



A US association said China is importing shrimp from Argentina and selling into the United States, hurting domestic producers. Photo: shutterstock

US shrimp association ties reprocessed Argentinian shrimp to China forced labor scandal

Argentinian shrimp imports coming into the US via China are not being documented and are hurting wild shrimp producers, group contends.

29 January 2024 22:22 GMT *UPDATED* 29 January 2024 22:22 GMT

By [Rachel Sapin](#) 

The Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA), a coalition of US Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishermen and processors, is asking for more scrutiny of Chinese seafood processors that the group alleges are exporting Argentinian red shrimp to the United States without proper documentation.

The group 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.

Earlier this month, 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.

US HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS ARE SEEKING SANCTIONS FOR THESE CHINESE PROCESSORS ACCUSED OF USING FORCED LABOR

The sanctions are intended to prevent the seafood processors and associates from selling goods made with Uyghur forced labor to the United States. The processors include:

- Yantai Sanko Fisheries
- Yantai Longwin Foods
- The Chishan Group, including Shandong Haidu and Rongcheng Haibo
- Shandong Meijia Group, including Rizhao Meijia Aquatic Foodstuff, Rizhao Jiayuan Foodstuff and Rizhao Meijia Keyuan Foods
- Qingdao Tianyuan Aquatic Foodstuffs
- Rongsense Group, including Rizhao Rirong Aquatic Products and Rizhao Rongxing
- Xinjiang Zhongtai Zhihui Modern Service

Source: SSA, Outlaw Ocean

The SSA asked for Weihai Wendeng Xinghe Food Co to be added to the list, although it has not been confirmed that the company exports products to the United States, according to Outlaw Ocean.

"Americans purchasing Argentinian shrimp unknowingly contribute to Uyghur oppression, as they have no way of knowing whether it was packed in plants in Shandong under current labeling laws," the group said.

Country of origin labeling issues

The association said in a letter to the US Department of Homeland Security Monday that since January of last year, over 265 containers of Argentinian shrimp were shipped to the United States by Chinese exporters, equating to an estimated 12 million pounds of shrimp that would have been harvested in Argentina.

"The millions of pounds of South American shrimp exported from China enters the US as a product of where it was harvested, meaning that there is no indication given in our official import statistics that this shrimp went through a Chinese processing plant," the group said.

That's because US import laws do not document Argentinian shrimp that has been substantially transformed in another country through reprocessing, it added.

Under current US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) holdings, the country-of-origin for shrimp is where the shrimp is harvested, Nathan Rickard, a trade attorney who worked with the association, told **IntraFish**. He noted the government agency does not constitute "freezing, peeling, and/or cooking shrimp" as a substantial transformation like it does with seafood that is imported from Russia via China and into the United States.

Earlier this month, the Biden administration expanded an executive order issued in December that closes a regulatory loophole that had been allowing Russian-harvested seafood reprocessed in China and other countries to be imported into the United States despite a ban on the imports implemented in 2022 in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The executive order applies to salmon, cod, pollock, and crab.

The association reviewed ship manifest data and identified shipments totaling 12 million pounds of shrimp claimed to have been harvested in Argentina that was shipped from a Chinese processor to the United States, he said.

"That means that within that 27 million pounds of Argentinian-origin shrimp imported into the United States between January to November of 2023, at least 12 million pounds was shipped to China for processing before being imported into the United States," he said.

The shrimp, the association argues, is competing for US consumer's attention over pink shrimp caught by US shrimpers in the Gulf of Mexico and the south Atlantic.

The association has long-advocated for antidumping duties against shrimp imports from Asia and elsewhere and over the years have received tens of millions of dollars in government payments stemming from the collection of these duties.

Overseas shrimp farmers and exporters are currently experiencing many of the same economic hardships facing US wild shrimp producers represented by SSA, including rocketing costs, weak consumer demand and low prices for their shrimp. (Copyright)

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