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**EVFTA VỀ XUẤT KHẨU THỦY SẢN VIỆT NAM:  
CƠ HỘI VÀ THÁCH THỨC**

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## Tóm tắt

Hiệp định Thương mại tự do Liên minh Châu Âu - Việt Nam (EVFTA), có hiệu lực từ tháng 8 năm 2020, là một hiệp định toàn diện đảm bảo lợi ích cân bằng cho cả Việt Nam và Liên minh Châu Âu. Hiệp định này tạo ra lợi thế cạnh tranh cho các sản phẩm xuất khẩu của Việt Nam, đặc biệt trong lĩnh vực thủy sản, về thuế nhập khẩu so với đối thủ, đồng thời cung cấp cơ hội cho các doanh nghiệp Việt Nam mở rộng thị phần tại khu vực Châu Âu. Dựa trên thông tin thứ cấp thu thập từ các nguồn đáng tin cậy và mô hình SWOT, bài nghiên cứu này phân tích những cơ hội và những thách thức cần chú ý mà EVFTA có thể mang lại cho xuất khẩu thủy sản của Việt Nam. Cuối cùng, nhóm tác giả đề xuất các giải pháp thực tiễn nhằm đảm bảo tăng trưởng bền vững cho ngành xuất khẩu thủy sản Việt Nam.

**Từ khóa:** EVFTA, EU, Việt Nam, thủy sản, xuất khẩu

## EVFTA ON FISHERY EXPORTS OF VIETNAM: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

### Abstract

The Vietnam-European Union Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), which came into effect in August 2020, is a comprehensive agreement that ensures a balanced benefit for both Vietnam and the EU. This agreement creates a competitive advantage for Vietnam's export products, especially in the fishery sector, in terms of import duties compared to competitors as well as provides a chance for Vietnamese businesses to expand market share in the European region. Based on the secondary information collected from reliable sources and the SWOT matrix, this research analyzes not only the opportunities EVFTA may bring to fishery exports of Vietnam but also some notable challenges. Lastly, the authors conclude with practical recommendations aimed at sustainable growth for Vietnam's fishery export industry.

**Keywords:** EVFTA, EU, Vietnam, fishery, export

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### 1. Introduction

In an era marked by global economic integration, the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) is a significant step for Vietnam's economic growth. The EU is a key trading partner for Vietnam. This agreement will enhance trade between Vietnam and the EU, ensuring positive outcomes and boosting Vietnam's role in global trade networks. Importantly, the EVFTA will also drive domestic reforms, strengthening Vietnam's economy, competitiveness, and innovation.

The EVFTA, which came into force on August 1, 2020, represents a strategic partnership that holds immense promise for various sectors, including the country's vibrant fisheries industry. The fisheries sector plays a vital role in Vietnam's economy, contributing significantly to employment, export revenue, and food security. With the EVFTA in place, the Vietnamese fisheries industry has gained unprecedented access to the European market, offering a potential boost to its global standing.

This paper offers a detailed look at the EVFTA's impact on Vietnam's fisheries industry. We'll explore how the agreement opens up new opportunities by easing market entry, cutting tariffs, and promoting cooperation. We will also tackle obstacles like meeting regulations, facing competition, and meeting sustainability standards. Finally, we'll suggest ways to ensure sustainable growth in this crucial sector of Vietnam's economy.

## **2. Research overview and research methodology**

### ***2.1. Literature review***

#### *2.1.1. Previous research*

The EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) is a major trade deal between the EU and Vietnam, giving Vietnam's fishery industry more access to the EU market. With this agreement, the EU will remove tariffs on 99% of Vietnamese exports right away and gradually decrease them for the rest.

Duong, H. N. (2020) highlights Vietnam's access to the extensive seafood market within the EU, comprising 27 member countries with a population exceeding 700 million and a GDP surpassing \$15 trillion, accounting for about 22% of global GDP. The EVFTA signing cuts tariffs to 0% on about 90% of goods exported to the EU. Previously, Vietnam dealt with average tariff rates of 7% on EU exports, with seafood facing tariffs as high as 10.8%.

