



Joe Bundrant, CEO of Trident Seafoods, said the company is conducting its own investigations into allegations of forced labor connected to a supplier in China. Photo: IntraFish

## Trident Seafoods focusing on 'determining if or how' it failed to detect forced-labor violations in its supply chain

Trident Seafoods has cut ties with a supplier connected to an investigation of North Korean workers in China.

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By [Rachel Sapin](#) 

Trident Seafoods has cut ties with a Chinese processor that has been accused of using forced labor from North Korea at its facility.

The use of North Korean workers was prohibited by the United Nations Security Council in 2017. In addition, under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, passed in 2017, the United States prohibits the importation of any goods produced by North Korean nationals.

The allegations, which were published recently by the nonprofit Outlaw Ocean Project, showed that as recently as December there were between 50 to 70 North Korean workers at Dalian Haiqing Food Co. Ltd. in Dandong.

According to trade records, Trident Seafoods Corporation was the consignee for shipments of seafood, including pollock, from Dalian Haiqing between October 2017 and December 2023, the nonprofit said.

The Outlaw Ocean Project investigation is part of an in-depth look at the use of North Korean workers at a range of seafood processing plants in Dandong city, close to China's border with North Korea. High Liner Foods and Sysco are also linked to the Haiqing plant in the report.

Bundrant said in a statement that prior to publishing its investigation Outlaw Ocean contacted Trident to let the seafood company know it "uncovered the presence of North Korean workers at a Trident supplier located in the Liaoning province of China."

"Without hesitation, Trident suspended trade with the supplier and initiated its own independent investigation," Bundrant said. "While our investigation remains ongoing, we've cooperated with, and remain fully aligned with OOP (Outlaw Ocean Project) in advocating for a transparent and healthy seafood supply chain."

Emails between Trident and Outlaw Ocean about the issue are available to read on the nonprofit's website.

Bundrant said Trident for the past two decades has operated in China with a comprehensive Food Safety and Quality Assurance (FSQA) program and an experienced production leadership team.

"In addition to third-party audits and certifications, we've also expanded our in-house corporate social responsibility (CSR) program to include a full-time, on-site CSR presence in China, through which we're able to assess compliance with our social standards and offer training and guidance to ensure companies and processing workers alike understand our human rights requirements, grievance mechanisms, and ethical workplace practices," he said.

Bundrant said the company is also conducting its own investigation of the allegations.

"We are focusing specifically on determining if – or how – we failed to detect violations of Trident's Human Rights and Supplier Code of Conduct policies," he said. "If gaps exist in our CSR program and auditing process, then the answer is simple: We'll fix them."

The group's North Korea findings are on top of a publication in *The New Yorker* magazine that came out last year implicating major suppliers and retailers in North America and Europe in distributing and selling seafood produced in China using Uyghur forced labor.

Commenting on that report in an opinion column published in October, Bundrant said: "[At Trident, we work with Chinese suppliers who meet international labor standards](#). Yes, we rely on third-party audits, but as *The New Yorker* article highlights, third-party audits alone aren't enough to ensure compliance."

[US buyers linked to Trident](#) that have been associated with Dalian Haiqing include Albertsons, Costco, Fairway Market, Foodservice Direct, Giant, Key Food, McDonald's, Shoprite, Target and Walmart.

Outlaw Ocean has contacted McDonald's about the forced labor issue with no response so far, according to its communications published online. (Copyright)

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