

**REVIEW OF SUBMISSIONS ON:**

**DRAFT IMPORT HEALTH STANDARD FOR THE IMPORTATION INTO NEW ZEALAND OF FROZEN FILLETED TILAPIA AND CATFISH FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION FROM SPECIFIED COUNTRIES**

Biosecurity New Zealand  
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry  
Wellington  
New Zealand

**2 December 2010**

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry  
Te Manatu Ahuwhenua, Ngaherehere  
Pastoral House  
25 The Terrace  
P O Box 2526  
Wellington  
New Zealand

Telephone: 0800 00 83 33  
Facsimile: +64 4 894 0720  
Internet: <http://www.maf.govt.nz>

Border Standards Directorate  
MAF Biosecurity New Zealand

**REVIEW OF SUBMISSIONS ON:**

**DRAFT IMPORT HEALTH STANDARD FOR THE IMPORTATION INTO NEW  
ZEALAND OF FROZEN FILLETED TILAPIA AND CATFISH FOR HUMAN  
CONSUMPTION FROM SPECIFIED COUNTRIES**

2 December 2010

Approved for general release

Matthew Stone  
Animal Export/ Import Group Manager  
MAF Biosecurity New Zealand

## INTRODUCTION

The draft import health standard for the importation into New Zealand of frozen filleted tilapia and catfish for human consumption from specified countries was notified for consultation on 25 May 2010.

MAF received one submission from the following:

1. Talley's 31 May 2010

This document summarises the issues raised in the submission, and presents the MAF response.

## SUBMISSIONS

### 1. Talley's

1.1 Talley's states that the assessment of the level of risk is inadequate.

#### **Biosecurity New Zealand comment:**

The risk analyses used to draft this import health standard examined the biosecurity risks associated with the importation into New Zealand of frozen, skinless and boneless fillet meat of catfish from Malaysia, and tilapia from Viet Nam, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. None of the potential hazards were identified as requiring specific risk management measures. The separation of the fillets from the rest of the carcass effectively removes the majority of organisms that might be present in the live animal. Titres of pathogenic organisms in muscle are usually many times lower than those found in the viscera. Quantities of waste in New Zealand are likely to be small and the likelihood of product entering the aquatic environment in sufficient quantities to represent an infectious dose is negligible. In addition, the freezing requirement effectively reduces any parasitic burdens to levels where the likelihood of entry to New Zealand is negligible.

Because the biosecurity risks associated with these commodities have been assessed and measures have been put in place to manage those risks, MAFBNZ is confident that the risk of new pests or diseases establishing through this commodity is negligible.

1.2 The product does not comply with the Food Act 1981 or Animal Product Act 1999, or acceptable levels of food hygiene health or safety.

#### **Biosecurity New Zealand comment:**

MAFBNZ must comply with the Biosecurity Act 1993 when implementing requirements for the importation of a product. The Biosecurity Act 1993 restricts our consideration to "organisms" that may be present in the "risk good".

Requirements under the Food Act 1981 and Animal Product Act 1999 are independent of the import health standard requirements and are managed by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA).

NZFSA was consulted during the drafting of this IHS. They comment: "NZFSA has made a preliminary evaluation of the food safety risks associated with the importation of skinless, boneless fillets of pangasid catfish and tilapia. While it has no specific food safety concerns associated with import of these products, it does have general concerns about hazards that may be present in aquaculture fish, particularly chemical hazards such as antimicrobial drugs, residues of agricultural compounds, and heavy metals. While there are currently no specific food safety standards or import requirements that would apply, if imported they would need to meet the requirements of all relevant food legislation, including the Food Act 1981 and the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Codes. In future, additional requirements may apply to these products as NZFSA is in the process of implementing the outcome of a major

review of its imported food programme. Implementation will occur over the next few years and will involve grouping imported foods into one of three categories of regulatory interest with different requirements and clearance options applying to each category. Foods may also be put on a 'scanning list' and subjected to additional monitoring (including sampling and testing) should this be warranted. Further information on NZFSA's import requirements and the new imported food programme is available on NZFSA's website at: <http://www.nzfsa.nz/imported-food/index.htm>"

1.3 MAF is negligent in its duty to protect the New Zealand public by allowing zoosanitary certification that has obvious falsehoods, including that the fish are:

- free from disease
- processed or grown in potable water
- processed in acceptable hygienic conditions.

