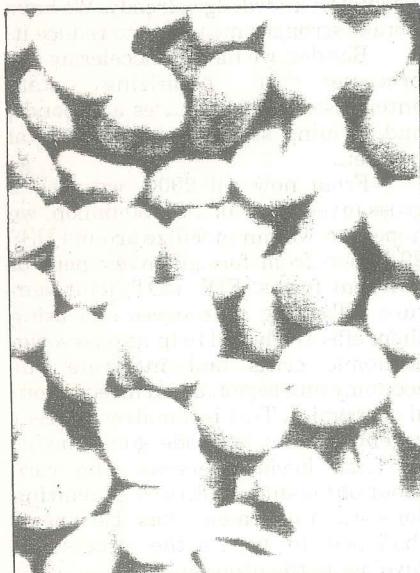


Vietnam continues to be an affiliate member of ICO in order to form business relations with other countries, to get timely information about prices and market demand, and secure a fixed price for our exports. Vietnam Coffee Association had better play a more active role in finding a good niche for Vietnam coffee in multimillion-tonne market of the USA.

As for the government's plan to concentrate coffee companies and limit number of coffee exporters, it's a necessary plan in the distant future. But at present, when the Vietnam coffee business has just recovered after a long dull period, coffee planters and traders go short of capital, the banks can't supply medium and long-term loans... this plan should be carried out step by step in order to keep coffee trading in this year's harvest from disorder. At present time, there are at least 25 big exporters in nearly one hundred companies trading coffee bean. These exporters have had desirable source of capital, technology and managerial skill along with stable markets in foreign countries.

In short, developing coffee bean into one of Vietnam's staples for export requires a lot of attempts, and the government plays a decisive role in this task. This product has a bright future and it needs the government's help such as supplying loans of low interest, allowing investment allowances, giving price support if necessary... in order to help the planters feel secure about their business, so they can invest more money in widening the area, and improving the yield and quality of their coffee bean. With appropriate measures taken, the Vietnam coffee bean can get a deserving position in the world markets and Vietnam will be a exporter of this high-profit product.



SPICED DRIED SEAFOOD FROM VIETNAM

by PHẠM HỒNG VÂN

Seafood processing business in HCMC has seen healthy development, not to say a boom, in recent years.

In fact, in a period of rapid economic growth, both state-run and private companies in this business have competed fiercely for local and foreign markets.

Canned fish or squid for export in different forms is not unusual thing, but one of the newest success stories is the rise of a new item: instant spiced and dried seafood. This product is ordered in large quantities by foreign markets recently but local manufacturers can't fill these orders.

This product isn't made from expensive fishes such as mudfish, trout... but from cheap ones which are food for the ordinary people, such as: anchovy, selachian, ray fish and various kinds of fresh-water fish. Shrimp and squid's arm can also be dried and spiced and sold quickly in foreign markets.

Chợ Lớn Food Processing Factory is one of the big manufacturers of this product. Nguyễn Ngọc Trung, its technical manager, has a lot of experience in producing this product.

At first sight, one can easily think that it's very simple to produce this product: just spicing and drying. But it's easier said than done. One should pay the price for any success and a lot of studies were done and a lot of failures were undergone. According to Nguyễn Ngọc Trung, the most difficult task is to choose a spice suitable to certain kind of dried fish. Besides, there are a lot of problems such as keeping the dried fish from breaking, choosing an appropriate process of spicing for each kind of dried fish, making attractive package... It's hard to satisfy the appetite of customers: they want to make dried anchovy peppery-hot and sweet, dried selachian or squid's arm sweet and not salty...

At present, Chợ Lớn Food Processing factory produces a line of 15 items. Their products are sold in packets of 25g. The price of each packet sold in Japanese supermarket is from US\$ 1 to 2. Over 100 tonnes of their products were exported to Japan last year. This product has also made its appearance in West European countries and ex-USSR states.

Foreign consumers like Vietnam spiced and dried seafood because its quality is goods, its price is cheaper than its counterparts from Singapore or Thailand, its taste is fine and as a matter of course, it is supported heartily by Vietnamese expatriates.

In the market economy, both state-run and private companies can take part in developing the national economy if they can find out the right market, the right demand and the right product even if it is only a small thing such as the cheapest fish ♣