

US government adds India shrimp to list of products with high incidences of forced labor

Shrimp from Thailand, meanwhile, was removed from a list of products suspected of being produced by forced child labor -- a long-sought win for the country.



The US government has added shrimp from India to a list of products suspected to be produced by forced labor. (Photo: Shutterstock)

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The US government on Thursday released a report adding Indian shrimp to the list of goods with high incidences of forced labor in its production.

The [US Department of Labor \(DOL\) Bureau of International Labor Affairs' \(ILAB\) "List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor \(TVPRA List\)"](#), which it releases annually, lists countries and products shown to have high rates of international labor violations.

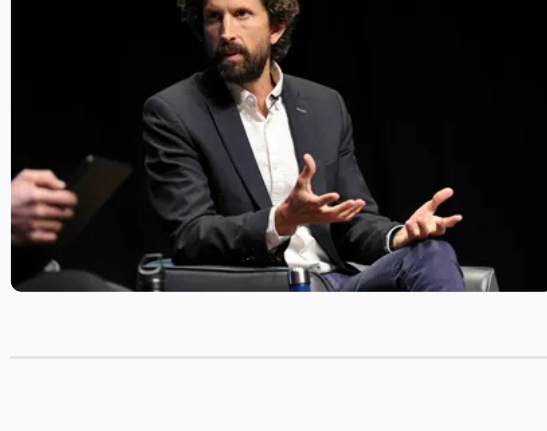
The report placed India shrimp into the "forced labor" category. Indian shrimp was added to the list this year because of reports of "debt bondage," lock-ins and surveillance, high risks of injury, and abuse toward workers, among other issues, according to the report.

Products included on the list face no direct sanction or penalty, Maria Campbell, senior international relations officer at ILAB, told [IntraFish](#) in an email.

"It is an awareness-raising tool that can inform the public and other agencies about risk of labor exploitation in a sector in a country," Campbell wrote.

In its report, ILAB said the TVPRA List should be considered "a call to action," but cautioned that a product's inclusion on the list "cannot be generalized to all production of that good in the country."

"In a given country, there may be firms that produce the good in compliance with the law and international standards, and others that employ child labor and forced labor," according to the report.

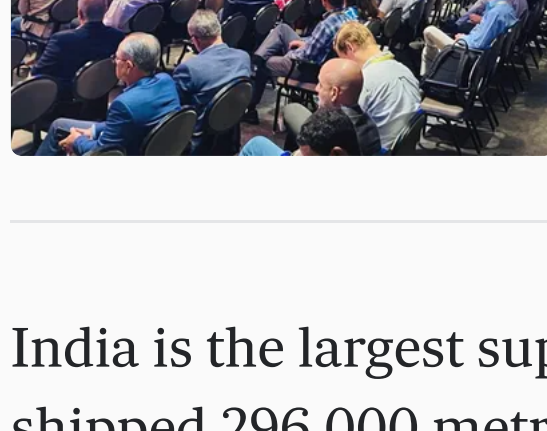


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Among the sources cited for ILAB's determination on Indian shrimp are [stories produced by *The Outlaw Ocean Project* and *Associated Press*](#). In addition, reports from NGO Corporate Accountability Lab and US retail giant Kroger are listed as supporting the claims. *The Outlaw Ocean*, *Associated Press* and Corporate Accountability Lab reports were released earlier this year. They prompted supply chain investigations and calls by US lawmakers to further scrutinize India's shrimp supply chain.

Indian shrimp industry members, including the Seafood Exporters Association of India, [denied the allegations, and claimed the report contained multiple errors and falsehoods](#).



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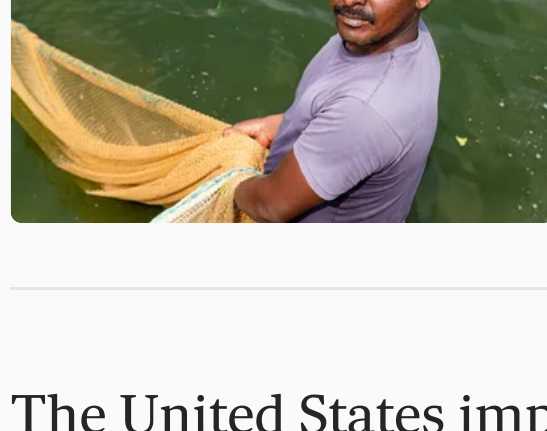
India is the largest supplier of shrimp to the United States. In 2023, India shipped 296,000 metric tons of shrimp worth more than \$2.3 billion (€2.1 billion) into the United States.

Other shrimp products, including shrimp produced in Thailand, were on ILAB's list of products with high rates of forced labor. Despite its continued inclusion on the list, however, the Thai shrimp industry scored a long-sought victory on Thursday.

The Department of Labor removed Thai shrimp from a separate list of goods suspected of being produced by forced or indentured child labor. That list helps ensure federal agencies do not procure goods made by forced or indentured child labor.

US federal agencies cannot procure goods made by forced or indentured child labor. Under procurement regulations, federal contractors who supply products on that list must certify that they have made a good faith effort to determine whether forced or indentured child labor was used to produce the items supplied.

The government report stated "although there is still ongoing labor exploitation in seafood industries in Thailand, including adult forced labor, stakeholders representing the government, workers, and the private sector affirmed that child labor and forced child labor in the production of shrimp in Thailand have been reduced to no more than isolated incidents."



