

Detention of Food Exported from Indonesia to the USA by FDA in 1998

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural products are expected to survive as export commodities under severe economic crises. Such an expectation could not be fully achieved due to the fact that some Indonesian food commodities exported to USA were held under detention by FDA. The detained food products were mostly cocoa bean, canned tuna, frozen shrimp and fish. Cocoa bean detention was due to the presence of filth and foreign objects, while for frozen shrimp and fish were due to the presence of filth, inadequate sanitary handling, and Salmonella contamination. Detention of canned tuna shipments were due to the presence of filth, decomposition, no accompanying canning schedule process document, or no compliance with the labeling requirements. Especially for cocoa bean export to USA up to present Indonesia has been subjected to automatic detention. Quality management and food safety, against the potential Indonesian export commodities should be improved to be able to compete in global market.

INTRODUCTION

Under the current economic crises export of agricultural product is becoming the most important sector to generate foreign currency for Indonesia. The increasing value of U.S. dollar against rupiah to some extent has resulted in a tremendous profit for food exporters which utilizing local agricultural product as raw materials. In 1998 the U.S. imported 2.1 billion dollars of agricultural, fish and forestry products from Indonesia. Indonesia was the fourth largest exporter of agricultural, fish and forestry products to the U.S. after Canada, Mexico and Thailand (Table 1). The data also indicate that coffee beans, cocoa paste/butter, processed fruit and vegetables, spices, shrimp and tuna represent the major exported agricultural and fish products (Table 2).

Table 1. U.S. imports of agricultural, fish and forestry products in 1994-1998 (in thousands of dollars)

Import Markets	1998 Rank	Calendar Years (Jan-Dec)				
		1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Canada	1	13,864,780	13,802,535	16,533,066	18,163,133	18,788,282*
Mexico	2	3,508,264	4,555,279	4,577,145	5,009,638	5,539,185*
Thailand	3	2,117,689	2,245,023	2,138,491	2,147,581	2,279,986*
Indonesia	4	1,666,330	2,046,068	2,189,902	2,299,199*	2,109,933
Brazil	5	1,157,001	1,610,311	1,747,852	1,944,961	1,685,150
China, People Republic of	6	895,771	1,021,707	1,133,687	1,337,882	1,520,048*
Philippines	18	567,234	720,089	744,889	812,325	799,965
Malaysia	22	603,762	659,712*	631,399	622,339	632,453
Taiwan	24	517,073	511,258	484,601	512,239	516,669
Vietnam	34	46,199	172,694	166,491	202,763	286,159*

Source : U.S. Bureau of the Census Trade Data

* : Denotes highest import levels since at least 1970

Table 2. Imports of agricultural, fish and forestry products from Indonesia in 1994-1998 (in thousands of dollars)

Product	Calendar Years (Jan-Dec)				
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Raw Coffee	76,356	76,603	120,035	139,684	137,960
Cocoa Beans	94,239	43,481	122,396	156,009	200,512*
Tea (Incl. Herb Tea)	15,970	10,774	13,105	11,208	16,520
Tropical Oils	49,849	29,708	77,708	116,854*	58,769
Other Vegetable Oils	0	51	24	56	391
Essential Oils	13,524	12,812	11,197	23,350	35,293*
Cocoa Paste & Cocoa Butter	19,983	46,644	62,089	96,905*	61,561
Snack Foods (Incl. Chocolate)	1,546	1,447	1,440	1,638	3,467*
Red Meats, Fresh/Chilled/ Frozen	2,773	3,062	4,464*	608	2,301
Processed Fruit & Vegetables	47,968	61,495	74,414	87,015*	67,736
Fruit & Vegetable Juices	2,048	3,170	7,483	10,198*	5,698
Tree Nuts	6,047	2,951	1,803	3,573	10,399*
Roasted & Instant Coffee	10,762	14,034	11,120	18,603*	13,253
Spices	82,027	115,385	102,807	111,143	127,276*
Shrimp	101,961	58,573	110,711	161,615	188,739*
Lobster	37,337	48,993*	43,931	37,047	45,133
Other Edible Fish & Forestry	37,804	43,110	38,104	51,812	64,410*

