

US expands ban on Chinese seafood over forced labor concerns, includes Argentinian red shrimp

The Southern Shrimp Alliance estimates that roughly 32% of the Argentinian red shrimp imported by the US in 2023 was processed in China

By [Barb Dean-Simmons](#) and [Jason Huffman](#) | June 11, 2024 17:07 BST



Wild-caught red shrimp from Argentina. Photograph by Jason Huffman.

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has added another big Chinese seafood processor to the list of companies prohibited from exporting products to the US over issues of forced labor, simultaneously shutting the door on a major source of processed Argentina red shrimp.

Shandong Meijia Group Co., Ltd. (also known as Rizhao Meijia Group) has been added to the "entity list" maintained under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA), DHS' Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF) announced Tuesday (June 11).

Two of the subsidiary members of the Shandong Meijia Group — Rizhao Meijia Aquatic Foodstuff Co. and Rizhao Meijia Keyuan Food Co. — are active exporters of Argentine red shrimp to customers in the US and Canada.

The DHS statement hints at an expansion of FLETF's plans to zero in more on seafood, footwear and aluminum products manufactured in China with the use of forced labor.

"We have shown again through today's enforcement actions that the United States is taking concrete steps to keep goods made with forced labor out of U.S. supply chains," said Robert Silvers, DHS' under secretary for policy and FLETF chair, in the statement.

"It is imperative for companies to conduct due diligence and know where their products are coming from," he said. "The [FLETF] will continue to designate entities that meet the UFLPA's criteria for inclusion on the Entity List, and US Customs and Border Protection will continue its vigilant enforcement at our ports."

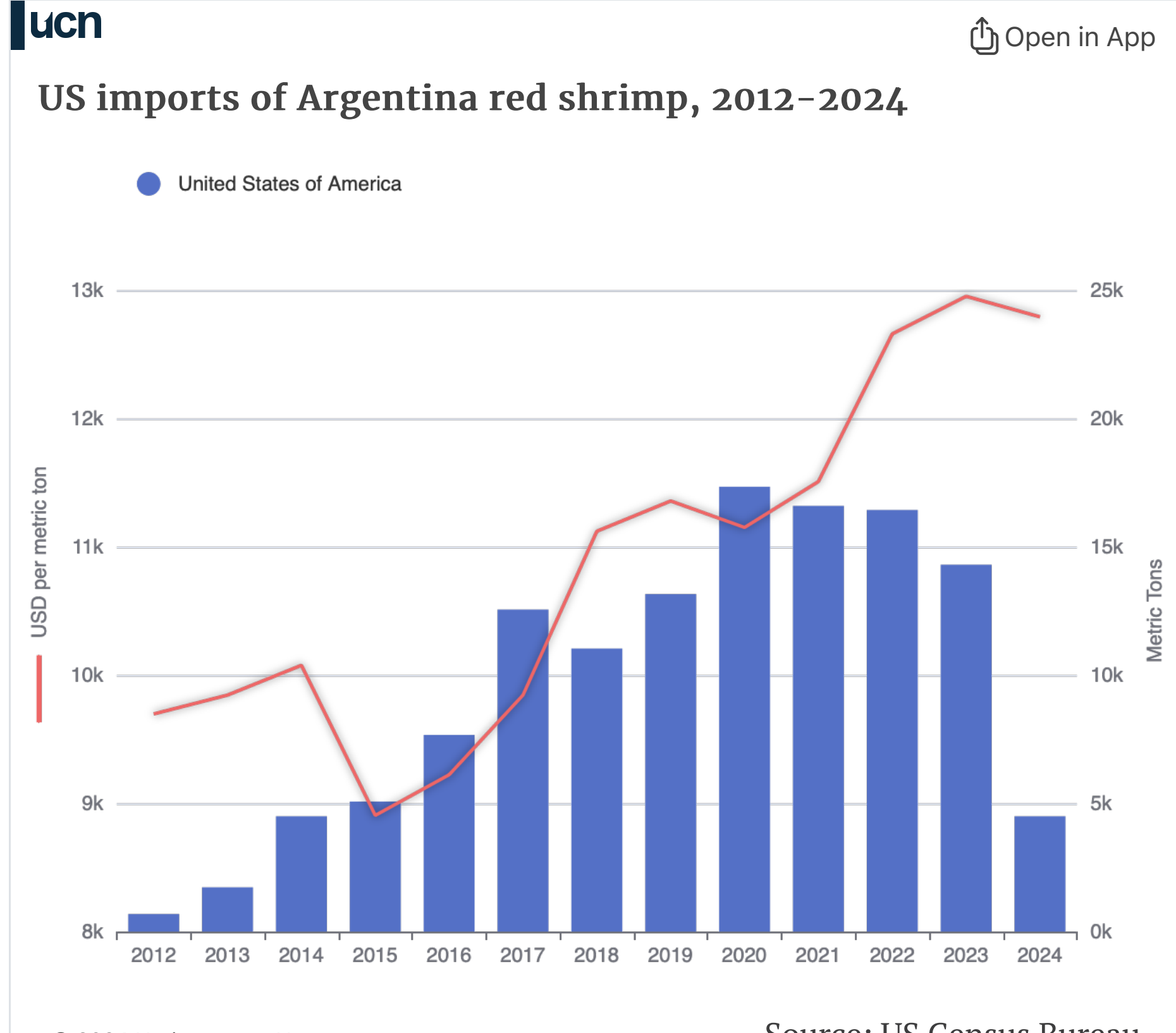
Recall that, in 2023, a report compiled by the independent journalism outfit, [The Outlaw Ocean Project](#), published in *The New Yorker*, found Chinese seafood plants using forced labor, workers from the Muslim Uyghur minority who were allegedly forcibly displaced from their home province, Xinjiang, to produce value-added products which were then sold to significant customers in Europe and North America.

