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Organic shrimp controversy in Sweden

Organic aquaculture, particularly shrimp farming, is one of the more difficult organic systems to manage. Furthermore, in contrast to the well accepted methods of organic crop production, organic aquaculture faces resistance from within the circle of environment activists. Since their market launch in Sweden organic shrimp from Indonesia have been the subject of a controversy involving four parties, namely the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (Sweden), Naturland (Germany), Coop Konsum (Sweden), and Alter Trade Japan (Japan).

Industrial shrimp farming is reportedly one of the reasons more than 50% of the mangrove forests worldwide have disappeared. Intensive shrimp farming also involves a high use of chemicals and antibiotics that contaminate the surrounding area. For these reasons the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) has urged consumers to refrain from consuming farmed shrimp since the mid 1990s. The SSNC views shrimp farming as a particularly problematic subject, and does not support eco-labelling of any shrimp farming. Their public position in Sweden, as well as the fact that they are a member of KRAV, the main private certification body in Sweden, were partly the reasons why KRAV decided not to draw up criteria for certification of organic shrimp.

Discussions regarding the limita-

tions of certifying farmed shrimp took place between SSNC and Coop Konsum (Coop), a Swedish retail chain, during 2001-2002. However, the objections raised by SSNC evidently did not dissuade Coop from going ahead with their marketing launch of certified organic shrimp in Sweden. Consequently, shrimp from Sidoarjo, Indonesia, certified by Naturland have been for sale in Sweden since July 2002. Alter Trade Japan (ATJ), a Japanese organisation established to promote equity and social justice through trade, manages the project and is the certified operator.

Based on visits to the operation site in May 2002 and October 2003, SSNC published two reports, titled 'Critical Analysis of Certified Organic Shrimp Aquaculture in Sidoarjo, Indonesia' by Dr Patrick

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