

ECUADOR PROFILE

Main seafood products and exports

Tuna is Ecuador's main industrial fishery. The tuna fleet operates mainly in the Eastern Pacific. In 2009 its industrial fleet consisted of 158 vessels over 24 metres long, of which 83 were purse seiners. Its annual average catch of some 200,000 tonnes accounted for some half of the total marine catch. Pelagic fisheries have consisted mainly of sardines, anchovies and mackerel. Most anchovies and sardines are canned for the export market, the remainder being converted into fishmeal for poultry feed. The pelagic fishing fleet consists of over 150 vessels which operate up to 70 nautical miles from the coast. Ecuador produces large quantities of fishmeal, either used as feed in shrimp farms or exported. Whiteleg shrimp culture, which began in the 1970s, has now become the main form of aquaculture, especially in the Gulf of Guayaquil.

In 2014 Ecuador exported US\$ 2.9 billion of fish products, the second largest exporting country in Latin America after Chile. Fish and shrimps together account for 11% of all exports. In 2012, fishmeal exports earned some US\$ 116 million.

Ecuador's exports of fresh and frozen fish and seafood have increased significantly over the past decade. The main exports include corvine, flounder, redclaw, sardines, seabass, shrimp, squid, swordfish, tilapia and tuna. Ecuador is the second largest exporter of cultivated shrimp in the world, exporting over 20 different shrimp products. Tuba, another principal seafood export, is exported fresh, frozen, and canned in brine and oil. Principal destination countries for Ecuador's seafood exports include Chile, Colombia, Japan, Spain and other EU countries, and the U.S.. Over 30 countries import tuna products from Ecuador.

There have been significant changes in export trends in recent years, notably with regard to shrimp exports. Both U.S. and EU shares have declined, while exports to Asia have showed dramatic growth. The EU market, which was Ecuador's principal export destination for shrimp two years ago, declined from 42.2% in 2013 to 27.4% in mid 2015. In the meantime Asia's market share for Ecuadorian shrimp increased to over 42% (90% of this going to Vietnam, nearly double the amount exported to Vietnam during the first five months of 2014).

Seafood exports to the UK

In 2014 Ecuador exported 12,493,696 kg of seafood to the UK, valued at UK£ 50,572,587. As in previous years, the bulk of this was tuna products. By value, the three species imported in 2014 were tuna (£ 36,791,862), warm water shrimp and prawns (£13,769,016) and a small amount of mackerel (£11,709).

Employment in fisheries and seafood

There appear to be no recent national figures. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) 2011 country profile for Ecuador cites figures for the 2001 National Population and Housing Census, of 61,560 persons employed in fishing. FAO calculates that the current figure is between 80,000 and 100,000 persons, of whom some 6,500 are employed in the industrial sub-sector. While women account

for less than 10% of employment in the industrial sector, they comprise the majority of the workforce in processing and packing plants.

Human trafficking and forced labour: rankings, indicators and reports

Ecuador is ranked in Tier 2 in the U.S. Government's 2015 Trafficking in Persons¹ (TIP) report. While the report refers to forced and child labour in agriculture, there is no reference to the fisheries or seafood industry.

Ecuador is ranked at No. 114 (a medium to good ranking) in the Walk Free Foundation 2014 Global Slavery Index², with an estimated 34,300 persons (or 0.218% of the total population) in modern slavery.

The U.S.- based labour rights and auditing NGO, Verité, reports on its website that it has recently conducted field research on working conditions and the risk of human trafficking in the seafood sector of Ecuador. Preliminary research findings demonstrate the intersections between human rights, IUU fishing, seafood fraud, and organized crime. Fishers involved in both medium and small-scale fishing experienced indicators of forced labour such as recruitment deception, indebtedness and coerced participation in illegal activities, including drug trafficking. No further information has as yet been made publicly available on this research.

Ratification of international human rights instruments

United Nations treaties and procedures

Ecuador has ratified all the main international human rights instruments of the UN system. These are, with their date of ratification by Ecuador:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1969)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1969)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1988)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (2002)
- Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2009).

Ecuador has also accepted individual complaints procedures for almost all these instruments, and has accepted a number of country visits under special UN procedures. In 2010, for example, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery undertook a mission to Ecuador. Although there was a focus on alleged abusive labour practices in a number of at-risk industries (including bananas, gold mining and the palm oil industry), there was no reference to the fisheries or seafood sector.

¹ United States Trafficking in Persons Report 2015 <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/>

² Global Slavery Index 2014 http://d3mj66ag90b5fy.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Global_Slavery_Index_2014_final_lowres.pdf

International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions³

Ecuador has ratified a total of 61 ILO Conventions, 56 of which are currently in force, including all eight of the core human rights Conventions.

Overall risk assessment

The overall risks for UK importers for Ecuador would appear to be currently low, though possibly rising to medium. There have been no recent reports of serious labour abuse in any parts of its seafood industry. However, it is significant that Verité has singled out Ecuador, as apparently the only one among Latin American countries, for a study on forced labour risks in the seafood industry. Such reports can have a snowball effect, generating similar attention from other human rights and labour groups, and the findings may well be repeated in such publications as the US TIP report. Verité's findings will therefore need to be awaited with interest. In the meantime, in addition to labour conditions in aquaculture or on industrial vessels in the tuna industry, there needs to be attention to labour conditions in the shrimp feed and fish meal sectors, potentially of importance for export production. There has been almost no public documentation of these issues, though the attention of human rights and labour activists may grow significantly in the not too distant future.

For further information

- **United States Trafficking in Persons Report 2015** <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/>
- The Department places each country in this Report onto one of four tiers, as mandated by the Trafficking Victims Prevention Act (TVPA). This placement is based more on the extent of government action to combat trafficking than on the size of the country's problem. The analyses are based on the extent of governments' efforts to reach compliance with the TVPA's minimum standards. Tier one is the best ranking and Tier 3 the worst.
- **Global Slavery Index 2014** http://d3mj66ag90b5fy.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Global_Slavery_Index_2014_final_lowres.pdf
The Global Slavery Index estimates the prevalence of modern slavery country by country, the absolute number by population, how governments are tackling modern slavery, and factors to explain or predict the prevalence of modern slavery. Rankings range from 1 to 167 - with 1 the worst and 167 the best, in terms of the prevalence of the population in modern slavery. This is based on three factors: estimated prevalence of modern slavery by population, levels of child marriage and levels of human trafficking into and out of the country. This gives a 'weighted measure'.
- **The International Labour Organization's Fundamental Conventions** http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_095895.pdf
Ratifications of fundamental Conventions and Protocols by country http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:10011:0::NO::P10011_DISPLAY_BY,P10011_CONVENTION_TYPE_CODE:1,F

This is an information service provided by Seafish for industry and key stakeholders. To the best of our knowledge this information is factually correct at the date of publication.

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³ The International Labour Organization's Fundamental Conventions
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_095895.pdf