November 2019

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

Seafood briefing notes


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

Initiatives and resources
The first stage of the inaugural UK Fisheries Sector Human Rights and Social Welfare Baseline Project has started as part of new joint work between Human Rights at Sea and The Fishermen’s Mission to look at the need for such an assessment in terms of the level of human rights and social welfare provisions in the sector. This includes levels of awareness, education and levels of basic understanding of individual fundamental rights, individual protections and routes to effective remedy within the UK Fisheries sector including, but not limited to, the emergence of ILO 188 'Work in Fishing Convention' and resultant UK legislation. Evidence collation will take place in December 2019 involving a desk-level review, face-to-face meetings with fishing Federations, Producer Organisations, other relevant entities and fishers in the local communities, and data analysis. The aim of the first stage is to complete and publish an independent Needs Assessment report in January 2020 to answer the basic question of need, or otherwise, for a follow-on comprehensive Stage 2 Baseline Assessment covering all human rights and social welfare provisions in the UK Fisheries sector. The project has been seed-funded by The Fishmonger’s Company in London.

The summary notes from the Forum will follow soon. You can view the Issara mini-documentary A Recruitment Journey.

Impactt Limited, with support from Humanity United and the Freedom Fund, have published the results of an evaluation of the lessons learned from the implementation of Thai Union’s Ethical Recruitment policy. This is an evaluation of the programme from the village level in Myanmar to factory sites in Thailand, assessing whether the policy worked as intended. From this, they developed a roadmap to help guide companies as they look at their recruitment policies and practices. Impactt’s evaluation of Thai Union’s policy found it had resulted in:
- A large reduction in recruitment-related costs paid by workers;
- Workers feeling safer during their recruitment journey and experiencing higher levels of job satisfaction;
- An increase in job applicants and reduced labour turnover;
The recruitment agent becoming more professional and being recognized for its ethical credentials.

**Ethical recruitment: Translating Policy into Practice full report**
**Two-page report fact sheet**

**News and views**

**UK**

**Publication of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner’s Strategic Plan 2019 – 2021.**

18 October 2019.

The UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Dame Sara Thornton has published her three-year strategic plan outlining her objectives and priorities for 2019-2021. One of the four priority areas highlighted in the plan is ‘Focusing on Prevention’ which particularly focuses on the roles and responsibilities of businesses in addressing the risks of modern slavery.

**Thailand and SE Asia**

**New Report on Forced Labour in Thailand’s Seafood Industry Tracks Progress, Illuminates Pitfalls.**

3 December 2019.

Humanity United and The Freedom Fund have released Tracking Progress: Assessing Business Responses to Forced Labour and Human Trafficking in the Thai Seafood Industry. The research, conducted by Praxis Labs, finds that the seafood industry has indeed made some progress. True industry transformation, however, is being undermined by a failure to fundamentally change the business model. In short, decisions are still driven primarily by price, and do not include realistic considerations relating to human rights and environmental sustainability. This is a follow-up to a 2016 report published by Humanity United and the Freedom Fund, and highlights progress made and gaps still remaining, with a particular focus on the private sector and the Seafood Task Force. This new research highlights progress made and gaps still remaining, a few years on, with a particular focus on the private sector and the Seafood Task Force. The report is divided into four distinct chapters. The first aggregates data from 28 seafood suppliers, buyers, and retailers to identify prominent private sector responses, areas of good practice, and remaining gaps. The second examines the collective industry response through the Seafood Task Force. The third looks briefly at the government/private sector nexus and the need to institutionalise legal reforms in Thailand. Based on the perspectives of 280 migrant workers, the final chapter looks at what has changed on the ground, where there have been unintended consequences, and where issues impeding decent work persist.

**EJF report: Rampant illegal fishing, child labour and grinding poverty: Vietnam boats using child labour for illegal fishing.**


Children as young as 11 are working aboard Vietnamese vessels fishing illegally for seafood that could end up on sale in supermarkets in the EU and US, according to an investigation by the Environmental Justice Foundation. The children were discovered on boats detained by Thai authorities for fishing illegally in Thai waters, thousands of miles from their homes. EJF also found a lack of catch documentation or verification systems on Vietnamese vessels to determine the origin of seafood.