Source : U.S. Bureau of the Census Trade Data

* : Denotes highest import levels since at least 1970

Information detention of food exported from Indonesia, however, might not be widely recognized by government agency and the food manufacturers. Since December 1997 the USFDA has imposed another regulation on imported fish and seafood. The regulation mandated that fisheries product intended for export to the U.S. should be handled, processed, packed, and stored according to Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles. It has been reported that 599 detention notice has been issued by the FDA to imported food from Indonesia. Some of the detained food products should be destroyed, re-exported, or reconditioned for different purpose (Raharjo, 1998). This has caused significant loss of foreign earning.

The objective of this paper is to evaluate non-conformance of exported food to the U.S. according to existing imported food quality and safety regulation enforced by the FDA. For that purpose the data presented here was based on detention report between May and August 1998. In addition, comparison has also been made to evaluate the number and reason of detention food exported from Thailand and Philippine to the U.S. during the some time interval.

DETENTION RECORDS

The United States of America is considered to be a big market of food exported from various part of the word. In 1988 the U.S. imported food from more than 100 countries around the word. Asian countries contributed the majority of detention records as compared with other groups of country. Among the Asian countries China had the highest number of detention records, followed by Thailand, Malaysia, India, Indonesia, and Philippine (Table 3). Australia, Canada, and Germany, represent developed countries, also had detention records issued by the FDA. This indicates that food quality or safety non-conformance is also a problem for developed countries. The incidence, however, was much less than that of developing countries. Within period of May to August 1998 Indonesia has recorded an increasing number of detention. This has raised our concern because too little effort has been done to address the recurring problem and it was also too slow. Related government agencies seem to be unresponsive to work with food processors to eliminate these problems.

Among food imported to the U.S., fish and sea food, processed fruits and vegetables, and herbs and spices possessed the highest detention records (Table 4). This

could be related to the volume of the imported products. In addition, these group of Food products may mostly originated from developing countries.

Table 3. Food from selected countries of origin detained by FDA at port of entry in the period of May-August 1998

No.	Exporting Country	Number of detention (May-August 1998)				Total
		May	June	July	August	
1.	Australia	20	20	19	25	84
2.	Canada	109	136	143	144	522
3.	France	50	90	114	78	232
4.	Germany	117	132	141	108	498
5.	India	123	94	128	122	467
6.	Indonesia	56	86	81	100	323
7.	Japan	149	138	150	152	589
8.	Malaysia	144	160	144	144	592
9.	Netherlands	16	27	23	27	93
10.	Philippines	39	83	84	97	303
11.	People Rep. Of China	326	357	347	314	1344
12.	Singapore	22	24	45	23	114
13.	South Korea	100	127	103	91	421
14.	Thailand	143	194	166	166	669
15.	United Kingdom	95	72	114	148	429
16.	Vietnam	19	39	37	26	121

Source : FDA (1998b).

Table 4. Number of detention classified into food groups in the period of May-August 1998

No.	Food Group	Number of detention between May and August 1998				Total
		May	June	July	August	
1.	Cereal and Starch	44	79	65	55	243
2.	Macaroni and Noodle	13	44	19	24	100
3.	Snack	4	9	7	4	24
4.	Fish and seafood	379	501	434	356	1680
5.	Fruit products	170	109	119	188	695
6.	Vegetable products	386	361	470	344	1461
7.	Vegetable oil	4	1	2	2	9
8.	Herbs and Spices	108	85	75	62	330
9.	Soft drink	25	33	33	29	120
10.	Tea and Coffee	5	10	14	8	37
11.	Confectionary	42	36	60	96	234
12.	Cocoa bean and Cocoa products	22	22	25	68	137
13.	Soup	11	9	18	13	51
14.	Food additives	7	4	1	28	40

Source : FDA (1998b).

