Press Note 21.01.2014

Japanese Health Ministry fixes MRL for Ethoxyquin in shrimps

Chairman MPEDA informed the press that the Ministry of Health, Labour & Welfare has officially notified the MRL for Ethoxyquin today the Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) has been fixed at 0.2 ppm in crustaceans including farmed shrimp. This had brought a closure to the 18 month long protracted effort made by the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), with the support of Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Embassy of India, Tokyo. In its meeting of 29th November 2013, the committee of the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour & Welfare has approved to fix a Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) of 0.2 ppm in crustaceans including farmed shrimp. The MRL was notified on 2nd December 2013 for public comments in Japan, besides was also placed in WTO.

It may be recalled that the import inspection authorities of Japan had suddenly enforced the default level of 0.01ppm for Ethoxyquin in shrimps from India and Vietnam without any reason in August 2012. The issue was immediately taken up with the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), METI and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan by Ministry of Commerce & Industry, MPEDA and Embassy of India, Tokyo citing the lack of scientific reasoning behind their action. Subsequently, then Minister of Health, Labour & Welfare referred the matter to the Food Safety Commission (FSC) under Cabinet Secretariat to asses and recommend Accepted Daily Intake (ADI) of Ethoxyquin in shrimps. The issue was also taken up at almost all bilateral meetings between India and Japan including at the Prime Minister’s level. Subsequently, the subcommittee of Food Safety Commission fixed the ADI for Ethoxyquin as 0.0083 mg /kg body weight in its meeting on 19th November 2013.

Meanwhile, the imports of shrimp from India has shown an increase of 20.10% in quantity and 61.79% in value on an year on year basis for the period
January –November 2013 compared to 2012. The increased intake in the country is attributed to short supply of shrimps from other major shrimp farming countries due to the Early Mortality Syndrome (EMS) disease and increased confidence in Indian farmed shrimp, especially the white leg (*Litopenaeus vannamei*) variety. The total shrimp imports upto November 2013 is 29153 tons worth 29651 million Yen. India stands at third position in shrimp imports to Japan during 2013. The first position is occupied by Vietnam, followed by Indonesia. However, India became the largest supplier of frozen shrimp to Japanese market since September 2013. Overall seafood imports from India also showed an increase of 44.15% in value during the same period, though the quantity showed a slight decline of 0.17%.

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