LEWISBURG - Crawfish from China are now being shipped to Louisiana, and local farmers say the product can be purchased and shipped so cheaply that the crawfish industry in South Louisiana could be decimated. Most of the farmers are deeply worried about the problem, and there were a few angry outbursts from local farmers who gathered with public officials to address the problem.

The crawfish from China is legal so long as it is free of contamination and clearly labeled to indicate that the product is imported from China. Congressman Clyde Holloway said, however, that there are presently investigators in China checking to see if the product is subsidized by the government. If it is, it will be possible to prevent importation of it into Louisiana.

Officials at the meeting, which was called by Congressman Holloway, included numerous local politicians, representatives of the local crawfish industry, and crawfish processors who are distributing the Chinese product. "They use huge quantities of pesticide to grow their crawfish, and they are grown in their country at all. As a result, the crawfish are grown in China, but Congressmen Holloway said that such a law will be difficult to pass through Congress. He added that crawfish are now being grown in Australia, Spain, and Turkey.

Mr. Johnson of the State Department of Agriculture said that there are now four species of crawfish being raised in China. Ironically one of the species is the red swamp crawfish which was introduced into China sometimes during the 50s and 40s and now flourishes in that area.

Chinese rice farmers will not allow crawfish on their farms, he said, because of the damage they cause to young rice. The crawfish are grown instead in ponds where the Chinese are involved in various kinds of aquaculture. They shipped 50 metric tons to Sweden last year, he said. That impacted the local industry because Sweden is one of our largest import markets. He added that it is known that one shipment of 45,000 pounds has been sent to the United States. Some of it wound up in Houston where it was mislabeled and seized, he said.

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By JERRY HOFFPAUR
LSN Staff Writer

The farmers would like for the government to put a total stop to the importation of Chinese crawfish. They learned, however, that under present law, such action may not be possible. The importation of crawfish from China is legal so long as it is free of contamination and clearly labeled to indicate that the product is imported from China. Congressman Clyde Holloway said, however, that there are presently investigators in China checking to see if the product is subsidized by the government. If it is, it will be possible to prevent importation of it into Louisiana.

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