



ACTIVITY REPORT

POLICY DIALOGUE IN TRA VINH PROVINCE

Project “Towards Sustainable Mangrove-Shrimp Aquaculture Through Capacity Building and Partnership in the Mekong River Delta”

1. Objective:

Policy dialogue serves as a forum for stakeholders to meet and discuss face-to-face, and to learn about the shrimp farmers’ problems. This information will serve as the input for the development of local socio-economic plans, which in return will help local shrimp farmers improve their livelihoods.

2. Workshop time and venue

- Time: 8:30 - 11:30 March 23, 2023
- Venue: 2nd floor, Cuu Long Hotel, 210 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ward 7, Tra Vinh city

3. Participants:

- Representatives of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Tra Vinh province
- Representatives of Fisheries Sub-Department of Tra Vinh province
- Representatives of Tra Vinh Provincial Forest Protection Department
- Representatives of Fisheries Association of Tra Vinh province
- Representatives of Tra Vinh Provincial Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Center
- Representatives of the Agriculture Department of Duyen Hai district
- Representatives of Cuu Long SeaPro Joint Stock Company
- Representatives of farmers' association, shrimp farming households in Long Khanh commune and Don Chau commune
- CECAD: Dr. Le Thi Van Hue; Dr. Phan Thi Ngoc Diep
- Ms. Mai Thi Thuy Trang - Director of Tai Thinh Phat Farm Ca Mau Cooperative

4. Meeting notes:

4.1 Introduction:

- Ms. Lam Ha Phuong - staff of Sub-Department of Fisheries introduced the workshop and the participants of the workshop
- Dr. Le Thi Van Hue - CECAD delivered opening speech and presented CECAD’s as well as project’s introduction
- CECAD showed a video summarizing the activities of the project

4.2 Discuss about shrimp farming in Ca Mau province:

- Ms. Mai Thi Thuy Trang shared the story of shrimp farming in Ca Mau, then asked representatives of Cuu Long SeaPro company how important was the seed production

facilities, where they get the seed, and were there any difficulties in produce and hatch the seed.

- Mr. Duong Truong Giang (Cuu Long SeaPro company): The seed are purchased from sale agents and households. However, the shrimp seed have not been certified. We are still purchasing, and there has been no problems reported.
- Ms. Trang: Is the quality of the product and the fishing process controlled?
- Mr. Duong Truong Giang (Cuu Long SeaPro company): The company are purchasing mainly from the sale agents, traceability at households
- Ms. Trang: Customers are now very observant; the shrimp quality must be guaranteed to retain customers. Currently, Tai Think Phat cooperative has 14 products, with types such as frozen (frozen black tiger shrimp), pre-processed and finished processing. For examples, our frozen black tiger shrimp products are fresh shrimp directly collected from farmers, and water supply and freezing process must ensure the freshness, therefore, the quality when delivered to customers is guaranteed. It is important to pay attention from the stages of cultivation, to harvesting and then processing. In addition, our preliminarily processed shrimp products are natural land shrimp. Tai Think Phat cooperative also has crayfish, silver shrimp, and crab. The cooperative regulates the ratio to ensure the safety of both buyers and sellers. When we have fresh crabs, we sell the fresh, raw crabs. If they are not fresh, the crab meat would be separated and packaged, which helps to increase the price of the product. This type of product is for customers who do not have time to cook.

In order to produce products with proper packaging and labels, there must be standards and some other factors. The production facilities must have a safety license according to the Decree 15/2018/NĐ-CP that have clear regulations. Products must have birth certificates, and are tested and announced according to the regulations on microbiology, antibiotics, ... according to Decree 15/2018/NĐ-CP. Farmers can contact the provincial food safety agency for a detailed explanation. For packaging, it is necessary to have colors and designs that attract customers' attention, which also affects their purchasing decisions.