**Guardian article. We can’t allow Myanmar’s slavery-tainted shrimp to land on our plates.**

12 November 2019

Europe is in talks with Myanmar to increase seafood imports. It cannot ignore the widespread slavery within the industry. While forced labour and slavery in the fishing industry in Thailand and other parts of the world have been brought to light in recent years, the fishing industry in Myanmar has received less attention. This is because fish caught there is mostly sold to local markets, but this may be about to change. Myanmar’s seafood businesses are increasingly seeking export markets,
including the EU. And unless the EU responds to the clear evidence of widespread slavery and brutal conditions in Myanmar’s fishing industry, Europe could face another slavery scandal.

**Other reports**

**Deadly life at sea: UN partners spotlight depths of danger in fishing industry.** 21 November 2019.

There is a clear link between the seedy underbelly of the seafood industry, and fishers’ safety, now ranked as the second deadliest profession in the world; and more must be done to ensure people dependent on this type of labour are working in safe conditions, as reported by the FAO and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at the International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability. Human rights violations and unacceptable practices at different stages of the value chain are increasing in fisheries and aquaculture.

**Lawless Ocean: The Link Between Human Rights Abuses and Overfishing by investigative journalist Ian Urbina.** 20 November 2019.

The high seas are a place where anyone can do anything because no one is watching. Globalization allows companies to rely on more tangled, international supply chains to tap cheaper labor. If countries were serious about combating human rights, labor, and environmental abuses at sea, they would step up legal protections, at-sea patrols, and, most especially, inspections when ships dock. Broadly speaking, there need to be more rules, more proactive enforcement of those rules, and more awareness of what is happening out there.

**New Index Ranks World’s Largest Seafood Companies on UN SDGs.** 8 November 2019.

For the first time, the World Benchmarking Alliance has ranked 30 of the largest seafood companies worldwide on their commitments, transparency, and performance to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A year ago, the newly formed World Benchmarking Alliance announced plans to rank seafood companies from 1 to 30 on their performance levels for the Seafood Stewardship Index. The new index presents an overall ranking based on the weighted sum of the results in five measurement areas. The five areas are governance and management of stewardship practices, stewardship of the supply chain, ecosystems, human rights and working conditions, and local communities. At the top of the ranking: Thai Union Group, which is known for its John West and Chicken of the Sea brands. The company “stands out with robust environmental and social commitments, targets and activities on which it reports publicly,” the World Benchmarking Alliance said.

**Report examines link between migration and exploitation.** November 2019.

A report Migrants and their vulnerability to human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour produced by the IOM, Minderoo Foundation’s Walk Free initiative and DFID, explores the connection between migration and modern slavery, and focuses on which migrants are most vulnerable, and in what circumstances, to modern slavery.

**Ending child labour, forced labour and human trafficking in global supply chains.** November 2019.

The report jointly published by the International Labour Organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Organization for Migration, and UNICEF (under the 8.7 Alliance) highlights the extent to which child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking are present in global supply chains. The study estimates that 26% of child labourers in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia contribute to exports to other regions.

**Social Sustainability in Norwegian Fisheries Evolution and Resilience in Fleet and Industry.** May 2019

The report describes Norwegian laws and legislation, controlling regime, trade union involvement and opportunities for sanctioning violations of human rights, safety and working conditions and

social security. Norway is one of a few countries which have ratified and fully incorporated ILO 188 into laws and legislations. Onshore, the Working Environment Act is one of many legislations tightly regulating safety, security, obligations and conditions for the workforce in Norwegian industry. In addition, the onshore industry is covered by an extended collective agreement, which secures the minimum wage. The results show that Norway has a system that covers most social sustainability issues mentioned in international agreements. It is undeniable that Norwegian workforce rights are significantly stronger than in most other countries. There is no indication of violations of the serious elements, i.e. slavery, trafficking or child labour. However, there are some challenging areas, especially concerning foreign labour. Authorities and trade unions are continuously working on improvements within documentation, communication and prevention.

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 November 2019.