



February 2018

**Seafood Ethics Common Language Group e-alert
(amalgamation of news alerts issued to SECLG circulation list by email in February 2018)**

Seafood Ethics Common Language Group

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

Seafish news

Annual review of the RFS Standard. 13 February 2018. Responses by 16 March 2018.

Seafish is welcoming feedback on the Responsible Fishing Scheme as part of the annual review of the [RFS Standard](#). The annual review process allows for minor amendments to the RFS Standard to ensure that the scheme is meeting its overall objective to 'promote a responsible fishing industry, assuring good practice from sea to quayside, and contribute to its long term viability'. All feedback must be submitted by Friday 16 March, using the official RFS Public Comments form available on the [RFS website](#). In addition to this annual review, planning is underway for a more in-depth review of the strategic direction of the scheme to help inform the development of Version 2 of the RFS Standard. This review, which will follow later in 2018, will require Seafish to run a formal process including further public consultation. For more information, contact E: [Kara Brydson](#).

Risk tools

Launch: The New Seafood Slavery Risk Tool: Shining a Light on a Dark Practice. 1 February 2018.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch program has launched a web-based Seafood Slavery Risk Tool. Jointly run by the aquarium with Liberty Asia and the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership it produces a rating indicating the likelihood that human rights violations are occurring on fishing boats in a specific fishery. The ratings are derived from credible, publicly available sources, including reports by authoritative institutions (e.g., U.S. government agencies, the European Union and the United Nations) and civil society organizations (universities, NGOs and media outlets). The [Seafood Slavery Risk Tool](#) rates the likelihood that forced labour, human trafficking, or hazardous child labour is occurring on fishing boats in a fishery. Ratings are not produced for countries. Evidence from credible media and authoritative institutions and civil society organizations is evaluated according to the Risk Tool's criteria to determine a profile fishery's rating. A fishery can be rated critical, high, moderate, or low risk. Risk Tool ratings are produced primarily for Seafood Watch's and SFP's business partners and Liberty Asia's financial sector partners to inform their due diligence. Users of the Risk Tool must still undertake comprehensive due diligence before making sourcing and investment decisions.

LOOK AT [TESS](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION: record for [Seafood Slavery Risk Tool](#).

Coverage and issues raised in the media

Slavery risk warning over UK's scallop fisheries. 1 February 2018.

The register singles out industry with retailers told to check suppliers are clear of any link to bonded labour. Marine conservation campaigners have warned there is a critical risk that slaves are being used on British scallop fishing boats, and urged retailers to be on their guard. The new slavery risk register has singled out the UK's queen and giant scallops fisheries as the most at risk of modern slavery after a Guardian investigation found allegations of bonded labour in the industry.

Monterey Bay Starts Slavery Traffic Light Recommendations with Woeful Lack of Data, Transparency. 1 February 2018.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium has unveiled a slavery tracking tool for seafood. The Aquarium says they have been working for two years on a database, but looking at the limited way they use data,

this tool is not ready for prime time. It is so non-specific, so inferential, and so much based on unverifiable and unaccountable hearsay, that it can serve no legitimate business purpose. There are much more serious efforts underway in the global seafood industry to monitor labor and social issues, and to avoid any possibility of slave labor being used in the international seafood industry. These efforts are being led by British retailers and suppliers, through a consortium organized by Seafish, and supported by the US National Fisheries Institute, and in the future such standards may be benchmarked by the GSSI, which is positioned to identify the mechanisms by which suppliers and buyers can be assured a labor screen for abuse is effective. There are also experts in the field who have tools based on years of direct experience, such as the Labour Safe Screen, which can do an audit of a particular supply chain to identify 'hot spots'.

[Was Your Seafood Caught With Slave Labor? New Database Helps Retailers Combat Abuse.](#) 1 February 2018.