Currently, our products are being sold in many supermarkets and malls such as Mega Market, Aeon Mall, An Nam Market and in some chain of food stores in the city. There was a time when the purchasing unit was worried that the cooperative did not meet the legal requirements for the supermarket system such as invoices or tax codes. Therefore, it should be noted that when establishing a cooperative, you must register for a tax code. Hopefully, farmers will focus on product quality first, and it would not so difficult to promote these quality products. In order to be certified as OCOP product, we have to follow many criteria. For example, in the processing of shrimp broth, there are 90 indicators, but we only need to control the main criteria (9 - 10 indicators) to ensure product quality.

As for packaging, you must also follow Circular 43 on the font format on the packaging, which must be standard, otherwise you have to discard the packaging and cause more waste. Up to this time, Tai Think Phat cooperative has linked many households and many distributors such as supplying crabs for restaurants such as Pizza 4P's and for domestic production and export.

- Ms. Nguyen Thi Nguyet Nga (household in Long Khanh commune) shared thoughts after listening Ms. Trang's story: All things are difficult before they are easy. To create

a brand needs to go through many stages. In Long Khanh commune, there have been many cooperatives established but not yet put into operation with good management. Recently, a new cooperative has just been established but still lacking many things, we are asking the People's Committee for support. There is a cooperative that sells blood clams, but now they only sell the fresh ones, they do not have frozen products, so they need the support from large enterprises. Farmers here are also raising mangrove shrimp with high technology, but they are affected by wastewater discharged into the river when supplying water for shrimp, so the quality is greatly affected. In many shrimp farms, they discharge the dead ones directly into the river, causing a lot of pollution. The percentage of good quality shrimp is small. Only location with high percentage of forest coverage that the quality of the crab is good, the price is high, the life is stable. So farmers rotate shrimp and crab crops to ensure the family's economy. Raising blood clams in the dam is more secure because the amount of water is controlled.

- Ms. Trang: In the past, there were also many farming households in Tai Think Phat cooperative discharging waste directly into the river, they were not controlling the wastewater, and also randomly releasing shrimp without recording the date and the shrimp amount. After that, I explained to the farmers and gave them notebooks to record information on where to buy shrimp, buy nets to stock shrimp, checking daily to see if they were grown enough. All of that to control the shrimp death cause was of the shrimp quality or water conditions. Although there was no immediate effect at first, but then when recording gradually, there will be data to compare, and then change accordingly. The results were shown pretty clearly. Farmers did not have an official source of information to know in which stage they were wrong, so we supported them to record, learned from the elders and then shared it with other households. After that, we set up regulations for farmers. We have a regulation when sucking the bottom water, it must be at the right time, households that did not follow would be fined. Then the quality gradually became different. We also do not allow shrimp-mangrove farming with industrial shrimp, especially for new households.
- Ms. Nga: If there is a good breed, the quality of shrimp will be different, but people did not choose carefully. They only buy cheap shrimps, so the quality is very poor. If they stock shrimps with crabs, they will lose all the shrimps. Some households have come to Ca Mau to observe the farming models there, but each farmer has their own opinion, so it is difficult to change.
- Ms. Trang: People always have their own opinions, so changing them is difficult and takes a lot of effort and time. For example, the story about the process of wearing gloves when peeling shrimp. At first, some workers in our cooperative refused to use them. And I still let them use their bare hands, however, the products they peeled off were placed in a separate corner. After a month, I let them tasted and compared the shrimp they peeled with the shrimps that were peeled properly. The quality was different, that how they realized the difference and after that they agreed to use gloves while peeling the shrimps.
- Mr. Nguyen Van Phung - Deputy Director of Fisheries Department: There are many good stories. In Long Khanh commune now there are many difficulties which are understandable. For example, Minh Phu Company has cooperated to support in evaluate mangrove shrimp many times, but they have not achieved the quality. Because in the mangrove shrimp area, there is also a super-intensive shrimp farming area, and

the wastewater affected the shrimp-mangrove area. However, if people are determined to do it, we can orient them to change direction gradually. It will be very difficult at first, but we will have to overcome, learn slowly and apply. When the evaluation provides many criteria, the quality and the selling price can be improved. For example, mangrove shrimp that with super-intensive shrimp are very difficult to sell, even domestic companies do not buy, let alone export.

