuring technical requirements for seafood exploitation.

Survey results of 53 aquaculture, exploitation and seafood processing enterprises show that ensuring environmental requirements during seafood processing is the criterion that enterprises are most likely to meet, achieving an average score of 3.91/5 points, of which 13/53 enterprises (accounting for 24.5%) are likely to meet this criterion "very well". However, the rate Purchasing and processing enterprises "limitedly meet" export requirements. The criteria for aquatic products for businesses still appear in the criteria of Ensuring requirements for aquatic product exploitation (9.5%); Ensuring requirements for declaration of controlled fishing (7.4%) and Traceability of origin (5.7%). Among the requirements for seafood production for export, the requirement of Ensuring raw material requirements for aquaculture is at the lowest rating (2.88/5 points). Other requirements such as: export seafood quality standards (3.98/5 points); traceability original (3.04/5 points); Ensuring technical requirements for aquatic exploitation (3.67/5 points); Ensuring requirements for controlled fishing declaration (3.35/5 points). Survey results shows that many Vietnamese aquaculture, exploitation and seafood processing enterprises have not yet met the criteria to ensure seafood production for export. This shows that in order for Vietnamese seafood exports to penetrate the EU market and enjoy the benefits from the rules of origin in the EVFTA, seafood exporting enterprises in general and Vietnamese aquaculture, exploitation and seafood processing enterprises in particular need to make more efforts to overcome barriers, especially barriers from trade policies and especially the rules of origin from this large market. To do that, information related to the EU market, especially the content of the EVFTA trade agreement, needs to be widely disseminated to

businesses. When asked about "How interested is your business in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement?", 16/53 surveyed businesses have researched it quite thoroughly (30.19%); 22/53 businesses have researched some information (41.5%); 11/53 businesses answered that they have heard but have not researched anything (20.75%); 4/53 surveyed businesses answered that this was the first time they heard about this agreement, accounting for 7.55%.

When the EVFTA comes into effect, the rules of origin are the factors that cause the most impact on Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises in general. For Vietnamese seafood farming, exploitation and processing enterprises, the technical measures and sanitary and phytosanitary measures in the rules of origin of the EVFTA free trade agreement have a great impact on seafood production activities for export. The survey results show that the most impacted factor is investment in science and technology of seafood farming, exploitation and processing enterprises (impact level is 4.22/5 points), followed by the cost of conformity assessment (related to certification, inspection) with an impact level of 4.18/5 points and the business methods/processes of enterprises with an impact level of 4.15/5 points. Information costs and input prices are clearly affected with impact levels of 3.94/5 points and 3.88/5 points, respectively. The impact level of this criterion on business awareness is 3.48/5 points. The impact level on general business activities of businesses is 3.02/5 points. The chart below summarizes the survey results of 53 businesses on the impact level of technical measures and sanitary and phytosanitary measures in the rules of origin of the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement on Exploitation, farming and processing activities of seafood enterprises:



(Source: Author's survey)

Fig 1: Impact level of technical measures and sanitary and phytosanitary measures on Activities of enterprises exploiting, farming and processing aquatic products

Thus, the survey results show the impact level of technical measures and sanitary and phytosanitary measures in the rules of origin of the EVFTA agreement on The exploitation, farming and processing activities of seafood enterprises are quite large, especially for investment activities in science and technology, costs related to certification, inspection and business methods/processes of enterprises. Therefore,

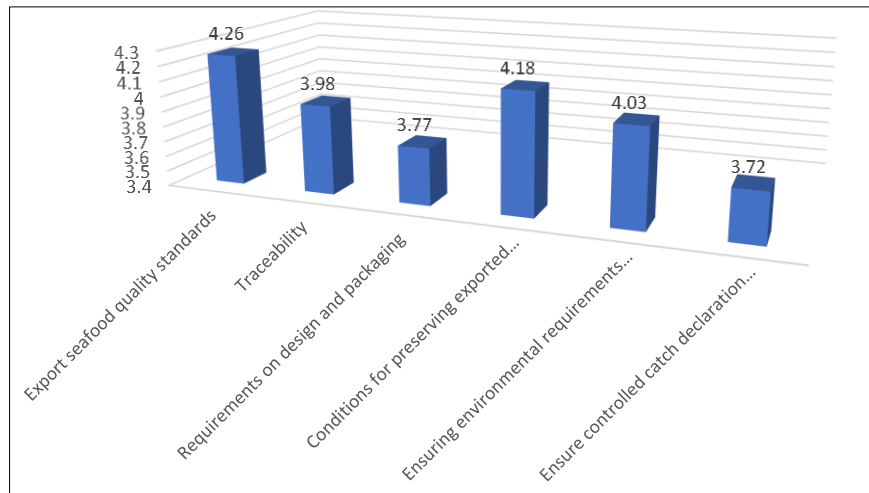
Vietnamese aquaculture, fishing and processing enterprises need to pay more attention to these criteria to better meet market requirements. In fact, in recent years, Vietnamese aquaculture, fishing and processing enterprises have invested a lot in technological innovation from fishing equipment for exploitation, cages, breeding technology, raw materials/feed, aquaculture environment treatment to processing technology.