The new Seafood Watch database, which took two years to design, assigns slavery risk ratings to specific fisheries and was developed in collaboration with Liberty Asia and the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership. Like Seafood Watch's color-coded ratings, the Seafood Slavery Risk Tool aims to keep it simple - a set criteria determines whether a fishery will earn a critical, high, moderate or low risk rating. The new Seafood Slavery Risk Tool will not advise retailers to purchase one species over another. Instead the mantra is 'stay, engage and create change in the industry by working with suppliers to change their practices'.

[Seafish response to the Seafood Slavery Risk Tool.](#) 9 February 2018.

Although Seafish had previously worked with the SSRT partners to develop a prototype human rights risk tool, Seafish has no association with the SSRT. Our involvement in the forerunner of SSRT came to an end in autumn 2017 in response to concerns that Seafish had identified with the earlier prototype's veracity. These concerns focused on the rigour and robustness of the methodology behind the tool, the objectivity of the information used to inform the tool, and the accuracy of the subsequent risk assessment results the tool produced. The Seafish approach to promote responsible sourcing across the supply chain is to educate, improve understanding and develop capability within the seafood sector. Seafish also recognises that risk tools can only take us so far and it is vital that the seafood industry continues to work together to improve transparency and make a positive change.

[Seafood Watch's new Seafood Slavery Risk Tool comes under fire.](#) 14 February 2018.

Seafish, along with U.K. scallop producers such as MacDuff, have criticized the tool's 'critical risk' rating of giant scallops and queen scallops from the United Kingdom. "We recognize that there are issues on some scallop vessels in the U.K., which has been widely reported, and we are pleased that those involved are now being dealt with by the relevant authorities. However, it is not right to say that the whole U.K. scallop fishing sector has the same problems. The scallop industry and the wider seafood industry in the U.K. are appalled by what has been going on and are keen to see those in the wrong punished for it, said Aoife Martin, operations director at Seafish. Also rated as 'critical' is Atlantic bluefin tuna from Taiwan. Fisheries at 'high risk' include albacore tuna from Japan, fishmeal from Thailand, the Argentine Patagonian toothfish fishery, and swordfish from Taiwan. Seafood Watch reported the new rating system has primarily received positive feedback.

Thailand

Update on Thailand's progress towards combatting IUU fishing.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Thailand has produced a number of documents:

- [1. 'Facts and Figures: Thailand's Tangible Progress in Combatting IUU Fishing and Forced Labour'](#) to chart the progress made in combatting IUU fishing. 29 January 2018.**
- [2. Thailand has improved the fishing license issuance process for more effective measures on IUU fishing prevention.](#) 8 February 2018.**
- [3. Thailand's effective fleet management and the deployment of police officers at the Fishing Monitoring Center.](#) 8 February 2018.**

4. [Thailand's Comments on Report on Labour Situation in Fishing Industry of Human Rights Watch. 25 January 2018.](#) With regard to the Report published by Human Rights Watch (HRW) on 23rd January 2018, entitled "Hidden Chains: Right Abuses and Forced Labour in Thailand's Fishing Industry", the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wishes to state as follows: Disappointedly, the Report of HRW contains many outdated references caused by using information from the situation in 2016 and in some cases, dating back to 2012. This shows that there has been no update of the latest status of this issue, and, therefore, the Report does not take into consideration the current progress and efforts made by Thailand in solving labour problems.
LOOK AT [TESS](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION: record for [Published Reports](#) includes the report by Human Rights Watch.

New reports and initiatives

Issara Institute: [Updated Guide to Ethics and Human Rights in Anti-Trafficking: Ethical Standards and Approaches for Working with Migrant Workers and Trafficked Persons in the Digital Age. 21 February 2018.](#)

This is a guide for any organisation or business working with migrant workers and/or trafficked persons. It is full of checklists and practical tools to guide anti-trafficking and responsible sourcing programs, and especially vital for organizations interacting with migrant workers digitally, such as through social media or other online, tech-enabled means.