Pham & Dang (March 2022) concluded that from 2011-2020, the export of Viet Nam's goods to the EU market has recorded encouraging achievements. Export growth has been strong, averaging 13.13% per year (nearly matching the overall export growth of 14.6% per year).

To meet the EU's standards, the Vietnamese government and fishery producers need to invest in improving food safety and quality control measures.

Nguyen (February 2019) stated that Vietnam faces many challenges. Vietnam might lose its EU market access because it lacks capacity, faces weak competition, and struggles with slow economic reform, mainly due to state-owned enterprises. The EVFTA could keep Vietnam stuck in a cycle of low wages and skills.

Le & Tran (March 2022) emphasized the fierce competition in the EU seafood market. Many countries are promoting the export of agricultural products to the EU, so Vietnam will have to compete fiercely with many other competitors.

This report will combine insights from multiple studies and trade expertise to provide thorough analysis and actionable recommendations for development.

#### *2.1.2. Research gap*

While existing studies acknowledge the potential benefits of the European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) for Vietnam's fishery industry, there is a notable research gap in the depth of analysis regarding the specific challenges and opportunities within this sector. The

current literature highlights the overall positive impact of the EVFTA on Vietnam's exports to the EU, emphasizing the reduction in tariffs and increased market access. However, there is a lack of focused research on the intricacies of the fishery industry's adaptation to the agreement.

The studies by Duong (2020), Pham & Dang (2022), Nguyen (2019), and Le & Tran (2022) touch upon various aspects, such as export growth, competitiveness, institutional reforms, and potential challenges in meeting EU standards. Although the EVFTA presents an opportunity for Vietnam's fishery industry to expand its market access to the EU, the available research seems to provide a broad overview and lacks a detailed assessment of the specific impact on the seafood sector. There is a need for more comprehensive studies that delve into the nuances of how the agreement influences seafood exports, considering factors such as market competition, production scale, technology adoption, and adherence to quality and sustainability standards. Additionally, while the reports mention challenges associated with meeting higher EU food safety and sanitation standards, there is a research gap in terms of detailed exploration of these challenges. Future studies should focus on identifying specific obstacles, evaluating the extent of adjustments needed in food safety and quality control measures, and providing practical recommendations for the Vietnamese government and fishery producers to navigate these challenges successfully.

The identified research gap lies in the absence of comprehensive studies that specifically focus on the EVFTA's implications for Vietnam's fishery sector. An in-depth analysis should address issues such as the sector's current state, the specific challenges and opportunities arising from the agreement, and practical strategies for enhancing competitiveness while meeting EU standards. A more nuanced understanding of the fishery industry's response to the EVFTA is essential for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers seeking to contribute targeted insights and recommendations for sustainable development in the evolving trade landscape.

## ***2.2. Research methodology***

The author group employs a qualitative research method, which involves synthesizing, calculating, and analyzing secondary data from reliable official reports such as General Department of Customs, VCCI, Vietnam's Ministry of Industry and Trade, Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers (VASEP), etc. By analyzing the actual export situations from Vietnam to the European Union before and after the EVFTA agreement came into effect, the paper draws significant conclusions regarding the opportunities and challenges faced by Vietnam's fishery exports to the EU countries. Furthermore, recommendations for the Vietnamese government and domestic enterprises to effectively leverage the advantages presented by the EVFTA are also proposed.

## **3. Overview of EVFTA and its regulations affecting fishery exports of Vietnam**

### ***3.1. Overview of EVFTA***

The European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) is a comprehensive trade deal between the EU and Vietnam aimed at boosting economic ties and trade relations. Signed in June 2019 and coming into effect in August 2020, the agreement eliminates most tariffs on goods traded between the two parties, facilitates market access for services and investments, and promotes regulatory coherence. It is expected to create opportunities for businesses, increase bilateral trade, and contribute to economic growth in both regions. According to the European Commission, the EVFTA is "the most ambitious trade agreement ever concluded with a developing country."

