

Major seafood buyers support US proposals to address IUU fishing in South Pacific

Over 30 major companies, including Costco, Aldi and Profand, have rallied behind the cause of IUU fishing and addressing human rights violations in the South Pacific

By [Matilde Mereghetti](#) | Jan. 30, 2024 16:17 GMT



□ Chinese squid fishing. Credit: OOP / Chishan

The South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO) kicked off its annual meeting in Manta, Ecuador, with a strong show of support from over 30 major seafood companies and industry associations.

These entities, which include some of the largest US and EU processors, retailers and distributors, such as Costco Wholesale, Aldi and Grupo Profand, have rallied behind the cause of combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and addressing human rights violations in the South Pacific.

According to industry sources, even though the organization has previously adopted management measures focused on ensuring resource sustainability, until now, it has never implemented specific measures on labor rights.

Sources also pointed out that some long-distance fishing fleets operating near Peruvian waters and/or transshipping along the Humboldt Current employ fishermen of a different nationality, who, in some cases, are subjected to severely exploitative conditions, such as forced labor and human trafficking.

To urge the SPRFMO to take swift action, the companies submitted a letter to the heads of delegation of members and cooperating non-contracting parties (CNCs) participating in the organization's annual meeting. It underscored the need for concrete measures and procedures to identify and combat IUU fishing activities in the convention area.

"We recognize the efforts of the SPRFMO in recent years to manage the jumbo flying squid stock, and are aware of the progress that the SPRFMO has made on ensuring the sustainability of this fishery," the letter reads. "Building on this progress, it is essential to increase efforts to curb IUU fishing in the convention area.

"We wish to see the commission accelerate the fight against the IUU fishing in the convention area by implementing appropriate procedures and measures to identify infringements and violations by vessels on the high seas," it continues.

The letter also noted that the organization had so far not included any fishing vessels on the IUU list.

The signatories to the letter also include Seattle Fish & Gourmet Provisions, SeaFarms, Quirch, Picard, Sysco France, Frinsa, High Liner Foods, GlobalPez, Fortune International, Denner, which is part of Grupo Migros, Cabomar, Congalsa, Conxemar, PanaPesca, Brianna Hughes, Wofco, Lund's Fisheries, Santa Monica Seafood, Grupo Conframar, Grupo Eroski, among others.

The key requests made in the letter include labor guidelines, such as establishing a specialized working group and the implementation of the first Conservation and Management Measure (CMM) focused on guidelines for the safety and equitable treatment of crew members. These proposals were put forth by the US, Ecuador, Australia and New Zealand.



□ Photo: Vessel fishing in the South Pacific.

Additionally, the companies called for amendments to the jumbo-flying squid CMM to gradually increase onboard observer coverage to 20%, as Australia and New Zealand suggested.

The letter also emphasized the importance of discussing and considering five proposals to improve monitoring, control, and surveillance measures to combat IUU fishing in the jumbo-flying squid fishery.

The SPRFMO commission, comprising 17 state members, including nations like the United States, China, and the European Union, will deliberate on these proposals during the annual meeting, which runs from Jan. 29 to Feb. 2. If adopted, these actions are expected to enhance transparency and enforce stricter controls to prevent IUU fishing in one of the world's most critical squid stocks.

Contact the author matilde.mereghetti@undercurrentnews.com

News

About

Subscriptions

Facebook

Data

Contact

Newsletters

Twitter

Webinars

Advertise

Jobs

LinkedIn

Blogs

Archive

Interviews