

Report: Chinese plants using forced Uyghur labor supplying major European, US retailers

Chinese seafood companies using forced labor from Uyghur workers are supplying to large value-added processors in Europe and North America, who are then selling to Albertsons, Carrefour, Edeka, Kroger, Sysco, Tesco and Walmart, according to *The New Yorker*

By [Undercurrent News](#) | Oct. 9, 2023 17:06 BST



□ A still from a video uploaded to a Chinese government Douyin account in 2023 depicting a labor transfer organized by the Kashgar authorities. Credit: Douyin, Kashgar Media Center/The Outlaw Ocean Project

Chinese seafood companies using forced labor from Uyghur workers are supplying to large value-added processors in Europe and North America, who are then selling to significant customers such as Albertsons Companies, Carrefour, Edeka, Kroger, Sysco, Tesco and Walmart, according to a report published [The New Yorker](#).

The report, put together by *The New Yorker* and NGO The Outlaw Ocean Project, names High Liner Foods and Nomad Foods as buyers of seafood from plants in China using workers from the Muslim Uyghur minority allegedly forcibly displaced from their home province, Xinjiang.

In Europe, Nomad is supplying the likes of Carrefour, Edeka and Tesco. Canada's High Liner, which generates around two-thirds of its sales from the US, is one of several importers in North America buying from plants using Uyghur labor, then selling to the likes of Albertsons, Kroger, Sysco and Walmart.

A spokesperson for Albertsons told *The New Yorker* they would stop purchasing certain seafood products from High Liner.

Walmart told *The New Yorker* it "expects all our suppliers to comply with our standards and contractual obligations, including those relating to human rights."

Chinese companies the Chishan Group, Yantai Sanko Fisheries and Yantai Longwin Food are all named in the story as users of Uyghur labor. The report clarifies the use of Uyghur labor is not illegal in China.

A spokesperson for Sysco told *The New Yorker* that its supplier, Yantai Sanko, had undergone audits and denied that it had ever "received any workers under a state-imposed labor-transfer program."

"Among the most serious issues we uncovered was the widespread use of Uyghur labor, transferred from Xinjiang by Chinese authorities to Shandong province, in seafood processing. Tens of thousands of tons of seafood processed by plants using Uyghur labor has been exported to the United States and Europe since 2018," wrote Outlaw Ocean's Joe Galvin in a post on LinkedIn.

"Our findings conclusively demonstrate the systematic transfer of Xinjiang ethnic minorities to factories in Shandong province's global seafood processing hubs over the last five years. Social media clips show Uyghurs working at ten big exporters in 2023," wrote Daniel Murphy of Outlaw Ocean on LinkedIn.

"Shrimp, salmon, cod, haddock, pollock, squid, mackerel and crab, among other species, are exported globally from these plants. Some of this seafood has been caught and farmed in the US, Canada, UK and EU - before being shipped to Chinese factories using Uyghur workers and hauled back over the ocean to world markets," he added.

In addition to being imported for use in retail, "it is also imported by companies fulfilling government contracts to put seafood in our schools, hospitals, military bases and prisons," said Murphy. "Our investigation reveals the broad failure of private sector safeguards - namely social audit, the principal tool big business deploys to detect forced labor."

Outlaw Ocean found that, in the case of one global exporter, labor transfers were facilitated by an arm of the state-owned Fortune 500 Xinjiang Zhongtai Group, which was added to the US Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) Entity List in September 2023.

The UFLPA aims to prevent the importation of goods into the US "manufactured wholly or in part with forced labor in the People's Republic of China, especially from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, or Xinjiang," states the website of the US Customs and Border Protection.

High Liner and Nomad were not immediately available for comment to *Undercurrent News*.

Carrefour's press office told *The New Yorker* it "strongly condemns the use of forced labor in its supply chain" and has opened an investigation, which, the company says, has not found evidence of forced labor thus far. Tesco declined to comment on its connections to suppliers sourcing from plants using Uyghur workers. Edeka's public affairs department said it was not responsible for compliance issues related to "branded products," like those from Nomad.

Costco and Kroger did not respond to requests for comment to *The New Yorker*.

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