LOOK AT [TESS](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION: record for [Issara Institute](#)

[How 'Responsible Supply Tech' is helping tackle modern slavery and human trafficking. 5 February 2018.](#)

A growing ecosystem of technologies, ranging from mobile phones that facilitate [worker engagement](#) to [traceability](#) software to [blockchain](#) offers new opportunities to create more responsible supply chains. New research on the [root causes of modern slavery](#) has yielded practical insights into the potential for harnessing diverse technologies to increase workers' agency and build responsible supply chains. New technologies foster a data-driven system for measuring and exchanging information across supply chains, which can inform decision making from procurement departments to labour standards enforcement agencies and investors. The quantification of actual working conditions offers an opportunity to build and publish comparable and credible benchmarks to drive labour, social and business performance.

New Issara Institute briefing. January 2018.

The Issara Institute's [Focus on Labour Issues in the Thai Fishing Industry series](#) was launched in late 2016 and aimed to provide a holistic and reliable set of analyses regarding labour issues in the Thai commercial fishing sector, with a view to finding practical solutions that engage the private sector in a substantive and constructive way.

[Paper 4 in the series: Eliminating Human Trafficking from the Thai Fishing Industry: Perspectives of Thai Commercial Fishing Vessel Owners](#) provides critical analysis on potential solutions to labour issues in the Thai fishing sector from the perspective of 75 Thai fishing vessel owners, who share their experiences, opinions, and challenges regarding what needs to happen to eliminate trafficking from the Thai fishing industry.

LOOK AT [TESS](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION: record for [Issara Institute](#)

Comments: [Many in Thai Fishing Industry Fail to See Conditions as Slavery. 6 February 2018.](#)

Thai fishing boat owners who trap workers on board ships and withhold wages often do not realize that is modern slavery, so authorities must ramp up their policing efforts, advocates say. The research shows many fishing operators are oblivious that the grim conditions on board their ships amount to forced labour. The findings show a need for stronger efforts to improve the working conditions and bring the fishing industry in line with anti-trafficking laws. It's all going to come down to enforcement.

[New report to highlight dangers facing aquaculture workers.](#) 31 January 2018.

The recent death of Scottish shellfish farmer Hugo Vajk in an accident on his oyster farm on the country's west coast has dragged the dangerous nature of the business sharply into focus. It also highlighted the fact that, despite being one of the most hazardous industries in the world, the risks posed by fish and shellfish farming are poorly understood and mostly neglected. A new study led by Professor Andrew Watterson of the University of Stirling's Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport aims to address this by highlighting the issues, and in doing so, seeking to protect the health of the world's 18 million aquaculture workers. The report is due to be published in April 2018. Welfare conditions and work-related factors that may contribute to ill-health were also included in the study, such as wages, housing, access to healthcare and transport. In addition, the team considered relevant global legislation, including national laws, international codes, labour practice guidance, and industry standards.

Certification

[MSC seeks public input on new forced labor policy.](#) 13 February 2018.

The Marine Stewardship Council will be seeking public input on a new policy on forced labor and related issues. The 30-day comment period will open on 15 March. This is the second round of public comments. MSC has been consulting on options to introduce a risk-based approach to mitigate the presence of forced and child labor in MSC-certified fisheries and supply chains'. MSC originally proposed that its [labour policy](#) would require fisheries and supply chains to submit a self-declaration on 18 different benchmarks in regard to forced and child labor. The [proposed policy](#) would have created a process allowing the filing of complaints in relation to any of the claims made in the self-declaration, with a labor panel then empowered to determine whether a complaint required further consideration. In the first round of MSC's comment period on the proposed standard, open to NGOs and end-of-supply-chain companies, 11 respondents supported the self-declaration as a first step, but they emphasized the need to strengthen its impact through a more comprehensive scope and accompanying complaints process. They also called for MSC to define the timeline for adding auditable requirements to the standard in the future. A further five respondents, among them several NGOs, said they support MSC's work in this area, but that a self-declaration is not the right approach. An additional two respondents – both representatives of the fishing industry– expressed concern that labor issues were outside of MSC's core mission of environmental sustainability and that fisheries could become subject to vexatious complaints.

LOOK AT [TESS](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION: record for [Marine Stewardship Council](#)

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