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US Department of Homeland Security adds seafood to list of priorities in Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act





■ he U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in its role as the chair of the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF), has added seafood to its list of high-priority

high-priority sectors under the act since 2022.

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas | Photo courtesy of lev radin/Shutterstock

The UFLPA was established in 202, and makes importing goods produced with Uyghur labor or labor from China's Xianjiang province illegal. The DHS's addition of seafood – alongside aluminum and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) – mark the first additions to the list of

sectors for enforcement of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA).

In its announcement, the DHS said the three industries were identified as at higher risk of forced labor or state labor transfers of Uyghurs or other ethnic minorities from the Xinjiang **Uyghur Autonomous Region.**

"Forced labor is a form of modern slavery, and the Department of Homeland Security is

Alejandro N. Mayorkas said. "The updated Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act Strategy

committed to eradicating it from our supply chains," Secretary of Homeland Security

and new high-priority sectors for enforcement announced today reflect the evolving and expanding scope of those who seek to circumvent the law and profit off the exploitation of abused people." Companies exporting seafood to the U.S. under review by the FLETF are subject to enforcement actions, such as inclusion on the UFLPA Entity list, export limitations, economic sanctions, and visa restrictions.

"Our Department will continue to work closely with our partners in government and with stakeholders across industry and civil society to lead U.S. efforts to end forced labor by enforcing customs laws, supporting economic fairness, and safeguarding the human rights of all," Mayorkas said.

The DHS has already added some Chinese seafood companies to the UFLPA Entity list,

effectively banning all imports from those companis. In June, it added Shandong Meijia,

also known as the Rizhao Meijia Group, as well as its subsidiaries Rizhao Meijia Aquatic

Foodstuff and Rizhao Meijia Keyuan Food Co., to the list.

processing facilities.

The increased scrutiny of Chinese seafood companies by the DHS comes in the wake of an Outlaw Ocean Project report that revealed evidence of multiple Chinese processing companies using Uyghur labor. The report showcased evidence of Chinese governmentsponsored labor transfer programs that shipped workers from Xingjiang to seafood-

expanding enforcement of the UFLPA to prevent goods made with forced labor from entering the U.S. "This will happen through designation of more companies to the UFLPA Entity List, enforcement by [Customs and Border Control] at our ports, a focus on additional industry

FLETF Chair Robert Silvers said that the addition of new products is part of the DHS's

U.S. House representatives Raúl M. Grijalva (D-Arizona) and Jared Huffman (D-California) praised the move, calling it a method of holding the seafood industry accountable for forced labor.

"Thanks to groundbreaking reporting from the Outlaw Ocean Project, we know that

importer of seafood, the U.S. has a duty to hold the industry accountable for these

human rights violations, including forced labor, are running rampant across the global

seafood supply chain," a joint statement from the lawmakers said. "As the world's largest

unacceptable practices and keep tainted products off American families' dinner tables. The

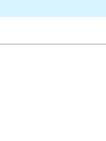
Biden administration's work to enforce a higher global standard for the seafood industry is

sectors, and continued engagement with industry and civil society," Silvers said.

commendable and we look forward to continuing to work with them to keep that momentum going." The DHS move was welcomed by NGO Oceana, which said it will pressure seafood processors and importers to better document seafood supply chains – which will in turn help combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. "The Department of Homeland Security should be commended for taking this crucial step

to protect American consumers and ensure our seafood isn't tainted by human rights abuses," Oceana Illegal Fishing and Transparency Director Max Valentine said. "DHS is stepping up in the fight against forced labor in the seafood supply chain, but they cannot do it alone. From blocking forced labor products in the seafood sector, to maintaining the current ban on Russian seafood, none of the government's lofty goals are possible without

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