



January 2021

**Seafood Ethics Common Language Group e-alert  
(amalgamation of news alerts issued to SECLG circulation list by email in January 2021)**

**Seafood Ethics Common Language Group**

<https://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/seafood-issues-groups/the-seafood-ethics-common-language-group/>

<https://www.seafish.org/responsible-sourcing/social-responsibility-in-seafood/>

**Seafish news and publications**

**Background briefing on fishery observers. November 2020.**

This literature review looks at the role of a fishery observer and the rules governing fisheries observer programmes; the issues being raised; the most recent prominent cases; the repeated calls for reform; the current situation in 2020 and the impact of COVID-19.

**Seafish summary of fishing references in 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report. 25 June 2020.**

**Seafish Social risk assessment information**. This reference document provides an overview of the metrics and scoring methodologies of different open and closed sources of information that offer insight on the social risks posed to UK businesses by seafood trading partners in third countries.

**Country profiles**. To understand the social risk landscape of countries supplying into the UK seafood market, a series of profiles covering main supply regions are available. There are currently 19 profiles.

**Latest news**

**First vessel attains GSA's Responsible Fishing Vessel Standard. 14 January 2021.**

The Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) Global Seafood Assurances (GSA) venture has had its first vessel reach its Responsible Fishing Vessel Standard (RFVS). The Antarctic Discovery, which belongs to Australian Longline Fishing, is a longliner operating in a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)-certified fishery for Patagonian and Antarctic toothfish. The 56-metre vessel has a crew of between 20 to 25 people, plus two observers. The GSA currently has 12 audit pilots underway, covering very different types of vessels, operations and locations around the world. (The GSA will be merged later this year with the GAA under a renamed entity, Global Seafood Alliance).

**ETI blog. The New Responsible Fishing Vessel Standard - allowing responsible operators to stand out, and be counted. 14 January 2021.**

This is the personal perspective of Nick Kightley at the ETI. "Standards alone can (not) bring about the sort of fundamental changes needed to correct all the injustices committed towards fishing vessel crews..... but this Standard paves the way for progressive improvements that will protect many existing crew and will provide a challenge that any company that claims to be a responsible fisheries business will need to take up."

**[Ongoing investigation of Indonesian fishers abandoned and exploited in Fiji. 16 January 2021.](#)**

Humanitarian ship visitors working with Human Rights at Sea, have been alerted to exploited Indonesian crew on a Chinese owned Fijian-flagged long-liner abandoned in the Port of Suva without their wages apparently being paid for 12 months.

**[New organisation to provide labour certification for fishing vessels launches public consultation. 8 January 2021. Deadline for responses is 8 March 2021.](#)**

A number of seafood industry players worldwide have united to develop a voluntary, independent and accredited third-party certification program for labour practices on fishing vessels called the FISH Standard for Crew. The FISH Standard is designed to ensure that fish sold in markets, grocery stores and restaurants around the world is harvested by crews who are recruited and hired ethically, treated with respect on the vessel, paid properly, and have fair processes to address grievances. The FISH Standard certification will be open to wild-capture harvesters of all sizes. A 60-day public consultation period for the FISH Standard opened on 8 January 2021. The deadline for responses is 8 March 2021.

**[BHRRC and allies to close Modern Slavery Registry. January 2021.](#)**

As the UK Government prepares to launch its own public registry of modern slavery statements in 2021, the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) will close its registry. The new government-run registry will hopefully result in improved monitoring and enforcement against companies that fail to comply with their obligations under the Modern Slavery Act.

**[Thailand offers work permits to undocumented migrants to curb COVID-19. 29 December 2020.](#)**

Thailand has said it would allow undocumented migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar to work in the country legally for about two years to curb the spread of COVID-19. Migrants have to sign up online and be registered by an employer before mid-September in order to receive a work permit until February 2023 and have to undergo health checks at a cost of about 7,200 baht (\$240).