### ***3.2. EVFTA's regulations about fishery export***

*Firstly*, the agreement eliminates 50% of tariffs immediately, with the rest phased out over 3 to 7 years. For instance, frozen and whole tiger shrimp have a 0% tariff from the start. Other shrimp products reduce tariffs over 3-5 years, while processed shrimp takes 7 years. Tra fish tariffs decrease over 3 years, except for smoked tra fish, which takes 7 years to hit 0%. Canned tuna and surimi fish paste have EU tariff quotas of 11.5 thousand tons and 500 tons, respectively.

*Secondly*, regarding origin rules: Vietnamese seafood exported to the EU must meet one of three criteria: (1) Purely Vietnamese origin; (2) Cumulated origin, made from EU/Vietnam materials and processed in Vietnam; (3) Fully produced in Vietnam, using some non-origin materials. The EVFTA also allows self-certification of origin alongside traditional Certificate of Origin issuance, streamlining the export process.

*Thirdly*, regarding technical trade barriers (TBT) under the EVFTA: Vietnam and the EU will collaborate on standardization and conformity assessments to streamline trade. They will align technical standards with international norms like ISO, IEC, ITU, and Codex, and consider each other's standards for equivalence as needed.

*Fourthly*, under the EVFTA, Vietnam and the EU adhere to WTO SPS rules and international standards (Codex, OIE, IPPC). They exchange lists of compliant food exporters and allow flexibility for Vietnam to meet SPS requirements, either through grace periods, proposing equivalent measures, or receiving technical support for gradual compliance improvements.

*Fifthly*, concerning trade defense measures, anti-dumping, and countervailing measures: Vietnam and the EU agree that these measures may be used based on fairness, transparency, and compliance with WTO regulations while considering the interests of the party subject to these measures.

*Sixthly*, regarding intellectual property rights (IPR) commitments: The agreement addresses issues to prevent misrepresentation of product origin and outlines procedures for complaints regarding trademark violations and geographical indications. The EU will protect 39 geographical indications from Vietnam, including Quang Ninh oysters, Ha Long squid, and Phu Quoc fish sauce.

*Seventhly*, regarding labor commitments: Labor used in seafood production for export must comply with International Labour Organization (ILO) regulations and its Declaration on

Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This includes promoting and implementing basic workplace rights principles effectively.

#### **4. Current status of Vietnam’s fishery exports to the EU market**

##### ***4.1. Vietnam’s fishery exports to the EU before the implementation of EVFTA***

In recent years, the European Union (EU) has been known as one of Vietnam's leading seafood export markets. From the EU's perspective, Vietnam is the second-largest supplier of seafood in the Asian region, behind China. The EU has a high demand for seafood imports, exceeding \$50 billion per year (MoIT, 2022).

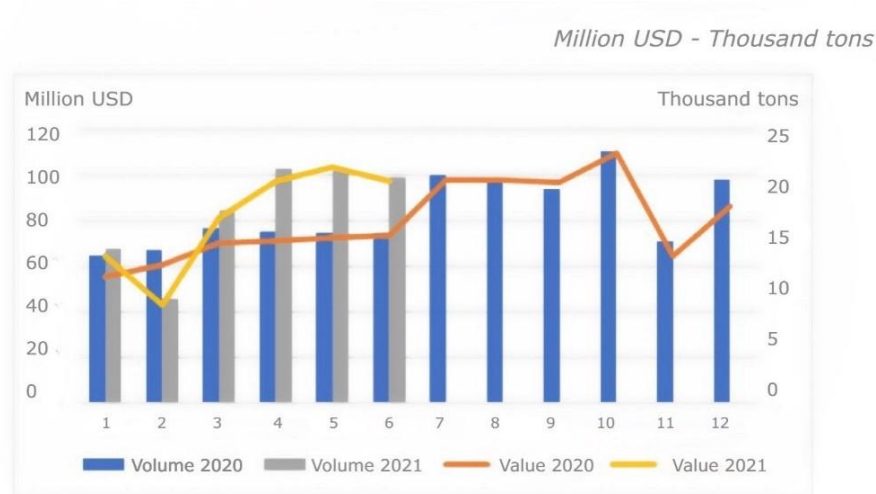
However, Vietnam's fishery exports to the EU faced difficulties in previous years before the effective implementation of EVFTA, especially from October 2017 when Vietnam received a “yellow card” from the European Commission (EC) for illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. This was the main reason for the consecutive decline in seafood exports to the EU for three years from 2018 to 2020, despite previous years' significant growth rates.