4.3 Policy brief introduction and discussion:

- Dr. Phan Thi Ngoc Diep presented the key findings and policy recommendations
- Ms. Trang: VietGAP was the popular regulations on good agricultural practices for domestic agricultural and aquatic products. Although the criteria to evaluate product quality are adequate, in reality, farmers have not met the standards. In addition, with the Vietnam Certified Organic certification, Tai Tinh Phat cooperative has applied and received a lot of support from the province. There are many different types of certification for us to follow and apply, however, once we understood the items, the instructions, we could do it right.

4.4 After group discussion:

- Ms. Trang: Group 1 focuses on shrimp quality. After having a sustainable shrimp area, when a company participates in a linkage, it will reduce risks, so it will be more secure for farmers. In addition, when there is a guaranteed quality shrimp area, even if other companies pressure prices when purchasing, farmers can create their own products from the materials they have without difficulty. We understand what we need the most, the government can't understand it yet, so we need to speak up. After having an area of raw materials and products, if selling to customers with difficulties, the cooperatives may cooperate to support each other. Cooperative members in different provinces, living in the city can sell, introduce and recommend to many other people. Good quality products will make them feel different and will come back to buy and we can retain customers.
- Mr. Duong Truong Giang (Cuu Long SeaPro company): If household of the cooperatives have tried and come to the final product, Cuu Long company will ready to buy. The part that needs most effort has already done by the farmers, then Cuu Long company would be ready to support.
- Mr. Nguyen Van Phung - Deputy Director of Fisheries Department: Through the discussion of the two groups, from the state management side, it is proposed that people will have a policy to support them. For example, the mangrove area will have to according to regulations. When there are difficulties, after establish cooperative groups and cooperatives, the state will support. If the policy is not accessible to the people, we will promote the communication activities and organize training to support them. It is suggested that the project support organic certification for consumption in the domestic market first because the shrimp output is not much, then discussing about the association with export companies. The project supported people here to learn from Ms. Trang's experience from processing, packaging, etc. The farmers need to change their mindset, although it is difficult, but they need determination, together with the government to change.

- Ms. Lam Thi Que Huong – A member of cooperative in Long Khanh commune: We are looking forward to participating and learning
- Ms. Nga: Farmers have to ask the government to zone the farming to ensure the quality of shrimp, try to overflow and then proceed step by step.
- Mr. Phung: The government is ready to cooperate with people and provide supports

4.5 Closing:

- Dr. Le Thi Van Hue delivered closing speech.

The workshop ended at 11:30.

ANNEX 1
AGENDA
POLICY DIALOGUE IN TRA VINH PROVINCE

Time: 8:30 - 11:30 March 23, 2023

Venue: 2nd floor, Cuu Long Hotel, 210 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ward 7, Tra Vinh city

Time	Content	Responsible by
8:00 – 8:30	Registration	CECAD
8:30 – 8:45	Introduction about the objectives and content of the policy dialogue	Fisheries Sub-Department of Tra Vinh province
8:45 – 8:55	Opening speech	Dr. Le Thi Van Hue, CECAD
8:55 – 9:00	Project implementation journey	Ms. Nguyen Phuong Ha, CECAD
9:00 – 9:15	Experience in organic shrimp farming and international certification (ASC)	Ms. Mai Thi Thuy Trang (Tai Thinh Phat Farm Ca Mau Cooperative)
9:15 – 9:30	Group discussion	All participants
9:30 – 10:00	Policy brief on sustainable mangrove-shrimp farming according to international standards	Dr. Phan Thị Ngọc Diệp, CECAD
10:00 – 10:15	Tea break	All participants
10:15 – 11:00	Group discussion	All participants
11:00 – 11:30	Group presentation	All participants
11:30 – 11:40	Closing speech	Dr. Le Thi Van Hue, CECAD

ANNEX 2
PHOTOS OF THE WORKSHOP