Chinese-processed red shrimp 32% of amount

The Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA), the trade association that represents harvesters and processors of US domestic shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico and southeastern coast, was quick to celebrate the news with a press release issued on Tuesday.

Earlier this year, SSA petitioned the FLETF to add eight Chinese seafood processing plants, including the Shandong Meijia Group and its subsidiaries, Rizhao Jiayuan Food Co. and Rizhao Meijia Keyuan Food Co., to the UFLPA's entity list, as reported by [Undercurrent News](#).

The US has been becoming more and more a fan of wild-caught Argentina red shrimp, importing as much as 31.5 million pounds of it in 2023, though the volume has been slipping since 2020 when the US imported 38.2m, based on a chart created by UCN's trade portal.



Based on an SSA review of bills of lading and ship manifest data, as much as 12m lbs (32%) of that amount was processed in China, though the country of origin label still identifies Argentina, said attorney Nathan Ricard, a partner at Picard Kentz & Rowe, in Washington, D.C., who represents the SSA.

Since January 2023, over 265 containers of Argentinian shrimp were shipped to the US

by Chinese exporters, SSA had advised in its earlier letter to DHS. The product competes for sales against the pink shrimp caught by US shrimpers in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic, SSA said.

"This wild-caught shrimp was sold as sushi in restaurants and in retail grocery stores across the United States without any indication that it may have been packed in Chinese seafood processing plants using Uyghur labor," the SSA said in its statement issued on Tuesday.

Ricard told *Undercurrent* that it's unclear why the Argentinian shrimp would travel all of the way to China for processing before being sent to the US. He added that product descriptions used in 2024 have become more vague and made the China-processed Argentinian shrimp harder to identify.

Contact the authors barb.simmons@undercurrentnews.com,

jason.huffman@undercurrentnews.com

- News
- About
- Subscriptions
- Facebook
- Data
- Contact
- Newsletters
- Twitter
- Webinars
- Advertise
- Jobs
- LinkedIn
- Blogs
- Archive
- Interviews