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Market Advisory Council (MAC) negotiates EU-Thailand Free Trade Agreement for aquacultureÂ

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TheÂ **Market Advisory Council (MAC)**Â provided recommendations to theÂ **European Commission**Â concerning the ongoing**Â negotiations for an EU-Thailand Free Trade Agreement**, which were relaunched in 2023. Â

In a yearly average between 2020 and 2022, the EU imported 39.644 tons of fishery and aquaculture products from Thailand for EUR 213 million, while exporting 18.153 tons valued at EUR 37 million. The main product imported into the EU from Thailand is prepared and preserved fish, of which canned and preserved tuna represents the majority of the volume.

According to MAC members, the European Commission should:

1. **Guarantee policy consistency on the fight against IUU fishing & against forced labour**, including through the introduction of clear provisions on the three pillars of sustainability and international governance, explicit references to the relevant ILOâ??s conventions, and use of all tools available under EU law.
2. **Take into account ongoing legislative developments in Thailand**Â and the potential rollback of standards concerning the fight against IUU fishing & against forced labour.
3. **Identify canned tuna and tuna loins products as â??sensitiveâ?•**, keeping in mind the competitiveness of the Thai industry, the differences in sustainability standards, and the potential negative economic and employment effects.
4. **Incorporate the EUâ??s preferential rules of origin**, as derived from the Customs Code.

Pierre CommÃ¨re, Chair of the Working Group 2 (EU Markets),Â highlighted:Â â??Thailand is a highly competitive country in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Therefore, the European Commission must account for potential impacts of a FTA on the competitive balance, the economy, and on employment. This is specially the case on the tuna sector for which a high degree of sensitivity has been identified in terms of defensive interest of the EU sector. Further, an ambitious FTA should incorporate clear provisions on the sustainable management of living marine resources and aquaculture products, on the fight against IUU fishing, and on decent labour.

For the fisheries and aquaculture sector, the three pillars of sustainability (social, environmental, and economic) and international governance are fundamental. Therefore, the Free Trade Agreement are expected to include chapters that guarantee the effective implementation and control of compliance with regulations, to guarantee a level-playing-field.

The EU-Thailand trade in goods was worth over â?¬42 billion in 2022, while trade in services was worth over â?¬8 billion in 2020. The EU is Thailandâ??s 4th largest trade partner. Thailand is the 4th most important trading partner for the EU in the ASEAN region and 25th worldwide. The EU is the 3rd largest investor in Thailand, representing around 10% of the total Foreign Direct Investment in the country, while being the 2nd largest destination of Thai Foreign Investment.