**Fishery observers**

**[Despite efforts to encourage adoption of social standards, WCPFC declines to take action. 17 December 2020.](#)**

At the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) annual meeting on 15 December the commission failed to address the human rights and labour issues regarding observer and crew safety for the tuna-fishing sector, despite lobbying by Human Rights at Sea and On-board Social Accountability (OSA) (see paper below).

**[Labour conditions and social responsibility in the Pacific tuna industry - information paper. 3 December 2020.](#)**

The paper by OSA was sponsored by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). It highlighted human rights and labour conditions in the Pacific tuna fleet and offered recommendations on how the WCPFC can improve social accountability in the fleet. Specifically, the paper calls for the commission to adopt a binding CMM on crew welfare and labor conditions on vessels operating in the WCPFC convention area.

**New resources, tools and reports**

**[Report shows social interaction matters between crew members. 5 January 2021.](#)**

The report is part of the [Social Interaction Matters](#) (SIM) Project, sponsored by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Red Ensign Group. The SIM Project was initiated with the primary objective of encouraging social interaction on board. COVID-19 has resulted in dramatically extended voyages and has focused attention on the importance of social interaction and seafarers' well-being.

**[Joint Packard and Walton Family Foundation report identifies five key seafood sustainability focus areas. 4 January 2021. See webinar.](#)**

The [Global Seafood Markets Strategy](#) Evaluation Report is a joint evaluation of the Packard and Walton Family Foundations two foundations' Global Seafood Markets strategies. It assessed key components of the Foundations' past grant-making, including buyer commitments, pre-competitive collaborations, certifications and ratings, fishery improvement projects (FIPs), and social responsibility. There is special mention of Northern Europe, which is looking to level the playing field for sustainable seafood products and the Global Tuna Alliance which primarily groups United Kingdom tuna importers and retailers.

**[Satellites can reveal risk of forced labor in the world's fishing fleet. 21 December 2020.](#)**

A groundbreaking model uses remote sensing data, machine learning, and human rights expertise to shed light on slavery at sea and can reveal the global extent of forced labor in the world's fishing fleet. The [study](#) shows vessels known to have crew that are subject to forced labour behave in systematically different ways to the rest of the global fishing fleet. The discovery was used to build a first-of-its-kind model to identify and predict vessels at high risk of engaging in these abuses.

**[ILO toolkit for developing national action plans on forced labour. 2 December 2020.](#)**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has released a toolkit which provides a roadmap and examples of how to build on existing frameworks to formulate national action plans. The toolkit also covers key forced labour definitions, how to mainstream forced labour topics and how to build an effective evidence base for national action plans. It is aimed at policy makers, civil society and stakeholders,

**[Whitepaper. The value of supplier codes of conduct: supporting transparency and improving performance. December 2020.](#)**

The paper covers what a code of conduct is, its role in delivering accountability and transparency and how to use a code of conduct. This is a collaborative research paper produced by University of Westminster and Ardea International.

**[Taiwan](#)**

**[Death on the high seas: Taiwanese rights groups demand end to modern slavery on fishing boats. 14 January 2021.](#)**

The death of a young Indonesian crew member has become a symbol for the endemic abuse of foreign fishermen

**[US CBP takes action against Taiwanese trawler, accusing it of using forced labour. 4 January 2021.](#)**

US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has issued a withhold release order against a Taiwanese tuna trawler, saying it has received credible information that the vessel was involved in the use of forced labour.

**[Greenpeace, EJF urge Western buyers to pressure Taiwan to tighten its fishing regulations. 17 December 2020.](#)**

According to Greenpeace and other NGOs concerned with labor issues in the global fishing industry, Taiwan's tuna-fishing firms, and major Western buyers, aren't doing enough to stamp out long-running abuses taking place in the Taiwanese tuna fleet. This follows a multi-year campaign by Greenpeace to persuade FCF Co., a Taiwan-based business and the largest tuna trader in the world, to make reforms.

***This is an amalgamation of the news alerts issued in January 2021.***