### **Biosecurity New Zealand comment:**

The import health standard process is concerned with biosecurity risk. An official veterinarian of the country signs a certificate that accompanies each consignment of fish to say that the animals were not slaughtered for disease control and showed no sign of disease at the time of slaughter. See answer to 1.1 above – even if bacteria were present in the fish, the processing involved would mean that negligible bacteria would be present in the commodity (frozen fish fillets).

The certification process also ensures that the fish originate from a registered farm, and are processed in a registered processing facility. International trade relies on certification by competent veterinary authorities, supported by robust internal verification systems. New Zealand has the opportunity to investigate such systems through in-country assessments if we deem this necessary. See answer 1.2. – the import health standard does not cover areas of food safety or food hygiene.

## APPENDIX ONE: COPIES OF SUBMISSIONS



Rca: 8/16/10

31<sup>st</sup> May 2010

May Chen  
Biosecurity New Zealand  
PO Box 2526  
Wellington 6140

Dear May,

1. We write to submit on the draft amendments to the Import Health Standards for Processed Catfish and Talapia.
2. Talley's strongly object to any permission enabling the import of Catfish and Talapia from any country and do not support the extension to Malaysia. We submit all permission to import these species should be withdrawn.
3. The assessment of the level of risk is inadequate.
4. The production and origin of these species is nothing short of a disgrace and in no way can New Zealand Government provide assurance that it complies with the Food Act 1981, the Animal Product Act 1999 or generally acceptable standards of food health, hygiene or safety. In suggesting that it can MAF are failing to recognize and investigate the true conditions under which these species are grown and processed.
5. MAF are negligent in their duty to protect the New Zealand public by allowing Zoo Sanitary Certification that has such obvious falsehoods. This fish is not
  - Free from disease
  - Processed or grown in 'potable' water
  - Processed in acceptable hygienic conditions.

The fish is grown in a sewer bowl, bleached white and passed off as premium white fish fillets. It is now world renown as a species characterized by fraudulent certification, horrific growing conditions and significant public health scares.

6. The certification scheme that allows Zoo-sanitary Certification to be issued in these jurisdictions are not as robust or credible as those in New Zealand. Clearly MAF cannot have the necessary 'level of confidence' to be sure that such certificates are actually, in fact, accurate and representative. These certificates from these

---

HEAD OFFICE  
Phone: 64-3-528 2800  
Email: [inquiries@talleys.co.nz](mailto:inquiries@talleys.co.nz)



---

Fax Numbers:  
Head Office 64-3-528 2802  
Export 64-3-528 9298  
N.Z. Sales 64-3-528 2805

Page 1 of 2

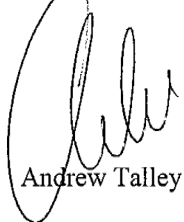
**TALLEY'S GROUP LTD** PO Box 5, Motueka, Nelson, NEW ZEALAND

AT - May Chen 31.05.10.doc

jurisdictions are frequently granted without sufficient independent or credible assurance programs. Knowing that, MAF are negligent to rely on them.

7. The conditions of growing, feeding and processing these fish is nothing less than horrific and it is an indictment on the New Zealand authorities, who regulate New Zealand food, that such imports are allowed. We would suggest that you should visit Vietnam, as our staff have, and witness firsthand the unimaginable conditions under which this fish is produced.
8. We attach a selection of information for your review outlining the issues associated with this species.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Talley