

Supply chain group wants EU crackdown on imports linked to forced labor

The Market Advisory Council has provided recommendations to the European Commission on a legislative proposal for a regulation prohibiting products made with forced labor on the EU market

By Undercurrent News | Dec. 6, 2023 10:22 GMT



□ Credit: VanderWolf Images / Shutterstock

The EU's Market Advisory Council (MAC) -- composed of organizations representing the entire value chain and NGOs -- has advised the European Commission and member states to adopt a regulation prohibiting products made with forced labor on the EU market.

The new instrument would prohibit the placing on the market and the exporting of products made wholly or partially with the intervention of forced labor, it said.

This comes after investigative journalism by the [Ocean Outlaw Project](#) detailed links between alleged forced labor and illegal fishing activities in China with major buyers in the US and EU.

According to a study commissioned by the MAC, there are specific major risks in the fishing sector regarding forced labor, namely hazardous working conditions at sea, isolation and lack of oversight, illegal recruitment practices, and complex supply chains, it said.

"Several major species commercialized in the [European] Union market may be affected by these problems."

According to MAC members, the European Commission and EU member states should:

- Engage with international and social partners, particularly advocating for the ratification of the International Labour Organization's Work in Fishing Convention (No 188) and strengthening bilateral and multilateral engagement.
- Ensure the availability of reliable and up-to-date information on forced labor -- in this respect, the EU should play a key role in constructing and maintaining comprehensive databases on social and environmental issues.
- Ensure a transparent approach, notably by openly communicating the methodologies developed and the outcomes of the investigations into forced labor practices, for example, via the establishment of a transparent list of companies and, where relevant, of fishing vessels found to have violated the regulation's provisions and the creation of a mechanism to demonstrate compliance.
- Improve the links with the proposed Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, for example, by ensuring that results of investigations are available to companies to feed their due diligence processes.

"Even though the proposed regulation is meant to apply equally to products made in the EU and in third countries, not targeting specific products, industries or countries, it can play a key role in fighting forced labor in the market of fishery and aquaculture products, as international trade is extremely important in this highly globalized sector with complex supply chains," said Yobana Bermudez, chair of the MAC.

News

About

Subscriptions

Facebook

Data

Contact

Newsletters

Twitter

Webinars

Advertise

Jobs

LinkedIn

Blogs

Archive

Interviews