

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

December 4, 2023

Troy A. Miller  
Acting Commissioner  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Acting Commissioner Miller,

I write to urge U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to take immediate action to enhance screening of seafood products imported from the People's Republic of China (PRC) to ensure compliance with international and domestic trade, safety, and labor standards.

The United States imports more than \$2 billion of seafood products from China annually.<sup>1</sup> Ongoing reports indicate a significant portion of this seafood is produced through illegal and unethical labor practices.<sup>2</sup> According to new research, tens of thousands of workers are trapped aboard fishing vessels where they are forced to work and endure unsafe conditions. Twenty-five percent of vessels abusing workers are flagged to China and the worst labor offenders are Chinese companies.<sup>3</sup> Many of these workers are trapped at sea for years, working under debt bondage, and forced to withstand abusive and neglectful working conditions.

A significant portion of the seafood consumed by Americans is imported from China, caught by Chinese ships, or processed in China's facilities. The PRC's flagrant disregard for international and domestic laws allows China to export seafood that is often sold at low prices to establish a market advantage and drive out American seafood producers. The unscrutinized import of these seafood products, which are not held to the same rigorous environmental and labor standards as American seafood, harms domestic fishing industries and coastal economies.

I am concerned that seafood exported to the United States from China is processed by Uyghur workers, a repressed ethnic minority in China's Xinjiang Region. This is in direct violation of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which prohibits the import into the United States of products made by forced labor in Xinjiang. It is imperative that your agency take decisive action to ensure all imported seafood products comply with the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act and all domestic laws.

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<sup>1</sup> ["Illegal, Unreported, And Unregulated Fishing Accounts for More Than \\$2 Billion Of U.S. Seafood Imports" U.S. International Trade Commission](#)

<sup>2</sup> ["The Uyghurs Forced to Process the World's Fish" The New Yorker, 9 Oct. 2023](#)

<sup>3</sup> ["China Leads List of Labor Abusers, Sometimes Akin to Slavery, Detected on Fishing Vessels Worldwide" Associated Press \(AP\), 15 Nov. 2023](#)

China's ongoing illegal and unregulated fishing activities are also threatening the rules-based order that protects the world's oceans from exploitation and overfishing. Over the past decade, the PRC has significantly increased the number of Chinese flagged vessels, while taking deceptive action to conceal illegal fishing activity, including poaching from other countries' Exclusive Economic Zones.<sup>4</sup> These actions threaten the international seafood supply chain, endanger marine ecosystems in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world, and undermine global efforts to promote environmentally sustainable fisheries. Therefore, I urge CBP to enhance screening for all imported seafood from China to discourage unfair trade practices, economic coercive measures, and other illegal activities.

Without proper enforcement and stepped-up screening by CBP, seafood products tainted with the use of forced labor from Chinese boats and processing centers will continue entering the U.S. market. Not only is this a violation of international and U.S. law, but it also causes significant harm to American consumers and our domestic seafood industry. I request CBP provide a briefing regarding the agency's efforts to monitor seafood imported from China and guarantee compliance with international and domestic trade, safety, and labor laws.

The United States must live up to its role as a leader in defending free and fair-trade systems based on the rule of law. Your agency has a responsibility to ensure our food imports are of the highest quality and in compliance with all applicable trade, safety, and labor standards. Any failure to do so will pose a significant threat to public health and our economic security.

I appreciate your consideration of these requests and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank Pallone, Jr." in a cursive style.

FRANK PALLONE, JR.  
Member of Congress

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<sup>4</sup> ["How China Targets the Global Fish Supply" The New York Times, 26 Sept. 2022](#)