In terms of export value and export growth, in 2010, the EU was the leading market for Vietnam's seafood exports with a value of \$120.3 billion, accounting for 23.91% of the total seafood export value of the country (VASEP, 2010). However, the proportion of Vietnam's seafood exports to the EU has gradually declined to its lowest level in 2020, reaching 11.4%, which ranked the EU fourth (after the United States, Japan, and China) in terms of seafood export value (VASEP, 2020).

On August 1, 2020, EVFTA officially took effect, expected to create breakthrough opportunities for Vietnam's fishery exports to the EU market.

##### ***4.2. Vietnam’s fishery exports to the EU after the implementation of EVFTA***

Looking at the statistics in 2021, it can be seen that the seafood sector has seized opportunities from EVFTA. In 2021, the EU ranked third as a market for Vietnam's seafood exports, with an export value of \$107.7 billion, accounting for 12.1% of the total seafood export value of Vietnam (VASEP, 2021).



**Figure 1:** The volume and value of Vietnam's fishery exports to the EU by month in 2020 – 2021

**Source:** Calculated from statistics of the General Department of Vietnam Customs

The export figure to the EU in the first 6 months of 2021 shows that except for February, the export volume and value in each month of 2021 increased compared to the previous year.

In 2022, fishery exports to the EU market reached over \$1.3 billion, a 21.6% increase compared to 2021, particularly in the market of Portugal. Vietnam was the 9th largest seafood supplier to Portugal in the first 9 months of 2022, with a market share of 1.8%, equivalent to approximately over \$37 million, a 34.2% increase compared to 2021 (VASEP, 2023).

**Table 1:** Vietnam's fishery exports to EU markets in the third quarter of 2023

| Market      | Quarter III/2023 |              | Compared to Quarter III/2022 (%) |              |
|-------------|------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
|             | Tons             | Thousand USD | Tons                             | Thousand USD |
| EU          | 57.639           | 255.648      | -9,6                             | -27,6        |
| Germany     | 9.757            | 54.658       | -9,1                             | -26,3        |
| Netherlands | 8.860            | 44.317       | -18,2                            | -33,5        |
| Belgium     | 5.509            | 34.246       | -18,3                            | -33,1        |
| Italia      | 6.675            | 28.965       | 5,8                              | 5,6          |
| Spain       | 6.587            | 15.562       | 9                                | -23,6        |
| France      | 2.489            | 13.705       | -37,5                            | -49,1        |
| Poland      | 2.851            | 11.029       | -6,5                             | -20,5        |