COCOA BEANS

Indonesia is one of the big exporter of Cocoa beans to the U.S. and the figure in 1998 was not less than 200 million dollars. The grooming value of Cocoa beans export, however, was also accompanied by the increasing number of automatic detention (Table 5). Cocoa beans detention in 1997 indicated that the number of detention reached its highest point in September. This could also be the case for the detention records in 1998. It seem the high number of detention was directly related with the peak season of harvest in August.

Other Cocoa beans producing countries such as Ivory coast, Brazil, and Papua Newguinea also exported their product to the U.S. Their detention records, however, much less than that of Indonesia. For example, among 68 detention cases in August 1998, 52 out of it originated from Indonesia. In addition, the reasons of detention of Indonesian Cocoa beans were more serious than other countries (Table 5). The presence of *Salmonella* in Cocoa bean indicates the poor hygienic condition of the environment and manufacturing practices.

Table 5. Number and Reason of detention for cocoa bean exported from cocoa producing countries in the period of May-August 1998

No.	Exporting Country	Number of detention (May-August 1998)				Total	Reason for Detention
		May	June	July	August		
1.	Indonesia	6	14	18	52	100	Filthy Soaked/wet Foreign object <i>Salmonella</i>
2.	New Guinea	7	-	-	8	15	Insanitary
3.	Ivory Coast	1	-	5	2	8	Filthy
4.	Brazil	2	-	-	2	4	Filthy
5.	Overall number of detention cases reported	22	22	25	68	137	

Sources : FDA (1998b)

FISHERY PRODUCTS

Detention records on fish and seafood were not only issued to developing countries, but also delivered to developed countries. The number of detention, however, was higher in fishery products exported by developing countries than that of developed countries (Table 6). The reason for the detention was mostly due to the presence with the existing quality standards. Another reason for the detention was due to the presence of pathogenic

bacteria such as *Salmonella* or *Listeria* and toxin contamination. The presence of these contaminants could pose significant food safety hazards to consumers. Many of the fishery products were found to have irregularities in its label, list of ingredients, net weight, name and address of manufacturers. This irregularity is easier to be corrected than the non-conformance on the quality and safety specifications. Most of the labeling mistakes were found in canned fish products, while *Salmonella* and *Listeria* were found in frozen shrimp or fish. *Listeria* contamination in fishery products is less likely to be found in tropical countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Philippines.

Table 6. Number and reason of detention of fisheries products exported by selected countries in August 1998

No.	Exporting Country	Number of Detention	Reason for Detention
1.	Australia	8	Unsafe food additives, poisonous, insanitary
2.	Philippines	18	Filthy, manufacturer not registered, unsafe food additive, foreign object, inconspicuous, labeling, no name, <i>Salmonella</i> , unsafe coloring, no list of ingredients, no schedule process, no english label
3.	India	50	Filthy, no name and address, nutrition label, foreign object, <i>Salmonella</i> , insanitary
4.	Indonesia	30	<i>Salmonella</i> , filthy, foreign object, poisonous
5.	Japan	10	Filthy, no name and address, not net content, no english label, nutrition label, <i>Listeria</i> , unsafe coloring
6.	Canada	4	Poisonous, <i>Listeria</i>
7.	South Korea	16	No schedule process, not registered manufacturer, <i>Listeria</i> , no name and address, no net content, no english label, no usual name, nutrition label, ni list of ingredients, poisonous
8.	Malaysia	8	<i>Salmonella</i> , filthy, no schedule process
9.	Mexico	23	Poisonous, no name and address, no net content, nutrition label, filthy, <i>Salmonella</i>
10.	Thailand	46	<i>Salmonella</i> , filthy, foreign object
11.	Vietnam	17	<i>Salmonella</i> , filthy, no name and address, nutrition label, no net content insanitary

Source : FDA (1998b)

MISCELLANEOUS PRODUCTS

Indonesia's export of exotic agricultural products is limited to canned fruit and vegetables. On the other hand, Thailand capable of exporting more diversified exotic products such as tamarind in the form of whole and

frozen, juice, young leaves, paste, and candy (Table 7). The Philippine showed its diversified products from coconut which include coconut milk, juice, candy, desiccated, shredded, grated and nata de coco. These are coconut products that Indonesia is lacking, beside plenty

of coconut is being produced. This is also true for tamarind products. Therefore, tamarind and coconut products in Indonesia deserve a higher priority to be managed to compete in the global market.

