Japanese Heath Ministry provisionally fixes MRL for Ethoxyquin* residue in Shrimp

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 will be now notified for comments from public and in WTO as per the procedure.

It may be recalled that the import inspection authorities of Japan have enforced the default level of 0.01ppm for Ethoxyquin in shrimps from India and Vietnam in August 2012. The issue was immediately taken up with the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), Ministry of Economy Trade & Industry (METI) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan by Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt of India, MPEDA and Embassy of India, Tokyo citing the lack of scientific reasoning behind their action. Subsequently, Minister of Health, Labour & Welfare, Govt. of Japan referred the matter to the Food Safety Commission (FSC) under Cabinet Secretariat to assess and recommend Accepted Daily Intake (ADI) of Ethoxyquin in shrimps. The issue was also taken up at various bilateral meetings. The subcommittee of Food Safety Commission had fixed the ADI for Ethoxyquin as 0.0083 mg /kg body weight in its meeting on 19th November 2013.

The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour & Welfare discussed and approved MRLs for 11 parameters on 29th November 2013. It is noticed that the assessment period for Ethoxyquin took only about an year, in comparison with assessment period which varied from 5 to 10 years for many other parameters. This has to be seen as a result of the constant efforts put in by Ministry of Commerce & Industry, MPEDA and Embassy of India, Tokyo. The final MRL announcement is expected by February 2014. It is expected that the resolution of Ethoxyquin will further augment India’s shrimp exports to Japan.

(*Ethoxyquin is chemically known as 1,2 - dihydro - 6 - ethoxy-2, 2,4- trimethylquinoline. It is used primarily as an antioxidant preservative in animal feed. It is also used in dehydrated storage of forage crops and as an antiscald agent in fruits.)