**Source:** Calculated from statistics of the General Department of Vietnam Customs

**Table 2:** Vietnam's fishery exports to EU markets in the first nine months of 2023.

| Market      | 9 months/2023 |                 | Compared to 9 months/<br>2022 |                 | Percentage ratio –<br>9 months/2023 |                 |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
|             | Tons          | Thousand<br>USD | Tons                          | Thousand<br>USD | Tons                                | Thousand<br>USD |
| EU          | 164.087       | 713.725         | -13,5                         | -31,3           | 100                                 | 100             |
| Germany     | 25.650        | 139.886         | -8,9                          | -29,7           | 15,63                               | 19,6            |
| Netherlands | 28.246        | 133.468         | -24,9                         | -39,8           | 17,21                               | 18,7            |
| Belgium     | 14.555        | 92.264          | -28                           | -41,5           | 8,87                                | 12,93           |
| Italia      | 17.148        | 66.574          | -13,2                         | -15             | 10,45                               | 9,33            |
| Spain       | 18.932        | 44.528          | -11,6                         | -32,4           | 11,54                               | 6,24            |
| France      | 8.166         | 46.409          | -33,4                         | -41,9           | 4,98                                | 6,5             |
| Poland      | 7.034         | 32.546          | -17,4                         | -11,1           | 4,29                                | 4,56            |

**Source:** Calculated from statistics of the General Department of Vietnam Customs

In 2023, due to global uncertainties and decreased consumer demand, many major markets reduced their fishery imports from Vietnam. However, many countries in the EU are still considered a stable market. In the first 9 months of 2023 exporting to EU markets, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy were the four markets where Vietnamese seafood exports achieved the highest value and showed good growth compared to the same period in 2022. During that period, fishery exports from Vietnam decreased compared to the same period in 2022. However, there were still increases in seafood exports to other markets such as Spain, France, Poland, ...

The EU spent 29.2 billion USD to import 4.68 million metric tons of seafood in the first 7 months of 2023. Among these imports, fishery imported from outside the EU accounted for 72.55% of the quantity and 61.68% of the value, reaching 2.889 million metric tons of seafood with a value of 17.4 billion USD. Vietnam was the 9th largest fishery supplier to the EU, accounting for 3.65% of the quantity and 2.91% of the value of seafood imports from outside the EU (Eurostat, 2023).

Specifically, in the German market, in the first half of October 2023, catfish exports to Germany reached nearly \$2 million, nearly doubling compared to the same period in 2022 (VASEP, 2023). Similarly, in the Polish market, Vietnam's exports of tuna were thriving. Among the tuna products exported to this market, canned tuna accounted for the largest proportion, over 83%, and compared to the same period, this product group saw a significant increase of 211% (VASEP, 2023). In Italy, tuna exports increased 30 times in October 2023. With this growth rate, Italy has become the largest tuna importing market for Vietnam in the EU (General Department of Vietnam Customs, 2023).



Strict regulations on labeling, traceability of origin, quality, and food safety as well as regulations on monitoring the production and processing of seafood in accordance with HACCP, are the factors that prevent Vietnam's seafood exports from being accepted in the EU market. According to the World Bank (WITS), 97.5% of seafood imports into the EU are affected by Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) measures, and 99.7% of seafood imports into this market are affected by Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures.

Regulations aimed at combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing require imported seafood products entering the EU to possess a certification containing detailed information regarding the species, fishing location, fishing vessels, date of catch, and transshipment activities. Vietnam has been issued a yellow card by the EU since October 2017, indicating that seafood products harvested from the sea and exported to the EU during this period must undergo thorough origin verification to ensure compliance with IUU regulations. This requirement has compelled Vietnam to modify its fishing practices, resulting in delays, increased expenses, and a potential impact on product quality due to the verification process. Consequently, not only are Vietnam's exports of harvested seafood, such as tuna, squid, octopus, two-piece swim bladder, crab, and shellfish, etc. directly affected by the yellow card, but the exports of aquaculture products are also indirectly influenced as Vietnam's reputation suffers.

Furthermore, information regarding unsafe quality, sustainability in aquaculture, and issues related to labor conditions are factors contributing to the continuous decline in catfish exports to this market (World Bank, 2011).

Overall, the EU has been and continues to be Vietnam's second-largest seafood export market after the United States. According to experts' assessments, overall, Vietnam's seafood exports have shown signs of recovery since late 2023 and are likely to increase further in 2024, especially in the latter half of the year (VCCI, 2023). VASEP assesses that the demand for Vietnamese fishery in the EU is gradually increasing, and the EU is expected to be a bright spot for exports as it is considered to have a more stable economy compared to other key markets.