3.1.2. Impact on seafood processing and exporting enterprises

To see the impact of rules of origin on the benefits of Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises, it is necessary to first assess the impact of rules of origin on seafood exporting enterprises. The survey results of 54 Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises show the following results:

Firstly, on the ability to meet the requirements for exported seafood during the processing and exporting process of the

enterprise. Most enterprises are at the level of "meeting" and "meeting well" the criteria given in the survey. Specifically, when asked: "How capable is your enterprise of meeting the requirements for exported seafood during the processing and exporting process?", the Export Seafood Quality Standards and Export Seafood Preservation Conditions are the two criteria that are met with the highest scores, respectively 4.26/5 points and 4.18/5 points.



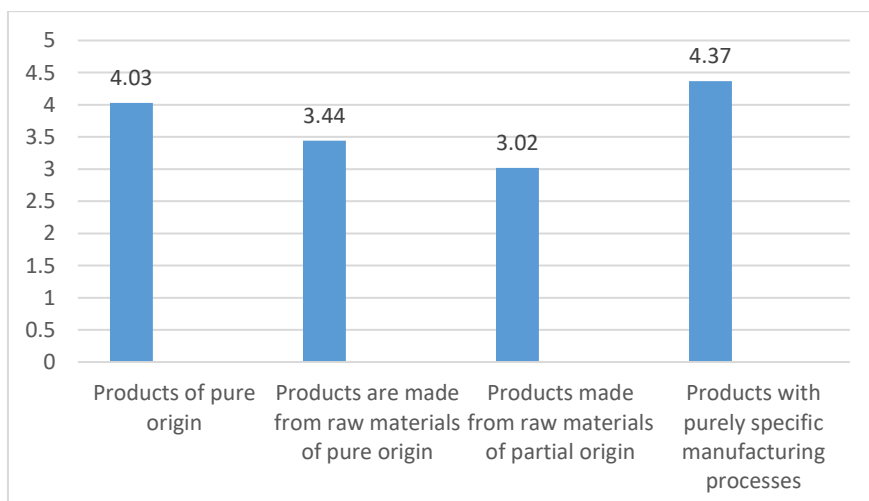
(Source: Author's survey)

Fig 2: Ability to meet requirements for exported seafood during processing and exporting of enterprises

Requirements on design, packaging and Ensuring controllable catch declaration requirements are two criteria with lower response levels than the remaining criteria, reaching 3.77/5 points and 3.72/5 points respectively. However, this is also a fairly good response level. This shows that in recent years, Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises have made significant improvements to market requirements, increasing both output and export value of Vietnamese seafood. To better meet these requirements, Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises need to invest in research to innovate designs, packaging and especially regulations in ensuring controllable catch declaration requirements, ensuring transparency in traceability of exported seafood.

Monday, on the level of awareness of enterprises with the

rules of origin of the EVFTA trade agreement. The level of awareness of Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises with the rules of origin in the EVFTA agreement ranges from 3.02 to 4.37. In which, Products with a specific production process are purely the criteria that many enterprises know and have a good level of satisfaction (23/54 enterprises). However, criteria such as Products with pure origin, Products made from materials with pure origin and Products made from materials with partial origin are only at the level of knowing but not meeting or meeting in a limited way. Up to 53.7% of surveyed enterprises said that their enterprises know but meet in a limited way the criteria of Products made from materials with partial origin while only 18.5% of enterprises responded that they can meet this criterion well.



