

The Department of Labour Protection and Welfare discusses with foreign buyers about solutions to forced labour problem in the Thai poultry businesses and supply chain, underscoring Thailand's efforts in enforcing labour protection law, collective cooperation, promoting Good Labour Practices (GLP) and the country's target of progressing to Tier 1 ranking of the U.S. Trafficking In Person's report and ratifying conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Ms. Pannee Sriyudhsak, Director-General of the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, met with representatives from Nomad Food Ltd., leading frozen-food manufacturer in Europe and top importer of Thai chicken products, to discuss about news report by the European media about forced labour problem in Thailand in November last year. Speaking after the meeting, Ms. Pannee said Nomad Food Ltd places importance on business ethics and social responsibility in the whole supply chain and this was why representatives of the company visited the department to discuss about the forced labour and slavery problem in the Thai poultry industry, especially in processed chicken businesses. On this matter, the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare clarified that Thailand places solutions to human trafficking as a national agenda and the solutions require collective efforts from concerned agencies. In solving the problem, the department places emphasis on strict law enforcement. Legal punishment will be imposed against employers who are found guilty of using forced labour without any delay while recently a new law has been enacted, prohibiting employers from hiring employees under age 18 in fishery and processed seafood businesses. In addition, punishment under the labour protection law has also been increased. The department also places importance to collective cooperation. It has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Mae Fah Luang University on cooperation on interpreters to support communication between employees and labour inspectors during enterprise inspections. It has also increased the number of labour inspectors by training officials from concerned agencies to enhance their understanding about the labour protection law with support from the ILO in designing curriculums and appointing them as labour inspectors. The department has also signed a MOU on GLP with the Department of Livestock Development and the Broiler Processing Exporters Association to improve employment and working conditions in poultry farms and egg farms in Thailand. At present, the Department of Livestock Development is overseeing a total of 7,917 farms and each of them has been issued a certificate of livestock farm standard. In future, if chicken farms do not comply with the labour protection law, the department will not issue nor renew this certificate for them so they will not be able to sell chickens to chicken export processing factories. As for the Broiler Processing Exporters Association, it has member companies which oversee a total of 6,200 chicken farms. The association will make sure poultry farms and egg farms apply GLP as a guideline to improve employment and working conditions and develop business practices which comply with the labour protection laws. Its members will not buy chicken from the chicken farms which do

not comply with the law, she said.

Following the meeting, the representatives of Nomad Food Ltd. expressed appreciation for efforts made by the Ministry of Labour and suggested Thailand to ratify the ILO conventions, which the country is yet a member. Ms. Pannee said the Ministry of Labour is committed to prevent and solve human trafficking problems to help Thailand progress to Tier 1 ranking of the U.S. TIP report, vowing all concerned parties will work collectively to improve relevant laws, effectively enforce the laws, increase labour inspectors, increase interpreters, thoroughly inspect enterprises and cooperate with agencies from both the private and public sectors in preventing and solving the problem through MOU establishment. Thailand has made concrete progress with regard to human trafficking situation as reported in the latest TIP Report 2016. The ministry will continue working with relevant agencies in solving the problem in a sustainable way, she added.