## **5. Analysis of opportunities, challenges, and SWOT matrix for fishery export activities of Vietnam since the execution of EVFTA**

### ***5.1. Opportunities***

*Firstly*, the European Union's tax reduction commitments under the EVFTA (European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement) represent a significant boon for Vietnam's seafood industry, paving the way for expanded exports to this lucrative market. Preceding the EVFTA, Vietnam already enjoyed some benefits from the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) preferential tax rates; however, these rates remained relatively high. With the EVFTA in place, nearly half of all tariff lines, including those about seafood, will witness reductions, with many high tariff lines plummeting to zero immediately. This reduction serves as a pivotal step in eliminating major

barriers that previously hindered Vietnamese seafood exports to the EU, fostering a more conducive trading environment.

*Secondly*, the EVFTA stands out as an unparalleled opportunity for Vietnam to gain a competitive edge over other seafood-exporting nations such as India, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines, which lack similar FTAs with the EU. Beyond mere market access facilitation, the EVFTA stimulates foreign investment inflows, fosters technological advancements, and promotes regional supply chain integration. These developments bode well for Vietnam's seafood industry, promising sustained growth and enhanced market presence in the foreseeable future.

*Thirdly*, the EVFTA brings forth avenues for technology transfer and innovation within Vietnam's fishery sector, facilitated through collaborative efforts with European experts. By leveraging the EU's technical support and engaging in partnerships with European fishery industries, Vietnamese seafood products stand to align with stringent EU import regulations, thus securing a formidable position in this expansive market. Notably, Article 6.15 of the EVFTA underscores the EU's commitment to providing tailored technical assistance to address Vietnam's specific compliance needs concerning EU SPS measures, underscoring the pivotal role of such support in enabling Vietnamese seafood exports to navigate the complexities of the EU market's import regulations successfully.

*Fourthly*, the commitments outlined in the EVFTA about TBT (Technical Barriers to Trade) and SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures) present unique opportunities for businesses to bolster their capacity to meet internationally recognized standards set forth by entities like Codex, IPPC, and OIE. Furthermore, Vietnam can actively engage in the development of international standards, ensuring that these standards align with the country's interests and priorities. This participation not only enhances Vietnam's standing in global trade but also empowers its seafood industry to adhere to best practices and remain competitive on a global scale.

*Fifthly*, the EVFTA empowers Vietnamese seafood businesses to voice their concerns regarding the EU's draft regulations on TBT and SPS, which, if excessively stringent, could impede trade and potentially contravene commitments outlined in the EVFTA and the WTO's TBT and SPS Agreements. Through mechanisms such as the Vietnam TBT and SPS office, Vietnamese stakeholders can effectively communicate their perspectives, enabling policymakers to consider and address industry-specific challenges while upholding international trade obligations.

*Lastly*, Vietnamese seafood products destined for the EU market stand to benefit from streamlined processes and reduced costs and inspection times as per the TBT and SPS regulations, thanks to commitments regarding mutual recognition of conformity assessment results under the EVFTA. This mutual recognition framework not only enhances efficiency but also instills confidence among exporters and importers, fostering smoother trade transactions and bolstering Vietnam's reputation as a reliable supplier of high-quality seafood products in the EU market.

## 5.2. Challenges

*Firstly*, the challenge in meeting the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regulations for seafood is becoming progressively rigorous, aligning with evolving consumption trends that prioritize health-friendly, environmentally sustainable practices. As consumers worldwide demand products with higher standards of safety, traceability, and sustainability, seafood exporters face mounting pressure to adhere to stringent regulations governing production, processing, and labeling. This necessitates continuous investments in advanced technologies, quality control measures, and supply chain transparency to ensure compliance and maintain market access.