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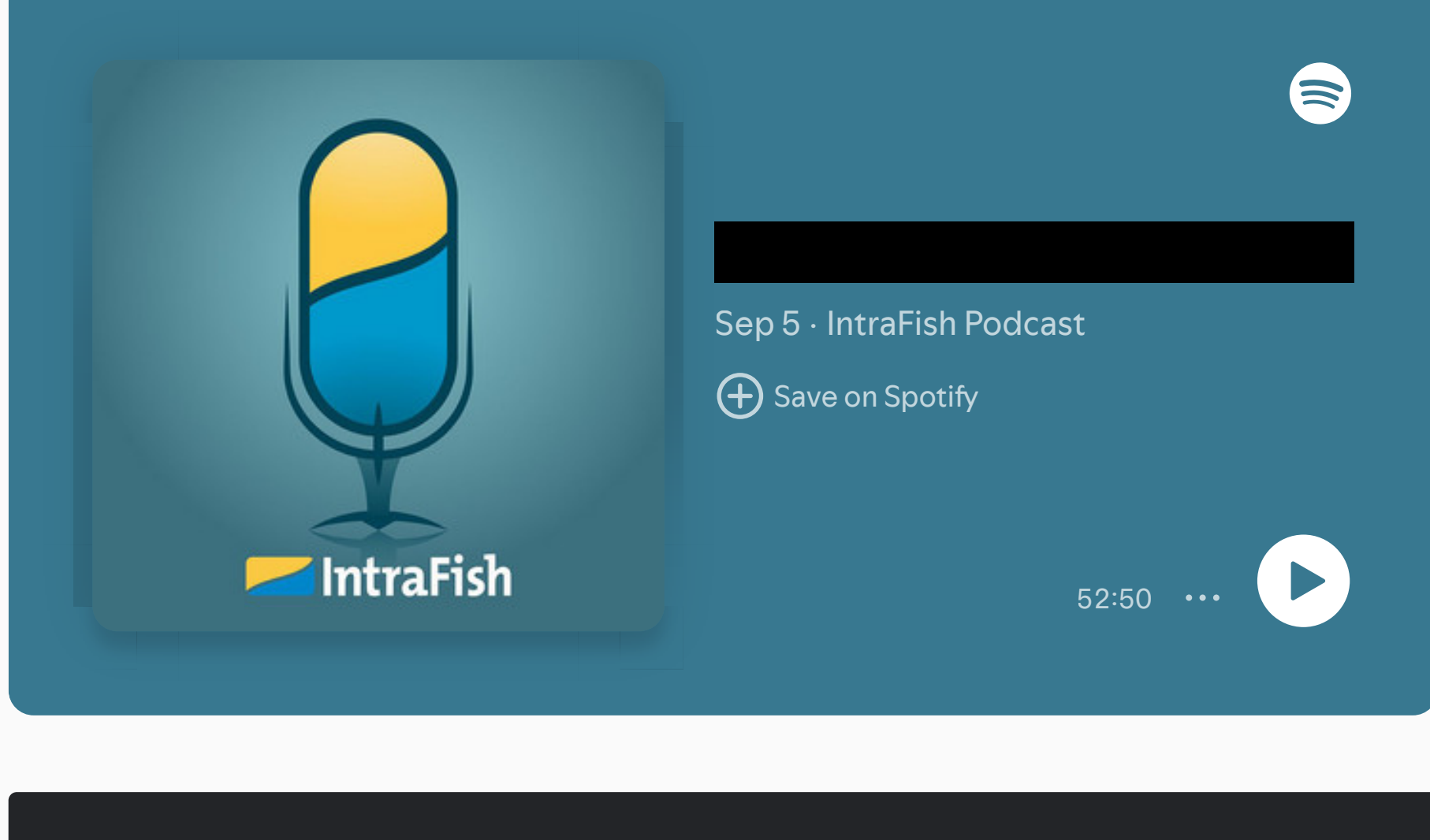
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The United States imported over 29,000 metric tons of shrimp from Thailand in 2023, according to NOAA data. Imports have dropped steadily since 2014, when over 65,000 metric tons of Thai shrimp was brought into the country.

Shrimp from Bangladesh and Cambodia was also included on this year's child labor list, and shrimp from Burma was included on this year's forced labor list. These countries were not new additions to this year's list.

Vietnam's shrimp farming industry [is also under scrutiny for potential labor abuses](#). A separate report released in August by the group Sustainability Incubator alleged troubling conditions in Vietnam's shrimp industry that supply Western supermarket chains.

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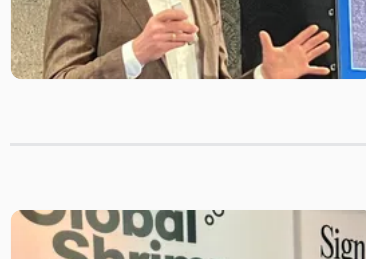


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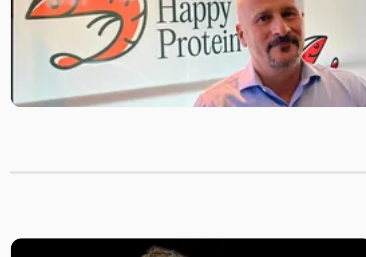
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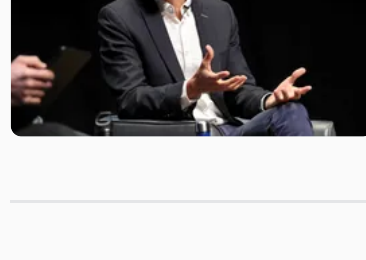
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