October 2019

Seafood Ethics Common Language Group e-alert
(amalgamation of news alerts issued to SECLG circulation list by email in October 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

Seafish briefing notes


Seafish analysis of Global Slavery Index 2018 fishing risk indicators by country.

UK news
UK Modern Slavery Helpline at risk of closure this November. See appeal. October 2019.
The 24/7 confidential national helpline offers free advice and support to anyone seeking assistance or information regarding modern slavery. Without urgent funding the specialist service is at risk of closure on the 30th of November due to cuts. Unseen runs the UK Modern Slavery Helpline, the only independent, confidential, 24/7 specialist hotline for anyone wanting to seek help or report modern slavery. In less than three years, the Helpline has indicated over 15,000 potential victims, including many British nationals. But without urgent funding, the Helpline will close on 30 November.

Multi-agency operation targets shellfish gathering in South Wales. 25 October 2019.
A multi-agency operation aimed at ensuring the safety of cockle pickers has taken place in South Wales. The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) together with Dyfed-Powys Police, the Welsh Government Marine and Fisheries Division, Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Food Standards Agency, Natural Resources Wales, and the Department for Work and Pensions conducted the operation at the Three Rivers Estuary in Carmarthenshire on Wednesday 23 October. Agencies checked the gatherers’ permits and collected intelligence relating to any unlicensed gangmaster activity. The operation also examined the boats used by the fishermen to check that they were seaworthy.

Guidance published for UK government on procurement and modern slavery. 18 September 2019.
The Cabinet Office has published its Procurement Policy Note (PPN) and guidance on addressing modern slavery risks in existing and new procurement activity. This new guidance applies to all central government departments, executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies. Procurement Policy Note 05/19: Tackling Modern Slavery in Government Supply Chains sets out how UK Government departments must take action to ensure modern slavery risks are identified and managed in government supply chains.

Become a member of the modern slavery helpline business portal.
Unseen is inviting businesses to join their Helpline Business Portal to get access to real-time information and data to help manage the risk of exposure to modern slavery and forced labour. This is a paid-for service, getting access to trend information and situations, whilst at the same time supporting the Helpline. To find out more see or E: Justine Currell.
Thailand and South East Asia

Taiwan Fisheries Human Rights Baseline Study Report. 18 October 2019.

A baseline human rights study Awareness and Application of Human Rights in Taiwan’s Fishing Industry looks at provisions, policy and protections for national and migrant fishers working in the Taiwanese coastal and distant water fleets warns of human rights abuses in Taiwanese fishing fleet. The study by Human Rights at Sea reports crew members on commercial Taiwanese fishing vessels are being forced to work overtime in unsanitary conditions, starved, being left in the ocean after they've fallen overboard and having their salaries illegally deducted. The paper advocates for: learning from other countries’ experiences in accelerating the extension of human rights to workers at sea; strengthening implementation of existing laws and policies; returning labor and recruitment duties to the country’s labor ministry and taking them away from the fisheries agencies; abolishing the Overseas Employment Scheme; providing training to migrant fishermen; and embedding the philosophy and state-led narrative of human rights at sea in the national agenda.

Thailand’s human traffickers flout 99% of court orders to compensate victims. 15 October 2019.

Human traffickers in Thailand have ignored court orders to compensate victims in more than 99% of cases in recent years, fuelling fears that many survivors could be re-trafficked, data obtained exclusively by the Thomson Reuters Foundation revealed. Thai courts have ordered traffickers to pay their victims more than 130 million baht ($4.3 million) for damages caused in about 1,335 cases since 2014, according to the latest available statistics from the Office of the Attorney General. But the money was only paid in five cases, with survivors receiving a total of 5.6 million baht - excluding cases settled out of court. Although Thailand has rescued a record-breaking 1,000-plus trafficking victims this year, campaigners are concerned that the failure to pay compensation will leave them in fresh danger.

Thai fishing group lobbies government to relax reforms, leaving NGOs, retailers, and suppliers troubled. 19 September 2019.

A list of demands from the National Fishing Association of Thailand (NFAT) – shared with Thai government officials in a closed-door meeting – could “derail the reform of the country’s fisheries,” according to the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) and its sources. NFAT’s demands include lifting all restrictions on crew and catch transfers at sea, as well as being allowed to fish for much longer without the obligation to record exact fishing locations, EJF said. Additionally, the group has called for vessels that lost their licenses in 2015 to be allowed to fish once more, and for the abolishment of annual inspections of vessels and crew. It has also requested that age restrictions on fishing be relaxed, and that operators be given the capability to revise crew lists for many hours after leaving port. EJF said if the demands were satisfied, it “would likely return the country’s fishing fleet to its abusive and illegal past, endangering the country’s economy, fish stocks and international reputation.”

New initiatives and guidelines

Fishing vessel safety declaration signed by 48 states. 23 October 2019.