*Secondly*, the challenge lies in implementing the European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), which introduces extensive commitments regarding SPS measures. These commitments include novel concepts such as the Single Entity, Pre-listing, and Regionalization, which require intricate technical understanding and close cooperation between Vietnam's ministerial and sectoral agencies and their EU counterparts. Building trust and fostering cooperation are crucial for effective implementation, as these concepts reshape regulatory frameworks and require adaptive strategies to ensure harmonization and mutual benefit.

*Thirdly*, the challenge extends to setting up and operating institutions effectively aligned with TBT and SPS commitments outlined in the EVFTA. For instance, the establishment of a Committee on SPS Measures, as mandated by the SPS chapter, demands substantial changes in organizational structures, operational mechanisms, and the capacity of officials overseeing regulatory compliance. This necessitates robust institutional frameworks, adequate resources, and ongoing capacity-building initiatives to navigate complexities and ensure seamless enforcement of regulatory standards.

*Fourthly*, challenges persist in coordinating construction activities, optimizing information-sharing mechanisms, and fostering collaboration between seafood export enterprises and governmental agencies responsible for oversight. Efficient communication channels, streamlined processes, and enhanced transparency are imperative to address regulatory requirements, mitigate risks, and facilitate smooth operations across the seafood export sector.

*Fifthly*, compliance assessment and certification costs for exported seafood are poised to increase due to stricter technical and food safety measures, both domestically and in export markets like the EU. To remain competitive, exporters must invest in advanced technologies, training programs, and quality assurance measures to meet evolving regulatory demands without compromising profitability or market access.

*Sixthly*, Vietnam's exported seafood faces intensified competition from domestically produced seafood in newly joined EU countries and products from established seafood exporters outside the EU. This heightened competition necessitates differentiation strategies, innovation in product offerings, strategic market positioning, and robust marketing campaigns to capture market share, sustain growth, and solidify Vietnam's presence in the highly competitive EU seafood market.

### 5.3. SWOT Matrix

|   | <b>OPPORTUNITIES (O)</b>  | <b>THREATS (T)</b>  |
|---|---|---|
|   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Boosting exports thanks to commitments to reduce taxes.</li> <li>2. Gaining a competitive advantage over other seafood-exporting countries.</li> <li>3. Gaining a position in a large market.</li> <li>4. Improving the ability to meet the standards of international organizations.</li> <li>5. Expressing trade concerns about TBT and SPS.</li> <li>6. Saving costs and time for inspection according to TBT and SPS regulations thanks to the mutual recognition mechanism...</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TBT and SPS regulations for seafood are increasingly strict.</li> <li>2. Extensive and new commitment to TBT and SPS.</li> <li>3. Effectively operate institutions according to commitments related to TBT and SPS.</li> <li>4. Information sharing and coordination mechanism between export enterprises and state management agencies.</li> <li>5. Compliance assessment and certification costs for exported seafood products may increase.</li> <li>6. Fierce competition.</li> </ol> |
| <b>STRENGTHS (S)</b>  | <b>Strategies (S-O)</b>   | <b>Strategies (S-T)</b>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strategic geographical location and favorable natural conditions.</li> <li>2. The fisheries industry is a traditional industry with a long history of development.</li> <li>3. Human resources in the fisheries industry are abundant, hard-working, and diligent.</li> <li>4. There is a connection between businesses and growing areas.</li> </ol> | <p>- S(1,2) and O(1,4): Being proactive in raw material sources to take advantage of rules of origin and enjoy preferential tariffs.</p> <p>- S(4) and O(5,6): Strengthening measures to protect the rights of fishermen and workers.</p>   | <p>- S(4) and T(1,3,4,5): Strengthening the support function of management agencies in providing information; Strengthening management and supervision of authorities to create products that meet EU market regulations.</p> <p>- S(3,4) and T(1,2,6): Regularly proactively research the market, proactively respond to EU market regulations, strengthen trade promotion activities, build and develop</p>   |

brands for Vietnamese seafood products in the EU market.

