May 2019

Seafood Ethics Common Language Group e-alert
(amelagamation of news alerts issued to SECLG circulation list by email in May 2019)

Seafood Ethics Common Language Group
https://www.seafish.org/article/the-seafood-ethics-common-language-group
https://www.seafish.org/article/ethics-in-seafood

UK and Ireland news

The government commissioned Frank Field MP, Maria Miller MP and Baroness Butler-Sloss to run an independent review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to strengthen and enhance the current legislation as modern slavery evolves. The review considered specific provisions in the act as explained in the documents below. The review submitted its final report to the Home Secretary on 29 March 2019 and the report was published on 22 May 2019. The Review has made 80 recommendations to enable the Modern Slavery Act to retain, consolidate and develop its status as a world-leading piece of legislation, including 20 relating to the Transparency in Supply Chains requirements specifically that the Government sets up a central repository for statements and that the six areas of reporting currently recommended in guidance be made mandatory. Independent review of the Modern Slavery Act: final report.

UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Sara Thornton begins term. 1 May 2019.
Sara Thornton began her three year term as the new UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC) on 1 May 2019. Appointed by the Home Secretary Sajid Javid MP, a key role of the IASC is to engage with the private sector to ensure they are working to address modern slavery in their businesses and supply chains.

New UK Share Fishermen Briefing Note Published. 26 April 2019.
Human Rights at Sea, alongside the National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations (NFFO) and The Fishermen’s Mission, has published a new briefing note covering the topic of UK Share Fishermen in respect of the ILO 188 Work in Fishing Convention 2007 to provide clarity and a new baseline reference publication in support of new UK legislation reflecting the application of ILO 188. The new Briefing Note aims to provide readers with a plain-English explanation of the status of share fishermen, and it intends to help those in the UK fisheries supply chain better understand the basis upon which share fishermen are engaged, the activities they undertake, and the rights and responsibilities they have. The introduction of ILO C188 Work in Fishing Convention and its implementation into UK law, includes both employed and share fishermen, and this independent briefing note by Human Rights at Sea clarifies that the rights of a share fishermen should be unaffected by the Work in Fishing Convention changes. UK Share Fishermen Briefing Note: A Practical Guide & Review of Status.

ILO 188

Article: Convention 188 helping to fight labour abuses on the high seas. 20 May 2019.
As labor issues become more prominent in the seafood industry, countries in both the West and in Asia appear reluctant to ratify and enforce the one global accord providing protection for fishermen. Introduced by the United Nations, the 2007 Work in Fishing Convention (also known as Convention 188) requires that all vessels under the flag of a country that ratified the convention must meet the minimum requirements on decent working and living condition on-board fishing vessels. To date,
only 14 countries have ratified Convention 188. By contrast, the Maritime Labour Convention (for merchant seafarers) has been ratified by 93 countries. Yet the ILO estimates the number of commercial fishermen on 38 million, compared to 1.65 million seafarers involved in international merchant shipping. Once a country has implemented the requirements of the Convention 188, it must organize and detail procedures for inspection and enforcement. The ILO has frequently stated its belief that more countries will ratify and implement the convention. Those efforts appear to be gaining traction after a number of high-profile incidents of labor abuse that have caught the attention of the world’s media.

**Initiatives supporting ethical seafood sourcing**


This report surveys the portfolio of legal work being carried out by the Freedom Fund’s NGO partners across seven modern slavery hotspots. Frontline legal interventions are classified into four key categories that respond to the issues that these organisations are trying to address – strengthening laws and regulations, supporting effective enforcement, building rights awareness and facilitating access to justice. The report focuses on the solutions that frontline NGOs have found, drawing out lessons from these interventions that are relevant to the wider anti-slavery community. Issues in Thailand are mentioned throughout the report where there is a clear link between ecosystem decline in fisheries caused by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and the use of forced migrant labour on fishing vessels. Mention is made of CSO Coalition for Ethical and Sustainable Seafood that has brought together labour rights and environmental groups to facilitate joint advocacy around gaps in protection in the seafood industry.

*Seafood transparency charter gathers more retailer support.* 20 May 2019.

