


New report alleges worker abuse in Vietnam shrimp farming sector

The report claims retailers and seafood distributors in the United States and Europe are driving shrimp prices down to unsustainable levels.



The report calls for urgent changes in the way supermarkets source their shrimp. It recommends that supermarkets pay prices that reflect the true cost of sustainable production, about 1.5 to 2 times the current prices. (Photo: Shutterstock)

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This article, originally published Aug. 29, was updated Sept. 4 at the request of Sustainability Incubator to remove the names of individual researchers. Their names had been included in the original statement.

A new report alleging troubling conditions in Vietnam’s shrimp industry that supply Western supermarket chains is the latest in a string of investigations into human rights abuses in the global shrimp supply chain.

[The report](#), released Thursday by the group Sustainability Incubator, claims retailers and seafood distributors in the United States and Europe are driving shrimp prices down to unsustainable levels, resulting in severe exploitation of workers, human rights abuses and widespread poverty among shrimp industry workers.

The primary research was conducted by teams in Vietnam, including the Center for Development and Integration. The research, including the market component, analysis and report writing were completed by Katrina Nakamura of the Sustainability Incubator, which is hosting the report on its website.

In 2018, according to the report, Vietnamese shrimp prices peaked at around \$11.00 (€9.95) per kilogram, with employers typically providing bonuses, overtime pay, and accident coverage.



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However, the situation has changed since then, according to the report. In 2024, shrimp prices have plummeted to an average of \$5.00 (€4.50) per kilogram. This dramatic drop has led to reduced wages, loss of benefits, and compromised safety and working conditions for many workers in the sector, the report claims.

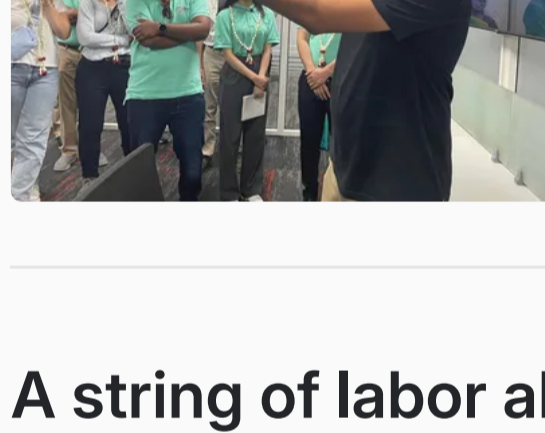
The report calls for urgent changes in the way supermarkets source their shrimp. It recommends that supermarkets pay prices that reflect the true cost of sustainable production, about 1.5 to 2 times the current prices.

Additionally, supermarkets should improve transparency by publishing the names of their processing plants and engage with unions and civil society organizations to address labor exploitation effectively.

The report also urges governments in shrimp-importing countries to enforce human rights and environmental due diligence legislation. Such measures could include adopting laws similar to the European Union’s Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and addressing unfair trading practices that contribute to the exploitation of workers.

Without significant changes, according to the report, the industry will continue to face ethical and economic challenges. Supermarkets and policymakers must take decisive actions to ensure that the quest for lower prices does not come at the expense of workers’ rights and well-being.

The report’s findings are based on research conducted from July 2023 to May 2024.



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A string of labor abuse reports

Last October, an investigation by the nonprofit [Outlaw Ocean Project published in *The New Yorker* magazine](#) alleged key US companies were importing and distributing seafood produced in China through the use of forced labor.

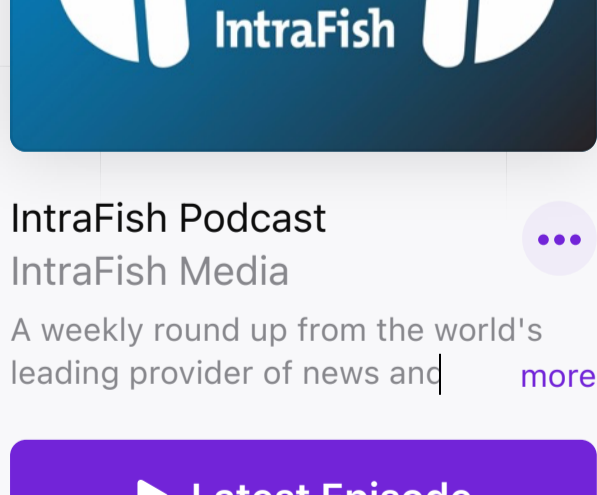
The Outlaw Ocean Project revealed evidence of forced labor of Uyghurs workers transferred from the Xinjiang Uyghur region to seafood processing factories in the Shandong province of China that have supplied US companies as well as the US government.

That investigation resulted in retailers and distributors ceasing to do business with some of the companies alleged to be abusing workers rights.

In March, [India's shrimp industry was accused of mistreating workers](#) and violating quality standards in three separate reports published by US-based media and nonprofit groups.

The reports also led to [changes in sourcing by some US companies](#) and calls for government action in the United States and Europe to address the issue.

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