| WEAKNESSES (W)   | Strategies (W-O)   | Strategies (W-T)   |
|--|--|--|
| 1. The proportion of farming areas that meet technical standards is still low. | - W(1) and O(3,4): Planning aquaculture areas applying high technology.  | - W(1,3) and T(1,2,3): Applying scientific and technological achievements  |
| 2. A lot of breeds and food have to be imported.                               | - W(2,3) and O(2): Ensuring sustainable aquaculture and exploitation activities, in accordance with national and international laws. | in the process of farming, processing, preserving and transporting to improve productivity and product quality, meeting strict regulations of the EU market.   |
| 3. Aquaculture and fishing techniques are still limited.                       | - W(4) and O(1,2): Closer coordination between the State, scientists, businesses, and farmers in the farming and production process. | - W(2,4,5) and T(2,5,6): Promoting seafood processing activities, diversifying products, strengthening cooperation links with domestic and foreign partners, forming a seafood export supply chain, and applying the circular economy model to create a source of exported aquatic products with optimal prices, ensuring quality, hygiene and epidemiological safety. |
| 5. Not fully meeting IUU regulations.  | - W(5) and O(4): More and more determination to implement measures to meet EU IUU regulations.                                       |  |

## 6. Recommendations

To enhance Vietnamese seafood exports to the European Union (EU) market under the framework of the European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), a comprehensive approach is necessary. Firstly, it's imperative to continue implementing aquaculture zoning plans and specific action programs aimed at ensuring sustainable fisheries management. This involves adhering to environmental regulations, mitigating pollution, and preserving aquatic habitats to meet the stringent sustainability standards demanded by the EU market. Secondly, embracing advancements in science and technology throughout the seafood production chain is vital.

Investing in research and development to improve aquaculture techniques, processing methods, and transportation infrastructure can boost productivity, enhance product quality, and align with EU market regulations. Additionally, fostering collaboration between seafood processing companies and domestic/international stakeholders to diversify product offerings and establish efficient supply chains is crucial for long-term competitiveness.

Furthermore, proactive sourcing of raw materials or strategic imports from markets offering preferential tariffs under the EVFTA is essential. By identifying and capitalizing on sourcing opportunities, Vietnamese seafood exporters can optimize cost structures and maintain competitiveness in the EU market. It's equally important to implement robust source traceability measures to comply with EU regulations. Utilizing technologies such as blockchain and electronic documentation systems enables accurate tracing of seafood origins, ensuring compliance with EU standards and combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing practices. Moreover, conducting regular market research to understand EU consumer preferences and regulatory requirements is imperative. Strengthening trade promotion activities and building the Vietnamese seafood brand in the EU market will help increase market share and foster consumer trust.

Lastly, ensuring the protection of fishermen and workers' rights is essential for sustaining long-term industry growth. Implementing policies and regulations to safeguard labor rights and provide a safe working environment is crucial. This involves establishing monitoring mechanisms to enforce compliance with labor standards and mitigate risks associated with labor disputes or violations. By following these multifaceted strategies, Vietnam can maximize the benefits of the EVFTA, capitalize on market opportunities, and enhance its position as a key player in the global seafood trade, particularly in the lucrative EU market.

## **7. Conclusion**

The EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) offers great chances for Vietnam's fishery exports. It means lower taxes and better ways to compete. Getting into European markets becomes easier, and Vietnam can sell more kinds of products there. Working with European partners and getting more investment helps the industry grow. But there are challenges, like following European rules and taking care of the environment. Suggestions include getting help from the government, following rules, and selling different things in different places. Vietnam needs to focus on meeting European rules, making better products, using new technology, and trying new ideas. To succeed in the long run, Vietnam should work closely with European partners to share knowledge. As the EVFTA happens, Vietnam's fishery industry faces both good and tough times. It's important to protect the environment and make sure everyone in the industry gets treated fairly. Joining in global efforts and getting involved in regional projects can help deal with the tricky parts. Finding a balance between making money, looking after nature, and treating people well will keep Vietnam's fishery industry strong and bring a bright future.

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