Table 7. Comparison of number and reason of detention of food products exported from Indonesia, Thailand, and Philippines in August 1998

No.	Name of Food Product	INDONESIA		THAILAND		PHILIPPINES	
		Number	Reason	Number	Reason	Number	Reason
1.	Coconut (candy)			3	Color additive label, aflatoxin		
2.	Coconut (milk)			2	Preservative label, no schedule process, manufacturer not registered		
3.	Coconut (juice)			1	No schedule process		
4.	Coconut (desiccated)					1	Unsafe additives, excessive sulfite
5.	Coconut (string)					3	No schedule process
6.	Coconut (young, shedded)					2	Salmonella, sulfite label
7.	Coconut (grated)					1	Salmonella
8.	Coconut (gcl/nata)					7	Excessive sulfite, no schedule process, no list of ingredients, false labeling
9.	Tamarind (candy)			3	Filthy	1	Filthy
10.	Tamarind (seedless)			3	Filthy		
11.	Tamarind (juice)			5	Filthy, insanitary		
12.	Tamarind (paste)			3	Filthy, Soaked/wet		
13.	Tamarind (whole, frozen)			2	Filthy		
14.	Tamarind (young leaves)			2	Filthy, no schedule process		
15.	Palm Sugar			1	No schedule process	2	No schedule process
16.	Palm Fruit					11	Unsafe coloring excessive sulfite, no schedule process, sulfite label
17.	Rice Products			6	Filthy	5	Filthy, insanitary
18.	Bamboo Short			13	No schedule process, manufacturer not registered, inadequate acidification		
19.	Jack Fruit					7	Excessive sulfite, no schedule process, inadequate acidification
20.	Cocoa bean	52	Filthy, Salmonella				
21.	Coffee bean	2	Filthy				
22.	Egg Products					6	Salmonella, no list of ingredients, no schedule process

No.	Name of Food Product	INDONESIA		THAILAND		PHILIPPINES	
		Number	Reason	Number	Reason	Number	Reason
23.	Fish (frozen)	10	<i>Salmonella</i> , filthy, poisonous	14	<i>Salmonella</i> , filthy, <i>Listeria</i>	4	<i>Salmonella</i> , filthy, unsafe additives, no english label
24.	Fish (canned)	1	Filthy	2	Filthy	6	No schedule process
25.	Fish (dried)			3	<i>Salmonella</i> , filthy	6	Filthy, foreign object, no list of ingredients
26.	Shrimp (frozen)	12	Insanitary, filthy, <i>Salmonella</i> , foreign object	8	<i>Salmonella</i> , foreign object, filthy, insanitary	3	<i>Salmonella</i>
27.	Shrimp (canned)	3	Filthy	9	<i>Salmonella</i> , filthy, foreign object		
28.	Shrimp (dried)	1	Insanitary				
29.	Snail (canned)	2	Manufacturer not registered, no schedule process, nutrition label, no net content				

Source : FDA (1998b)

CONCLUSION

Detention of fishery products was mostly due to the presence of filth, toxin, and *Salmonella*, while cocoa beans and other food products were detained due to the presence of filth, foreign objects, and *Salmonella*. The detention by the FDA of food imported from Indonesia over the past few years should be placed as the first priority by manufacturers, exporters, and regulatory agencies. A nation-wide and systematic measure must be planned and strictly implemented to decrease or eliminate the number of detention in the future. The fact that detention notices have also been issued to other Asian countries should not be used as an excuse for us to take no action.

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