

EXPERIENCE ON "EQUIVALENCE"

Submission by Fiji

A. POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

(i) *HTFA treated products for New Zealand market*

1. Fiji uses HTFA (Hot Forced Air Treatment) as a quarantine measure for exporting paw-paws, mangoes and eggplants to New Zealand. There have been no hiccups with Fiji HTFA treated commodities entering the New Zealand markets. Fiji has developed quarantine protocols with New Zealand on specific agricultural produce, particularly fruits and vegetables.

(ii) *Fiji fish for Japanese market*

2. The Japanese market accepts exported fish from Fiji, provided that it is certified as collected from Fiji Waters. Japan has clearly stated that the certification is an assurance that the exported fish is not from waters that have been identified as having high mercury levels.

B. NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE

(i) *HTFA treated commodities not accepted into the Australian market*

3. Australia requested Fiji to provide HTFA treatment facility data. The requested data has been provided but Australia has still not made a decision on whether to accept Fiji HTFA treated products or not. Instead the Australia Quarantine and Inspection Service has continuously stated that Fiji needs to do more research on its quarantine treatments since they are not satisfied with the research data Fiji has provided. The end result is that we cannot export HFTA treated products to Australia. This means that Fiji paw-paw, mangoes and eggplants cannot be exported to Australia.

(ii) *Indiscriminate fumigation of exported products – Australia*

4. Australia continues indiscriminate fumigation of root crops exported from Fiji including vegetables such as taro leaves, bele and okra. Fumigation is supposed to be carried out only if a pest found in a consignment is identified as a potential threat to agriculture. However, this is not the case. Exported root crops and vegetables from Fiji to Australia are fumigated even if only household pests are found in consignments. This results in the considerable reduction of product shelf life and losses to the industry.

(iii) *HTFA treated products not accepted for transshipment*

5. For your information, the HTFA treatment was developed in Hawaii for products exported to US mainland destinations. Hawaii exports HTFA treated products to the US mainland while Fiji is not even allowed to transship HTFA treated products via Hawaii to Canada. This means that export to the United States of HTFA treated products from Fiji are totally out of the picture.

(iv) *Fiji Marlin not accepted into the Australian market*

6. Australia has not accepted fish from Fiji – specifically Marlin for export since 1997. A high level of mercury found in exported fish is being used as the reason for this non-acceptance of Marlin from Fiji for export to the Australian market. What Fiji needs from Australia is scientific evidence of tests carried out on exported fish from Fiji that shows high mercury levels.

C. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

(i) *Enhancing local capacity*

7. WTO and other Donor Agencies could facilitate the enhancing of local capacity in the areas such as pest risk assessment, laboratory analysis and testing in compliance with international standards and strengthening of local institutions in the understanding of Codex standards.

(ii) *Provision of scientific evidence by import country*

8. Importing countries should provide sound scientific evidence on analysis carried out to justify non-acceptance of Fiji products. This would facilitate recognition of equivalence where the exporting country carries out measures that will ensure products exported comply with importing country standards which are scientifically based.
