

8. INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION OF FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS

8.1 The Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission effected a mission from 23 to 27 January and made recommendations concerning the legislation, official control and verification procedures, empowerment of officers, auditing of establishments, inspection procedures for vessels, sampling procedures and the testing laboratories to the Competent Authority (CA) – Division of Veterinary Services (DVS).

8.2 The export of fish and fish product regulations 2006 was promulgated in February (Government Notice 27 of 2006) under the Fisheries and Marine Resources Act to empower the Division Veterinary Services as the Competent Authority. These regulations were amended and subsequently replaced by the Government Notice No. 148 of 2006 on 2 October 2006.

8.3 An action plan to implement the recommendations was prepared and sent to the EU in July. Meetings were held with the fish business operators to consolidate public/private partnership for the implementation of EU norms at all stages of production.

8.4 A consultant was hired in July for a period of six weeks to assist in the inspection and certification of fish and fishery products intended for export to the EU. In order to fulfill the recommendations of the FVO mission, additional staff from the Fisheries Division was posted at the One Stop Shop and provided training by the consultant whose service was extended for a period of one year as from October.

8.5 Four laboratories were designated to carry out official testing of water, ice and fish and fishery products. Sampling of water and fish products was started by the CA as per an established sampling programme.

8.6 An inspection manual for fish, fishery products and aquaculture, a certification manual and a manual of procedures for the monitoring of fishing vessels, freezer vessels, for the processing and storing of fish and fishery products were prepared.

8.7 The officers of the CA and representatives of fish business operators were trained by an EU consultant in the principles of HACCP and inspection of fish and fishery products for periods of three weeks and one week respectively.

8.8 A fee structure on the inspection and certification of fish and fishery products intended for export was set up through Government Notice No 148 of 2006.

8.9 A residue monitoring plan was under preparation for aquaculture farms. Fish samples from the marine fish farm were collected by the CA and sent to a reference laboratory in Italy for testing. Results were found to be in compliance with EU norms.