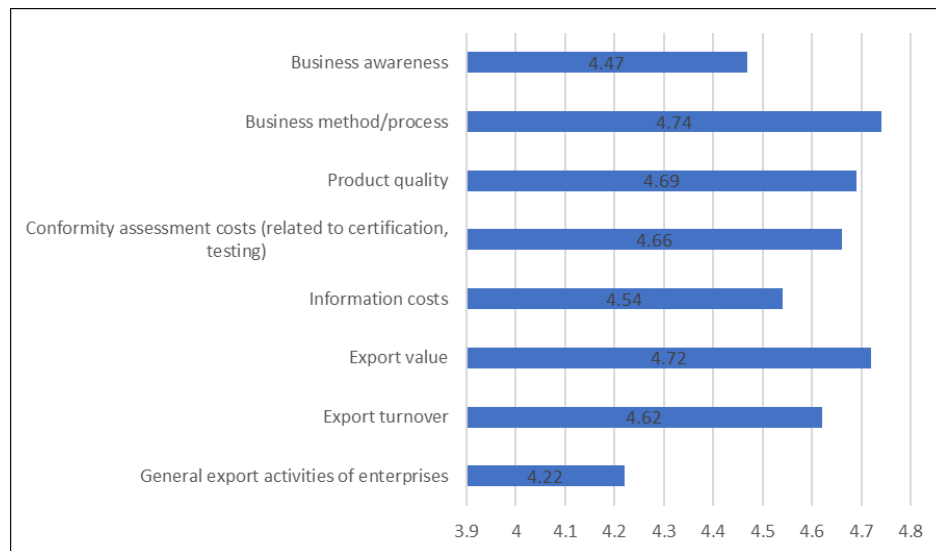
(Source: Author's survey)

Fig 3: Level of awareness of businesses with the rules of origin of the EVFTA trade agreement

The survey results show that most seafood exporting enterprises have a certain awareness of the rules of origin in the EVFTA agreement, but the level of compliance is still quite limited. Therefore, in order for Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises to take advantage of the incentives from these rules of origin, seafood exporting enterprises need to focus more on improving their ability to meet the requirements of the rules of origin.

Third, on the impact of the rules of origin in the EVFTA trade agreement on the operations of seafood exporting enterprises.

When asked “What is your assessment of the impact of the rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement on specific business activities?”, most businesses said that the rules of origin in the EVFTA trade agreement have a strong impact on the business method/process and export value of the enterprise. Specifically, up to 34/54 seafood exporting enterprises (accounting for 83.3%) said that this rule of origin has the greatest impact on their business method/process. The value of exported seafood also changed significantly.



(Source: Author's survey)

Fig 4: Impact of rules of origin in the EVFTA trade agreement on the operations of seafood exporting enterprises

The impact level of the rules of origin in the EVFTA agreement on the business methods/processes of seafood exporting enterprises reached 4.74/5 points. Obviously, the impact level is very large. This shows that, to ensure benefits when participating in the EVFTA trade agreement, enterprises need to make efforts to further improve their ability to meet the rules of origin.

The main reason is that the EVFTA agreement has a great impact on all international trade activities in general and especially on the seafood industry and seafood exports of Vietnam in particular. In addition to the incentives that this Agreement brings to help Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises increase their benefits, correctly understanding and fully meeting the requirements of the Agreement in general and the requirements of the rules of origin in the Agreement in particular are really big challenges, requiring Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises to constantly strive and improve further.

3.2. Principles for developing Vietnamese seafood export enterprises under the impact of rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement

The development of seafood export enterprises in Vietnam needs to thoroughly grasp the following principles:

Firstly, developing seafood export enterprises must solve the problem of quality of exported seafood. The quality of seafood products is considered the most important issue for export enterprises. Therefore, developing seafood export enterprises must pay top attention to ensuring the quality of exported products. Each export enterprise must start from a strong product, truly build its own brand for its strong product, and ensure that it meets the high quality criteria in

aquaculture, processing and exporting seafood.

Second, developing seafood export enterprises must solve market problems. In addition to ensuring product quality, it is extremely important to develop and expand markets, exploit potential markets in addition to traditional markets to ensure the diversity of export markets, avoiding over-reliance on one market. Enterprises need to focus long-term on their ecosystem, affirming brand value towards sustainable development. In addition, focusing on brand promotion, boosting trade promotion, and building trustworthy relationships with international partners is extremely necessary. In addition, developing seafood export enterprises also needs to take advantage of government support policies, especially credit and tax policies to improve production efficiency, build and develop linkage chains in exploitation, farming, processing and exporting seafood.