Marks & Spencer and Waitrose & Partners have become the latest U.K. retailers to sign the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) Charter for Transparency, a commitment to ensure their seafood supply chains are free from illegal fishing and human rights abuse. Co-op, Sainsbury’s, and Tesco had already signed the charter, which includes recommendations that retailers can use with suppliers to make sure no vessel associated with illegal or unethical practices blemishes their supply chains. The recommendations include the use of traceability systems that allow fish to be tracked from net to plate, accompanied by necessary evidence showing it was caught legally and ethically, and backed by third-party audits.


In recognition of the challenges confronted by ethical foreign shrimp producers and U.S. seafood purchasers, the Southern Shrimp Alliance has introduced new online tools to identify the risks of both antibiotics use in aquaculture and labor abuse in shrimp production activities overseas. The resources compile government and third-party reports, which contradict industry-controlled certification programs that offer vague promises and inoperative commitments. The Southern Shrimp Alliance expanded the “Check Your Supplier” tools to focus on forced and child labor in shrimp supply chains. The online feature consolidates U.S. government and third-party reports regarding labor abuses in foreign countries to highlight countries most likely to use exploitative labor practices in shrimp production. It also links to mobile apps developed by the U.S. Department of Labor for consumers and for importers. [The new “Check Your Supplier” component of the Southern Shrimp Alliance’s website is here](#).

*Ending slavery at sea headlines key regional fisheries meeting.* 13 May 2019.

The annual Forum Fisheries Committee officials meeting concluded with a headline decision to strengthen the regional harmonized minimum requirements for fishing licenses in the high seas Pacific region with the addition of crew employment conditions. The outcome has already been
hailed as “ground-breaking” by the 17 members as well as by international NGOs present at the meeting.

**Updates coming to new GSA program, including on social standards and capture processing.** 9 May 2019.
From labor standards on-board fishing vessels to food safety in processing plants, the Global Aquaculture Association’s new Global Seafood Assurances (GSA) standard is seeking to create an all-encompassing group of certifications addressing every major aspect of sustainability in the seafood industry. The primary goal of GSA is to create a comprehensive certification scheme that addresses existing gaps in the seafood certifications universe. GSA, through its affiliation with GAA, already has a robust assurance program for aquaculture farming and processing in the Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) program. Over the past year, the organization has worked to expand that model into capture fisheries processing. GSA will also soon roll out the second version of the Seafish RFS, which covers the safety and legality of vessel operations, as well as social and labor issues. In the future, GSA is also working on initiatives concerning animal welfare and mitigating climate change, as well as a leadership program called SOLI that that will focus on environmental issues, particularly climate change.

**Global news**

**Major legal victory for migrant workers in Thailand as two traffickers sentenced to prison.** 7 May 2019.
A couple from Myanmar was convicted in a Thai court on 23 April of trafficking 12 migrant workers and their family members from Myanmar to Thailand. The case represents a major victory for migrant workers in Thailand. The defendants were sentenced to 18 years in prison under Thailand’s Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and ordered to pay 1,948,075 Thai Baht ($61,000USD) to the victims. Two Freedom Fund partner organisations, the Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN) and the Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF) assisted the victims in the case and provided them with legal assistance.

**Events**

There are a number of sessions on social responsibility including the opening seminar, sponsored by Humanity United and The Freedom Fund, which is titled Amplifying Worker Voice: Integrating Worker Engagement Approaches into Ethical Supply Chain Management. This will focus on how to bridge the gap globalization has created between those who manage supply chains and those who work within them.

**Diary date.** 3rd annual Issara Global Forum: Innovation in Human Rights and Responsible Sourcing from November 6-8, 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand.
This will involve three days in Bangkok bringing together all of the stakeholders critical to the realities of responsible sourcing to discuss and debate trends and advancements in ethical trade, emerging technology solutions, innovative (and effective) partnerships, and ethical recruitment. There will also be some new, innovative formats to foster more intensive learning and deeper interaction between stakeholder groups, including with worker representatives and other on-the-ground actors.

*This is an amalgamation of the news alerts issued in May 2019.*