

# US Homeland Security adds seafood to forced labor priority list

'Forced labor is a form of modern slavery, and the Department of Homeland Security is committed to eradicating it from our supply chains' -- Alejandro Mayorkas, homeland secretary

By [Barb Dean-Simmons](#) | July 10, 2024 16:04 BST



📍 A Chinese fishing vessel known to belong to a company linked to using Uyghur forced labor. Photo courtesy of the Outlaw Ocean Project

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is strengthening its strategy to remove forced labor from American supply chains by adding seafood to the list of high-priority sectors for enforcement under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA).

DHS, which chairs the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF), announced on Tuesday (July 9) that it was updating its strategy to prevent the importation of goods produced with forced labor in China to include seafood, as well as the aluminum and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) sectors.

These industries were identified due to the higher risk of forced labor of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities from the Xinjiang region, the federal agency explained in a statement.

"Forced labor is a form of modern slavery, and the Department of Homeland Security is committed to eradicating it from our supply chains," said DHS secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas.

"Our department will continue to work closely with our partners in government and with stakeholders across industry and civil society to lead US efforts to end forced labor by enforcing customs laws, supporting economic fairness, and safeguarding the human rights of all," he promised.

Originally published in June 2022, the UFLPA strategy outlines a multi-pronged approach to combating forced labor in global supply chains. The update comes after DHS added three Chinese companies from the seafood, aluminum and footwear sector to the UFLPA entity list in June.

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

Chinese seafood processor Shandong Meijia Group (also known as Rizhao Meijia Group) was among the companies added to the list last month, as reported by [Undercurrent News](#). The list now contains 68 companies from China whose goods are restricted from entering the US, said the DHS.

US representatives Raúl M. Grijalva, the ranking Democrat on Natural Resources Committee, and Jared Huffman, the ranking Democrat on the committee's oceans panel, were quick to applaud the action.

"As the world's largest importer of seafood, the United States has a duty to hold the industry accountable for these unacceptable practices and keep tainted products off American families' dinner tables," they said in a statement. "The [president Joe] Biden administration's work to enforce a higher global standard for the seafood industry is commendable and we look forward to continuing to work with them to keep that momentum going."

The Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA), a trade association that represents the harvesters and processors of wild-caught shrimp in the southeastern US, also applauded the latest update from the DHS.

China's processing sector significantly impacts the US shrimp market, the SSA said in a press release, noting that a review of bill of landings data indicates that at least 12 million pounds of Argentine red shrimp processed in China was exported to the US in 2023. This shrimp was sold in restaurants and retail stores across the US without any indication that it may have been packed by Chinese seafood companies using Uyghur labor, SSA said.

"Seafood purchased by American consumers cannot become a vehicle for the Chinese Communist party's abuse of its own people. With today's announcement, US importers are made aware that processing seafood in China, while cheap, may come at a tremendous cost," said SSA executive director John Williams.

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