Third, developing seafood export enterprises must solve the problem of capital and technology. Capital and technology are the core issues for developing strong seafood enterprises in the current context. Seafood export enterprises need to optimize financial management, diversify capital sources, and funding, along with establishing good relationships with financial institutions and banks to ensure optimal capital for development. In addition, to develop seafood export enterprises (directly or indirectly), it is necessary to invest in technological innovation, from seafood exploitation technology, environmental treatment technology in aquaculture, technology in production (seedlings, raw materials), seafood processing technology, preservation technology, packaging and transportation of exported seafood products.. to ensure the quality of exported products. Fourth, developing seafood export enterprises must address

the issue of enterprises' awareness of rules of origin as well as the system of international rules for exported seafood products. Developing strong seafood export enterprises requires a deep understanding of rules of origin as well as the system of international rules for exported products. Seafood export enterprises must have a methodical and professional seafood export process, from preparing and checking export goods sources; preparing documents and papers for customs procedures for exported seafood shipments to customs notification and customs clearance for exported seafood shipments. In addition, enterprises also need to be flexible, constantly updating international standards on exploitation, farming, processing and exporting seafood to make appropriate changes.

3.3. Solutions to contribute to business development Vietnam's seafood exports under the impact of rules of origin in the Vietnam - EU free trade agreement

3.3.1. Opportunities and challenges for Vietnam's seafood exports in the context of the EVFTA agreement coming into effect

Opportunity

Firstly, expanding the market. The EU is one of the second largest seafood export markets of Vietnam with an average seafood import demand of 50 billion USD/year. When the EVFTA is signed, Vietnamese goods in general and Vietnamese seafood in particular will receive many preferential commitments on tariffs and import quotas, thereby improving competitiveness and creating conditions to penetrate deeper into the EU market.

Second, tariff incentives, improving competitiveness. EVFTA brings opportunities for Vietnamese seafood to enjoy tax incentives when 50% of tax lines will be 0% in 2020 and about 220 tax lines of seafood products have a basic tax rate of 0-22%, the remaining tax lines will be reduced to 0% according to a 3-7year roadmap including main products such as shrimp, tuna, squid and octopus (VASEP, 2020). This not only helps Vietnamese seafood products to compete on price, but also helps increase export turnover. Before EVFTA came into effect, Vietnam was enjoying GSP preferential tax for developing countries (3.5% lower than normal tax). While the average import tax based on the trade proportion between product groups of Vietnamese goods imported into the EU is 7%, the tax on seafood alone is 10.8% (VASEP, 2018). Therefore, when the EVFTA comes into effect, most of Vietnam's seafood products will be able to have more competitive prices and gain more market share.

Third, increasing investment attraction in aquaculture, exploitation and seafood processing. EVFTA commitments have created opportunities for EU investors to access the Vietnamese market more easily. EU enterprises can take advantage of Vietnam's existing advantages in developing fisheries; exploit the existing potential of rich aquatic resources that the EU cannot cultivate due to the specific characteristics of the growing environment such as tra fish, basa fish, mackerel, etc. At the same time, they can take advantage of the existing infrastructure system of the aquaculture and seafood processing sector instead of having to build new ones. In addition, EU enterprises can also take advantage of excess by-products from seafood processing to create value-added products, such as: processing diesel oil from tra fish fat, extracting omega 3 from tuna by-products to make fish oil or producing fish and shrimp feed from squid liver powder, then selling them to the domestic market to

increase profits.

Fourth, access to modern advanced science and technology helps improve the quality of exported seafood products. With the EVFTA taking effect, Vietnam can attract investment capital, access modern science and technology through technology transfer cooperation, supply of seafood processing machinery, application of biotechnology in aquaculture, seafood processing, learning high-tech aquaculture models, sharing experience in management, processing and preservation of seafood. This contributes significantly to improving the quality of aquaculture, modernizing processing technology, and improving the quality of exported seafood products. On the other hand, by participating in the EVFTA, Vietnam will strictly comply with commitments on rules of origin, technical barriers and animal quarantine safety measures for exported seafood products. This will help Vietnamese seafood improve and enhance the quality to meet EU quality standards as well as other international standards.

