



# The Pawns of Thailand's Prawn Industry

## Executive Summary

### Thai Shrimp are Making Jumbo Sales

Thailand's booming \$6 billion seafood industry is mainly geared towards exporting (EJF, 2015; Hodal, Kelly & Lawrence, 2014). These exports end up at the frozen seafood aisle at your local grocery store, as the majority of these exports are west-bound. This is due to the increasing demand for prawns in North America and Europe, with 500 000 tons of prawn shipments per year (Hodal, Kelly & Lawrence, 2014). The seafood industry also employs around 800 000 people (EJF, 2015).

### Behind the Scenes Reality

However behind the active industry lies a darker story. In 2014, a six month investigation by the Guardian found that shrimp caught by the means of slavery was being sold around the world, notably by four major global retailers: Walmart, Costco, Carrefour, and Tesco (Hodal, Kelly & Lawrence, 2014). The International Labour Organization estimate that around 21 million people work in slavery around the world, and half a million of that from Thailand (Hodal, Kelly & Lawrence, 2014). The largest prawn farmer in the world, Charoen Pokphand (CP) Foods based in Thailand, source their seafood from slave ships (Hodal, Kelly & Lawrence, 2014). In fact, the slave trade is so profitable, that some fishers switched from fishing to slave trafficking (Stoakes, Kelly & Kelly, 2015). The majority of these slaves come from Cambodia and Burma and work in appalling conditions filled with human rights abuse (Hodal, Kelly & Lawrence, 2014). The human trafficking is enabling the continuation of overfishing in Thailand, with the catch per unit effort having dropped 86% since 1966 in Thailand waters (EJF, 2015). By supporting the shrimp industry, consumers are inadvertently supporting human trafficking and unsustainable fishing (EJF, 2015; Stoakes, Kelly & Kelly, 2015).

### From interviews with victims of trafficking on Thai fishing vessels, compiled by the Environmental Justice Foundation (2015):

- **94%** had no contract (ILO 2013)
- **80%** reported never having sense of freedom (Zimmerman et al 2014)
- **68%** reported violence, either sexual or physical (Zimmerman et al 2014)
- **59%** witnessed executions (UNIAP 2009)
- **52%** witnessed someone being harbed by their boss or trafficker (Zimmerman et al 2014)
- **47%** reported at least one injury (Zimmerman et al 2014)
- **44%** reported lack of food (Zimmerman et al 2014)
- **42%** reported wage reductions (ILO 2013)
- **23%** were confined in a room during trafficking (Zimmerman et al 2014)
- **17%** worked against their will (ILO 2013)
- **17%** were threatened with violence (ILO 2013)
- **11%** tried to escape (ILO 2013)
- **10%** were beaten severely (ILO 2013)
- **5.8%** were forced to use drugs (Zimmerman et al 2014)

## What Has Been Done?

In 2015, Thailand had been slapped with a yellow card under EU's illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) regulation for having poor surveillance systems and fisheries legal frameworks (Gotev, 2015). This risked banning of exports from Thailand from the EU (Gotev, 2015).

As of March 21, 2017, Thailand's Trang Provincial Court has sentenced six defendants to 14 years of jail time for human trafficking on fishing vessels (Smith, 2017). These six defendants included higher ups in the fishing industry, such as the chairman of Trang Fishing Association and the owner of Boonlarp Fishing L.P. Sompon Jirotemontree (Smith, 2017). Boonlarp was also fined a sum of 600 000 baht and the victims were compensated with 1.9 million baht. While this is an example of law enforcement targeting the big guns, six people represent a meager amount of the total individuals involved in shrimp slave trafficking in Thailand (Smith, 2017).

*"If we disappear for three of four hours whenever we are back in port, they assume we've fled. [The brokers] immediately show pictures of us to motorbike taxi drivers to get them to find us, offering them money if they bring us back. They also show the police and tell them who is escaping from which pier and offer them money as well to bring us back. That's what they do."*

- Auna Kvi, escaped victim of trafficking

### Quotes (Retrieved from EFJ 2015)

*"I'd been working [at Boonlarp] for many years, I didn't get any money. Luckily, I didn't die. Here are the wounds that I got, where they stabbed me with their knives... I'd tried to escape from them ever since I was sent to the sea. But I was captured again, I was beaten. Since then, I decided that, whatever happens, I would run away when I went back to port."* - Thein Myat, escaped victim of trafficking

Find out more through these videos by the Environmental Justice Foundation (EFJ) :

**"Slavery at Sea: The Continued Plight of Trafficked Migrants in Thailand's Fishing Industry"** <http://ejfoundation.org/video/slavery-sea-continued-plight-trafficked-migrants-thailands-fishing-industry>

**"Sold to the Sea: Human Trafficking in Thailand's Fishing Industry"** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwJ38-04pDY>

## Policy Suggestions Based on Recommendations from EJF 2015:

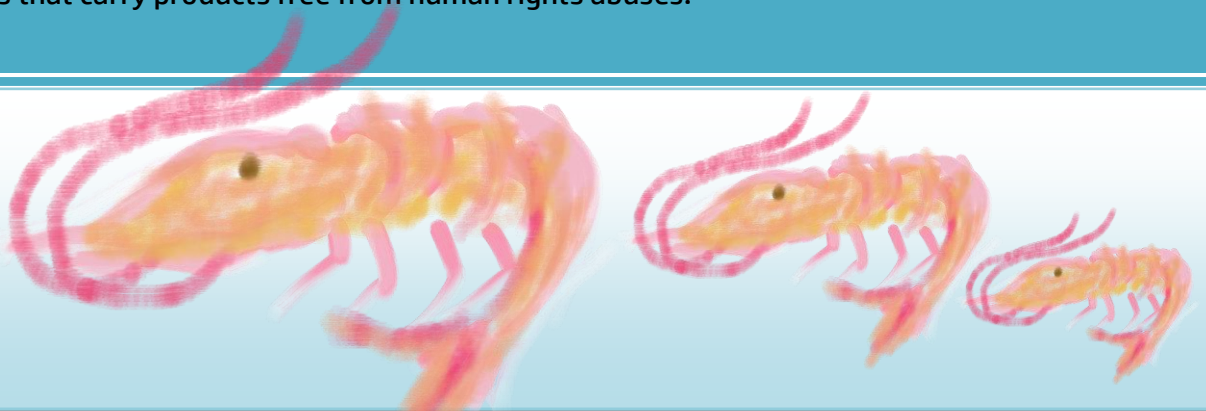
1. **To Royal Thai Government:** Enforcement should be more strictly implemented, as although regulations exist, the resulting enforcement is not currently effective and swift enough. It should be high-targeted towards the major beneficiaries, mainly those in charge of the businesses that engage in the slave trafficking and IUU fishing.
2. **To Governments of other Countries:** As an international community, should implement trade embargos and implement a ban on Thailand fishing imports if this behaviour continues.
3. **To Retailers and Producers:** Businesses should scrutinize the sourcing of the products and adopt a zero-tolerance practice to slavery and IUU fishing.
4. **To Consumers:** Question the sources of the seafood products you buy and use your buying power to support retailers that carry products free from human rights abuses.

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