A total of 48 states have signed a public declaration to indicate their determination to ratify the 2012 Cape Town Agreement on fishing vessel safety. On 21 – 23 October 2019 senior government officials from around the world met in Torremolinos, Spain to attend the International Maritime Organization’s ministerial conference on fishing vessel safety and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. The conference aimed to promote ratifications of the Cape Town agreement, a treaty that establishes international safety standards in the commercial fishing industry. The Torremolinos declaration aims to ensure that the 2012 Cape Town Agreement will enter into force by the 10th anniversary of its adoption, on Oct. 11, 2022. The Cape Town Agreement includes mandatory safety measures for fishing vessels of 24 meters (79 feet) in length and over. It covers key
parameters such as stability and associated seaworthiness, machinery, and electrical installations, life-saving appliances, communications equipment, fire protection and fishing vessel construction.

**GLAA. Shellfish gathering exploitation profile.** October 2019.
The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) has produced an intelligence profile for the shellfish gathering industry, which provides a summary of the nature and scale of exploitation within the sector.

**FAO consults industry on guidelines for social sustainability in seafood.** 30 September 2019.
The United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is in the process of developing standards for social sustainability in seafood, as it has done for stocks. FAO invited more than 1,000 people to register for the online public consultation, and received more than 750 comments with the participation of 57 subscribers. The latest draft was circulated. There was a presentation on this at an FAO meeting in Vigo on 30 September. Now, FAO will take the draft guidelines to member countries, starting during the COFI meeting in Vigo, Spain in November. The document must go through a negotiation process, and then will emerge as an approved document as soon as 2020. The guidelines aim to strike a balance between laying out firm stances on hot-button issues such as human rights and seafood slavery while not alienating member countries cooperating with the process. The main outcomes and recommendations from the consultation were:

- The guidance needs to be practical and simple ‘one size does not fit all’.
- It needs to involve all actors in the value chain
- There needs to be a distinction between small-scale and large-scale fisheries.
- There are cultural and traditional nuances.
- There needs to be recognition of the role of women.
- There needs to be child labour, migrant labour and gender inclusiveness.
- Retailers need to be included in the guidance.

The Australian government has published a guide on the Commonwealth Modern Slavery Act 2018 which covers who needs to report under the new legislation and how to prepare an annual modern slavery statement.

**Reports**

A failure to hold companies to account for lesser labour abuses from late wage payments to excessive overtime creates a breeding ground for the worst forms of modern slavery to thrive. Businesses are judged only on their efforts to curb extreme forms of labour exploitation, leaving more common abuses unchecked and likely to lead to even poorer working conditions, according to U.N. special rapporteur Maria Grazia Giammarinaro. To identify the worst forms of labour abuse in global supply chains, addressing broader areas of exploitation is essential. The U.N. expert pointed to laws in Britain and Australia requiring companies to report their anti-slavery efforts, but said there were concerns about firms focusing on extreme forms of exploitation instead of issues such as trade unionization.

**Much of the fish on supermarket shelves in Europe comes from developing countries which can export more than 90% of their catch.** 25 September 2019.
A new study shows swapping fish for meat to help combat climate change risks exacerbating hunger in Africa. Fish is increasingly exported to wealthy nations instead of providing key vitamins to malnourished local people. Some consumers in rich countries are shunning meat in favour of other forms of protein, including lentils and fish, in order to reduce the amount of planet-warming
greenhouse gases emitted by intensive livestock farming. But popular fish such as sardines and mackerel are sourced from African countries that export most of their nutrient-rich catch instead of selling it to their own populations. A shift in diets would "serve to ... worsen the food and nutritional security of already vulnerable people in places such as West Africa, Asia and the Pacific’.

**Feedback**

Invitation to provide input on the draft IFFO RS Chain of Custody Standard V2.0. 22 October 2019. Deadline for responses is 21 December 2019.

IFFO RS invites stakeholders to provide input on the draft V2.0 Chain of Custody Standard, which is now open for 60 day public consultation until 21st December 2019. This standard has been developed using a multi stakeholder consultation process with the support of technical experts and consultants. In addition, it has been tested on feed manufacturers, oil refiners, storage facilities and traders in China, Thailand, Peru and Chile to understand what the impact on current certificate holders to the new standard might be. This public consultation period will offer the chance for additional stakeholders to input into the further development of the standard.

Successful Public Consultation for the RFVS. Informal feedback on the standard is still welcome.

With the 60-day Public Consultation on the next iteration of the RFS Standard, the Responsible Fishing Vessel Standard (RFVS), now closed, the team is pleased to share that valuable feedback was received from all sectors of the seafood industry - Catching, Processing, Retail, Standard Holders, NGOs and the Public. Seafish and GSA would like to thank all respondents for the time they’ve taken to provide their input. The feedback received will be presented to the RFVS Technical Working Groups during November and will inform the development of the final Draft Standard. Please send informal feedback and any questions to E: Lara Funk, RFS Coordinator.

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