

Pangasius farmers meet in Vietnam to discuss standards

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Vietnamese pangasius farmers, retailers and processors gathered Wednesday to discuss the worlds first-ever draft standards for pangasius farming.

The two-day workshop was attended by experts from the World Wildlife Fund's Pangasius Aquaculture Dialogue group (PAD), who have worked with local people to help draw up the guidelines. Work on the standards started in 2007 at the WWF's initiative. Since then, they have collected opinions from every party involved in the pangasius farming industry, with the aim of introducing internationally accepted standards that both protect the environment and benefit society.

The standards will be applied to two types of fish raised in Vietnam from 2011: tra (pangasianodon hypophthalmus), and basa (pangasius bocourti).

Regulations are expected to address environmental and social issues arising from fish farming, legal compliance to the use of land and water, water pollution, management of feed and chemicals, safety, and the health of pangasius farmers. Hundreds of farmers, mostly small operations, have joined in the formulation of the draft standards, which are being developed in a transparent manner in line with guidelines issued by the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling Alliance (ISEAL). Flavio Corsin, WWF Vietnam's senior aquaculture advisor, underlined the importance of the standards, saying world demand for pangasius is rising fast and Vietnam is one of the world's major suppliers.

According to the Vietnamese Association of Seafood Exporters and Processors (VASEP), farmed pangasius output in Vietnam grew to 1.1 million metric tons last year, up from 400,000 metric tons in 2005, earning the country \$1.4 billion (€974.6 million).

The WWF has so far organized eight similar seminars, to gather opinions from over 2,000 people on how to formulate farming standards for 12 types of seafood.

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