Challenge

Firstly, fierce competition. The EU is a large market, with high per capita income and living standards, along with a large annual per capita seafood consumption, attracting many seafood export markets in the world to the EU, including Vietnam. According to data published by the Vietnam Trade Office in Belgium and the EU, the EU is the third largest market for agricultural, forestry and fishery products in the world. Every year, the EU imports about 300 billion USD of agricultural, forestry and fishery products (of which, agricultural products are 190 billion USD, seafood is 50 billion USD, wood and wood products are 59 billion USD). Therefore, Vietnamese seafood will have to compete fiercely with many other competitors. Meanwhile, most of Vietnam's seafood enterprises are still small and medium-sized, with small scale, low technology, and undiversified seafood products, not bringing high added value.

Second, the challenges of complying with and implementing the provisions of the EVFTA agreement such as rules of origin and food safety regulations. The requirement of rules of origin is one of the major challenges that Vietnam must overcome. This rule not only requires exported products to be produced in Vietnam, but also has other strict requirements on imported raw materials. Meanwhile, domestic seafood raw materials only provide about 40 - 45% of processing capacity. In addition, the strict standards on traceability of the EU set out many regulations on conditions for production organization, labor, environment, etc., which also bring significant challenges to Vietnamese seafood enterprises. In addition, although Vietnam's seafood exports to the EU market are increasing, there are still warnings about food safety violations and in fact many products are returned. Specifically, in 2021, in Official Dispatch No. 6353/BCT-AM, dated October 12, 2021, the Ministry of Industry and Trade issued a warning about residues of harmful substances in some agricultural and aquatic products of Vietnam exported to the EU market. In particular, the Italian health agency discovered undeclared sulphite in the shipment of crustaceans and seafood exported by Minh Chau Import-Export Seafood Processing Company Limited. In May 2019, the EU's Rapid Alert System for food and food products that pose a risk to public health announced that 9 shipments of Vietnamese seafood were rejected or monitored when entering the EU.

Third, the challenge from trade defense measures. Tax commitments from both sides make tariffs no longer an effective protection tool for countries to protect domestic enterprises, so trade defense measures will be given priority. EU countries also tend to increasingly use anti-dumping measures, non-trade barriers such as technical standards or food safety and hygiene.. to protect domestic enterprises. This creates a significant challenge for Vietnamese seafood enterprises when penetrating this market.

Fourth, comply with IUU regulations. Previously, due to limitations in fishing capacity, management organization, and product declaration, Vietnam had violations in fishing. On October 23, 2017, the EU officially withdrew the yellow card from Vietnam due to lack of cooperation and insufficient efforts to combat IUU fishing. This means that all Vietnamese seafood exported to the EU will be 100% controlled, while previously it was controlled probabilistically. According to the Vietnam Fisheries Association, after 2 years of receiving the "yellow card" warning for Vietnam's fishing and exploitation activities, Vietnam's seafood exports to the EU decreased sharply. In 2018, the first year affected by the IUU yellow card, the total export turnover of seafood products to the EU decreased by 6%. In 2019, the total value of Vietnam's seafood exports to the EU reached about 1.3 billion USD, of which exploited seafood products contributed about 387 million USD. Compared to 2018, Vietnam's seafood export turnover to the EU market in 2019 decreased by 12%. Therefore, removing the yellow card or strictly complying with IUU regulations is always a big challenge for the entire Vietnamese seafood industry.

3.3.2. Solutions to contribute to the development of Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises under the impact of rules of origin in the EVFTA agreement

Macro solution group

- Continue to improve support mechanisms and policies for seafood exporting enterprises. The State, ministries, departments, branches and functional agencies need to continue to improve support mechanisms and policies for seafood exporting enterprises such as: capital policies, investment policies for science and technology, trade promotion and market expansion policies, training policies, capacity building for enterprises to support Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises to improve the production and business environment and better meet the requirements of the rules of origin. In addition, the State needs to promote administrative reforms in all areas, especially in the fields of investment, construction, land, tax, customs, import and export as well as continue to build and improve the system of laws and policies, on the one hand to meet international commitments in general and the requirements of the EVFTA agreement in particular. On the other hand, to support businesses to remove difficulties and barriers to improve the production and business environment, enhance the competitiveness of businesses. In addition, it is necessary to promote digital transformation in the seafood industry to overcome fragmented and small-scale production and strengthen the management of seafood import and export activities in a modern and effective direction. Because in the context of current technological development, digital transformation is an inevitable requirement for all industries and fields. Regarding the removal of the IUU yellow card: The

imposition of the IUU yellow card brings many difficulties to the Vietnamese seafood industry in general and Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises in particular. According to the report "Assessing the economic impact from trade analysis of non-compliance with anti-IUU fishing regulations: The case of Vietnam" published by the Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers (VASEP) in collaboration with the World Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on August 10, 2021, if the European Commission's IUU yellow card cannot be removed or, more seriously, a red card is issued, the estimated loss for the Vietnamese seafood industry is about 480 million USD per year, not to mention damage to reputation or strict control by import management agencies in partner markets. Therefore, the State, competent agencies and the seafood industry need to take appropriate measures to quickly remove the IUU yellow card.

