

# US congressional panel's report recommends expanding SIMP for Chinese seafood

'With this report, the select committee has shown that the bipartisan will exists to meet the call of history' -- US representatives Mike Gallagher and Raja Krishnamoorthi

By [Jason Huffman](#) | Dec. 18, 2023 17:37 GMT



□ US representative Mike Gallagher, chairman of the House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the US and the Chinese Communist Party. Image is from committee's website.

Another US congressional committee is making recommendations that would serve to limit or ban the import of seafood from China in the wake of an investigative series that spotlighted forced labor in the Chinese commercial seafood harvesting and processing sector.

The US House of Representatives Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party last week issued a [53-page report](#) in which it recommended expanding the list of seafood products from China that would be subject to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP).

The panel also has recommended adding language to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA), a law passed in 2021 and implemented in 2022, to specifically ban the import of seafood involving the use of labor from China's Xinjiang region.

The seafood-related recommendations are among 150 made in the report but are limited to just one paragraph on page 21. The paragraph reads:

"Expand the 'rebuttable presumption' in the UFLPA to include certain imported [Peoples Republic of China] seafood products. Expand the list of seafood products from the PRC subject to [SIMP] to include all types of seafood products to ensure the United States is not complicit in the PRC's practice of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing."



□ Photograph by sudhakar.m from Flickr.

## US shrimp producers hail recommendations

The strategic competition committee was created in January to help the US gain a more competitive stance economically with China by erasing some of the communist country's unfair trade advantages and has spent much of the year holding hearings to discuss a wide range of issues. It consists of 24 members of the House, including 13 Republicans and 11 Democrats. It's co-chaired by representative Mike Gallagher, a Wisconsin Republican, and Raja Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat.

"With this report, the select committee has shown that the bipartisan will exists to meet the call of history," Gallagher and Krishnamoorthi said in a jointly issued statement to bring attention to the report. "... Collectively, these recommendations will reset the terms of our relationship with the PRC, prevent the flow of American capital and technology from supporting its military advances and human rights abuses, and build collective economic resilience in concert with our allies and partners while ensuring American leadership for decades to come."

The Southern Shrimp Alliance, a group of shrimp harvesters and processors in the southeastern US, was quick to applaud the report. In a press release published Thursday (Dec. 14), SSA recounted how China began laying the groundwork to take advantage of labor practices in 2016.

That's when US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) was asked to make rulings regarding the country of origin for Argentinian red shrimp shipped to China for processing before being imported into the US. CBP determined that the shrimp processed in China was not substantially transformed and "is a product of Argentina for [CBP] marking purposes," SSA recalled.

"If the select committee's recommendation regarding the UFLPA was adopted, US importers would no longer be able to exploit the human rights violations occurring in Shandong province to obtain higher profit margins on their shrimp products," SSA said.

"There is no reasonable justification for shipping shrimp across an ocean to be processed in a plant that has the same capabilities as shrimp processing plants around the world," said John Williams, SSA's executive director. "Creating supply chains to profit off of human suffering is reprehensible and the [SSA] is grateful to the select committee for focusing on this issue and proposing meaningful, effective solutions."

## Investigative series continues to build pressure

Nowhere in the panel's paper is mention of the Outlaw Ocean Project's two-part series, published Oct. 9 in [The New Yorker](#), but it clearly was a factor.

The series provided haunting details about crew members being held captive, beaten and suffering from malnutrition aboard vessels in China's distant water fishing fleet, as well as a thorough accounting of the Chinese program used to enlist and transport a large number of Uyghurs over 1,000 miles from Xinjiang, in the land-locked, northwestern part of China, to seafood processing plants in Shandong, on the east coast.

Ian Urbina, a former 17-year reporter for the *New York Times* and the winner of a Pulitzer Prize, was one of four witnesses to appear before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) during a [nearly two-hour hearing](#) held at the end of October.

Following the hearing, CECC co-chairs Smith, a Republican representative from New Jersey, and Jeff Merkley, a Democratic senator from Oregon, asked the president Joe Biden administration to halt imports from seafood-processing facilities in two Chinese provinces. Smith and Merkley later asked the big retail superstore chain Costco to share the audits and risk assessments it used to "justify" the sale of seafood caught and processed by Chinese companies.

On Dec. 6, senator Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican, introduced a bill that would legislatively ban seafood imports from China within a year of enactment, as reported by *Undercurrent*.

Late last week, as reported by [Undercurrent](#), the Sysco Corporation, the world's largest broadline distributor, confirmed that it has ended its relationship with Shandong Haidu following allegations of the major Chinese seafood supplier relying on forced labor. The company is under pressure applied by representative Jared Huffman, a California Democrat who serves as the ranking member of the House Natural Resources Committee's oceans panel.

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