



April 2017

Seafood Ethics Common Language Group e-alert

(amalgamation of news alerts issued to SECLG circulation list by email in April 2017)

Seafood Ethics Common Language Group

<http://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/discussion-forums/the-seafood-ethics-common-language-group>

Modern Slavery reporting

Three things the Modern Slavery Act has achieved. 19 April 2017.

So, what impacts has the legislation made in addressing the problem?

It started the ball rolling – and offers huge potential for transformation with 28,000 organisations globally producing modern slavery statements as the first real indicator of structural business change to the issue.

Other governments have followed suit, helping level the playing field. The apparent success of the MSA has undoubtedly encouraged other national governments to consider their own legislation. In the US, loopholes in trading laws have been closed to better identify instances of modern slavery. In the Netherlands, the government has passed a [new law on child labour](#). In Australia, a parliamentary [inquiry](#) has been opened into adopting its own version of the Modern Slavery Act. It gives companies a chance to innovate. The fact forced labour is being discussed in the boardroom means the potential for change within companies is enormous. He points out that good boardrooms drive the culture and direction of the company, so being faced with having to discuss and respond to this issue at board level “will be transformative over time as every year the item will come up for discussion and reporting”.

Stronger legislation and enforcement needed to protect workers’ human rights. 5 April 2017.

On 16 June 2016, the House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights announced an inquiry into human rights and business, to consider progress made by the UK Government in implementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, by means of the National Action Plan that was published in 2013 and revised in May 2016. The report published on 5 April 2017 calls for legislation and enforcement to be improved to ensure adequate protection of workers' human rights and proposes providing more accessible and effective mechanisms to improve access to justice in cases where human rights may have been breached.

Analysis of modern slavery statements. April 2017

Ergon Associates has just produced a new report analysing the content of modern slavery statements. This covers 150 statements from March 2017 and compares them to our previous analysis of modern slavery reports from early adopters a year ago. This report provides a snapshot of how companies are reporting on their efforts to identify and combat modern slavery in accordance with the UK’s Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA).

A year after the UK Modern Slavery Act, time for a Global Modern Slavery Agreement? Phil Bloomer, executive director, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre. 31 March 2017.

An existential risk is surfacing: if governments all unilaterally design legislation then companies could understandably complain that they face a ‘spaghetti soup’ of, perhaps, 30 inconsistent sets of national legislation to eliminate slavery. But governments can and should cooperate to take the best of existing regulation and incentives, and set a common minimum standard of corporate behaviour. At the least, governments can coordinate to ensure coherent national laws that establish a level

playing field for business. At best, like-minded states could establish an international high-standard reflected in national legislations. We need a Trans-Atlantic, or perhaps Global Modern Slavery Agreement. An effective international standard would build on and integrate effective government action so far. This falls into four categories: mandatory transparency; mandatory due diligence; incentives for action; and access to justice and remedy.

[The Modern Slavery Helpline.](#) 20 March 2017.

Since its launch on 10 October 2016 the UK-wide Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre, based in Bedfordshire, has taken over 800 calls. Potential victims who call the helpline can talk to fully trained call handlers who will guide and assist them to access relevant services, including Government-funded support through the National Referral Mechanism. The Helpline and Resource Centre is providing information, advice and guidance to potential victims, the public, statutory agencies and businesses on all aspects of modern slavery. The helpline is free, confidential and operates 24/7, 365 days a year. For help, advice or support on any modern slavery issue, call 08000 121 700 to speak to a fully trained call handler.

[Results of the first Corporate Human Rights Benchmark launched.](#) 13 March 2017.

The initiative, coordinated by the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, with funding from the UK Government, is the first-ever ranking of the world's largest publicly listed companies on their human rights performance. The 2017 Corporate Human Rights Benchmark assesses 98 of the largest publicly traded companies in the world on 100 human rights indicators. The results reveal a small group of leaders pulling ahead of the rest.

<https://tiscreport.org/>

tiscreport.org is the World's largest Open Data Registry committed to ending Modern Slavery, joining up Transparency In Supply Chains (TISC) reporting globally. As an open data initiative it is funded purely by commercial fees and donations from organisations uploading reports to the site. The proceeds of membership fees will be split between the UK Modern Slavery Helpline and tiscreport.org.

Thailand

[ILO releases report on forced labor in Thailand.](#) 28 March 2017.

The International Labour Organization has released a report critical of Thailand's handling of migrant laborers in its seafood industry's workforce, but noted the country's recent efforts at improvement. It details numerous abuses of migrant workers in the Thai fisheries sector, specifically detailing failures caused by Thailand's "weak" legislative and regulatory framework, "deceptive and coercive" recruitment practices, questionable employment practices and inadequate working and living conditions, the country's lack of an effective complaints mechanism, and the absence of penalties for those who break the law. The report also details Thailand's recent actions to combat the use of forced labor and coercive recruitment practices. It notes the Thai government's passage of anti-trafficking and worker protection laws and an ordinance upping penalties on companies and individuals found guilty of human trafficking in its commercial fishing industry. The ILO also noted the Thai government's increased efforts at policing and prosecuting such crimes.

Certification

[MSC seeks input on six standards.](#) 15 March 2017.

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) has launched its 2017 policy development round, opening up six areas of its program to consultation from stakeholders. This includes an update on how to confirm the absence of forced labour in fisheries and supply chain organisations. The MSC is extending the requirements for labour practices across its program. The proposal is for a self-declaration by certificate holders and those in assessment confirming the absence of forced and

child labour in their operations. The inclusion of labor practices is a decisive step to address social responsibility for an organization founded on its environmental focus in the mid-1990s. It has remained focused exclusively on environmental issues until recent years, as labor rights violations have surfaced in international media. The consultation is open until 14 May.

