

Trade

US bans shrimp from Chinese exporter tied to forced labor

Latest action was prompted by forced labor allegations in an investigation by the Outlaw Ocean Project.



The ban on Argentinian shrimp produced by the Shandong Meijia Group takes effect June 12, the agency said. (Photo: Shutterstock)

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The US government on Tuesday added a Chinese exporter to the list of companies prohibited to ship product to the United States because of the processor's use of forced labor.

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) added Shandong Meijia Group Co., Ltd., also known as Rizhao Meijia Group, to its Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Entity List, which provides companies with more information about the potential involvement of forced labor in their supply chains.

"Information reviewed by the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF), including publicly available information, indicates that Shandong Meijia Group Co., Ltd. participated in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) government-sponsored labor transfer programs to transfer and receive individuals from persecuted groups, including Uyghurs, out of the XUAR for labor at its factory in Shandong," DHS said in a press statement.

The ban on Argentinian shrimp produced by the Shandong Meijia Group takes effect June 12, the agency said.

This latest action, designed to prevent products suspected of being produced using forced labor from being imported into the United States, stems from an investigation by the nonprofit [Outlaw Ocean Project published in *The New Yorker* magazine](#) in October. The investigation alleged key US companies were importing and distributing seafood produced in China through the use of forced labor.

The investigation 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.

Following publication of the investigation, US supermarket giant Albertsons stopped purchasing certain products produced in China and supplied by Canadian seafood company High Liner Foods. Other major seafood suppliers also cut ties with some companies cited in the investigation.

In January, [the Southern Shrimp Alliance \(SSA\), a coalition of US Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishermen](#) and processors, asked the US government for more scrutiny of Chinese seafood processors that the group alleges are exporting Argentinian red shrimp to the United States without proper documentation.

The SSA said US consumers are provided no indication as to whether the Argentinian shrimp being sold in grocery stores was shipped from China, and pointed to information from bills of lading they analyzed showing some of Argentinian shrimp was cycled through China's Shandong province, an area tied to forced labor abuses.

In January, the nonprofit Outlaw Ocean Project, with the help of the NGO Human Rights Foundation (HRF), [submitted a formal legal petition to the US government seeking sanctions against seven Chinese seafood processors](#) accused of using forced labor to produce seafood sold in the US market.

Shandong Meijia Group was one of the seven companies listed.

"Shrimp supply chains have a disturbing pattern of profiting off of the globe's most vulnerable populations. Argentinian red shrimp packed by Uyghurs in Chinese seafood processing plants should not be competing with wholesome products in American grocery stores," said John Williams, executive director of the SSA.

Move follows other allegations

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 first report, authored by the Corporate Accountability Lab (CAL), a Chicago-based nonprofit group, claims "pervasive systemic abuses" throughout the shrimp supply chain. It alleges that workers are routinely exploited and subject to forced labor by some companies.

The CAL report was followed by an investigation from the *Associated Press* news agency, which said it uncovered widespread abuse and hazardous working conditions in Andhra Pradesh state, and a report by investigative journalism group The Outlaw Ocean Project, which interviewed a whistleblower and former employee of a shrimp company in the same state.

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