- *Establish and strengthen linkages among members in the supply chain of exported aquatic products.* One of the solutions to promote sustainable development for aquatic product exporting enterprises is to form agricultural product supply chains for export to increase linkages and mutual support among enterprises. In reality, due to small scale, fragmentation, and lack of linkages, Vietnamese aquatic product exporting enterprises find it difficult to take advantage of the incentives of the EVFTA agreement as well as encounter barriers in meeting the standards of the rules of origin. Therefore, it is necessary to establish supply chains for exported aquatic products, clearly identify the benefits as well as harmonize the interests of members in the supply chain. It is necessary to increase the level of cooperation among members and fully identify and balance the interests of all members participating in the supply chain; There needs to be a reasonable distribution mechanism to ensure that the final profit generated from the production, processing and export of seafood must correspond to the level of contribution of each member in the chain. In addition, it is necessary to establish an information sharing system in the export seafood supply chain. Information that needs to be shared includes: information on export markets, price developments, requirements on quality, types and quantity. Effective sharing and connection will contribute to providing complete, accurate and timely information to members in the chain, thereby minimizing the impact of market factors.

Group of solutions for seafood exporting enterprises

Although it is a large market with great potential for development of Vietnam's seafood exports, the EU is a very demanding market. Therefore, in order to serve the export of seafood products to this market, especially to meet the requirements of the rules of origin in the EVFTA, effective solutions are needed for Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises.

Firstly, businesses need to increase investment in technological innovation to improve the quality of seafood products for export. Use modern tools and means in the process of exploiting, farming and processing seafood to meet the standards of the rules of origin; it is necessary to promote investment in developing domestic seafood raw materials to meet the rules of origin in the EVFTA agreement.

Second, actively and proactively learn, grasp information, raise awareness of the EVFTA agreement as well as the requirements of the rules of origin in the EVFTA agreement to improve the production and processing processes of your business to better meet the requirements, making the most of the incentives brought by the rules of origin. In addition, it is also necessary to actively learn about information about the EU market in general as well as the requirements for imported seafood of potential EU markets to have appropriate strategies for your products. Invest in renovating the working environment, improving the qualifications of workers in your business to improve the quality of products for export.

Third, actively diversifying seafood export products and building long-term business strategies. Through crossbreeding or testing the cultivation of new seafood species, businesses will diversify seafood species for export while ensuring a more stable seafood supply. On the other hand, diversifying seafood export species not only helps seafood exporting businesses better meet the needs and tastes of the market, but also helps businesses expand brand value and increase export value. Combined with building a reasonable business strategy are brand promotion activities, participating in food and seafood fairs in the EU to better grasp market information. From there, it is possible to take advantage of the incentives brought by the rules of origin.

Fourth, proactively participate in supply chains, linkage chains, enhance cooperation, information sharing and mutual support in implementing the requirements of rules of origin, market analysis, helping exported seafood products to better penetrate the EU market. Participating in linkage chains helps seafood exporting enterprises to share information and support each other in the process of exploiting, farming and processing seafood for export. From there, enterprises can support each other to overcome barriers and challenges caused by rules of origin or protect themselves from negative impacts from market factors.

Fifth, focus on strengthening trademark registration, trademark copyright, intellectual property and product origin labeling to protect seafood brands as well as increase the added value of Vietnamese seafood products. In addition, seafood exporting enterprises need to research and ensure the supply of seafood products for export in the long term, ensuring adequate and timely supply to the market.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of the EVFTA has brought many great opportunities for sustainable development to the Vietnamese seafood industry in general and Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises in particular. The rules of origin in the EVFTA have created many opportunities as well as great challenges for the development of Vietnamese seafood exporting enterprises. In the current context, identifying and assessing the impacts, finding the principles for developing seafood exporting enterprises as well as applying appropriate solutions to develop seafood exporting enterprises is extremely necessary, not only helping exporting enterprises to penetrate deeply into the large EU market but also enhancing the position and brand of Vietnamese seafood in the international market.

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