[Investigating requirements for social sustainability in the value chain for wild fish.](#) 27 February 2017.

From 2017, all British vessels that supply to the supermarket chain Marks & Spencer in the United Kingdom must be certified by the Responsible Fishing Scheme. Perhaps more players in the market will follow and require documentation of social sustainability? This is what researchers at Nofima and FAFO are about to find out. The Norwegian Seafood Research Fund (FHF) has been asked by the industry to identify standards for social sustainability and to evaluate whether customers in the seafood market require documentation of social sustainability. They also wish to investigate whether and how the Norwegian seafood industry can utilise good working conditions as a competitive advantage, and if this can be documented in Norwegian fisheries. The project commenced in December last year and will run until 15 May 2017. They will primarily focus on the markets in the United Kingdom, France and Germany. The project will investigate whether requirements concerning social sustainability could become “hygiene requirements” and therefore required for manufacturers in order to secure access to the market.

Quantifying sustainability risks among suppliers and certificate holders. Best practices and lessons learned. A study commissioned by ISEAL Alliance. January 2017.

The ISEAL Alliance commissioned Proforest to conduct a study of sustainability risk-based approaches being used, in order to assess their strengths, identify challenges and suggest lessons that can be shared. The study covers seven sectors including fishing. The findings are based on: a literature review; discussions with experts; and interviews and surveys with 40 organisations, comprising 16 standards bodies and accreditation bodies (SABs) and 23 private sector organisations. The areas of strength in risk-based approaches for the fishing sector were seen to be making use of scientific and academic data sources, industry collaboration and stakeholder consultation and the development of geospatial tools. Labour issues are within this. See section 5.2.

Global news

[Corporate Coordination Can Stop Seafood Slavery. Center for Americal Progress.](#) April 2017.

At a moment when many U.S. policymakers and ordinary citizens are voicing skepticism over U.S. participation in a globalized economy, now is the time for the international seafood industry to take robust and unified steps toward a transparent and traceable seafood supply chain. *A succinct summary of some of the positive steps that have been taken by industry.*

[FAO: Exploring the human rights-based approach \(HRBA\) in the context of the implementation and monitoring of the SSF Guidelines.](#) 2017.

The SSF Guidelines are based on internationally accepted human rights standards and are to be interpreted and implemented in accordance with those standards. Their objectives are to be met through the promotion of a human rights-based approach (HRBA). This workshop explored what the human rights-based approach means within the context of small-scale fisheries in general and the thematic areas covered by the SSF Guidelines in particular. It discussed what the HRBA entails in terms of the conduct of the various state and non-state actors to whom the SSF Guidelines are addressed as well as the needs of the different stakeholders in the various policy areas, with a view to developing guidance materials for the application of the HRBA in the implementation and monitoring of the SSF Guidelines.

SECLG news summary. April 2017.

[Global estimate of modern slavery.](#) 16 March 2017.

The Walk Free Foundation and International Labour Organization have formally announced a collaboration on the Global Estimate of Modern Slavery. They will also work closely with IOM. The Global Estimate will be launched in September. Its purpose is to develop a single global estimate from which progress towards achieving **[Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7](#)** can be benchmarked.

[The Human Impact of Crew Abandonment MV Liberty Prrudencia.](#) 10 March 2017.

Human Rights at Sea has published an independent case study and investigative report into the case of the Indian crew of the MV Liberty Prrudencia, who had been left onboard the vessel in China without wages since November 2016 suffering personal hardships and distressing effects for their families back home in India. The crew have been forced to agree to sign-off, but with only one month's wages and no firm assurance of receiving the remainder of their wages owed. The crew have been in constant contact with the charity, alongside other supporting organisations. Read the full report **[here](#)**

IUU and human rights

[Mars, Nestlé commit to clean up pet food supply chains, increasing pressure on Thai Union to act.](#) 16 March 2017.

Following global pressure on pet food companies, industry giants Mars and Nestlé have announced that they will take steps to ensure their pet food supply chains are free of human rights abuses and illegally caught seafood. Their commitments to act on transshipping at sea increase the need for global seafood giant Thai Union, a supplier for both companies, to eliminate any outstanding risks of human rights abuses and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in its own supply chains. Nestlé has committed to a full ban on transshipment at sea in its supply chains, while Mars has committed to suspend the use of transshipped products in their supply chains if its seafood suppliers cannot adequately address the human rights and illegal fishing issues associated with the practice in the coming weeks.

[Oceana: 50% of suspected global transshipping events in Russian waters.](#) February 2017.

NGO Oceana has released a report exposing the global scale of transshipping at sea, a practice that can mask illegal fishing practices and conceal human rights abuses. The report uses a new dataset released by Global Fishing Watch and Oceana's partner SkyTruth to identify likely transshipping hotspots as well as the top countries whose vessels were involved in suspected rendezvous at sea and the ports they most frequently visited. Oceana identified 5,065 likely rendezvous of refrigerated cargo vessels with the largest commercial fishing vessels between 2012 and 2016. Of the suspected transshipping events worldwide, 50% occurred within Russian waters. In 2016, Russian-flagged fishing vessels ranked highest for the average number of suspected rendezvous per vessel in a national fleet. Comoros and Vanuatu, both 'flag of convenience' countries, were the second and third highest-ranked countries for the average number of suspected transshipping events per vessel in a national fleet during 2016.

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