



Fishing and Aquaculture

Overview of the Fishing and Aquaculture Sector:

Economy and Workforce:

The fishing and aquaculture sector is one of the world's fastest growing sectors. In 2012, global per capita fish consumption was approximately 19.2 kg per person, up from 9.9 kg per person in 1960.¹ The FAO estimates that fishing and aquaculture provide livelihood for 10-12 percent of the world's population. Over 58 million people are involved in fishing and aquaculture, approximately 37 million of whom are engaged full-time. Over 84 percent of those involved in the fish sector are in Asia, with an additional ten percent in Africa. Although the majority of workers in the direct-capture fish sector are men, the sector also provides livelihood for women, who represent an estimated 15 percent of all workers engaged in fishing and aquaculture, and up to 90 percent of workers in secondary activities such as processing.²

Fish is a highly traded commodity, with about 200 countries exporting fish and fishery products. Fish and fish products are particularly important for many developing nations, where the fish trade accounts for more than half of the total value of traded commodities. Developing economies saw their share rise to 54 percent of total fishery exports by value in 2012.³ In addition to trade, fishing and aquaculture are important to many rural poor. Fish provides a key protein source in diets as well as providing jobs and income in areas where other income sources are scarce.⁴

With the expansion of the fish sector has come an increase in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) exploitation of wild fish stocks. IUU fishing refers to all activities that happen outside the control of laws and regulations, including activities such as fishing without a license, fishing in a closed area, fishing with prohibited gear, fishing in excess of a quota, and fishing of prohibited species. Fishing regulations can be challenging to enforce, as much of the IUU fishing happens on the high seas – that is, in water over 200 nautical miles from shore, where there is little regulation and enforcement. Outside of a nation's "exclusive economic zone" (the 200 mile strip of ocean adjacent to the shoreline), vessels are generally governed by the laws of the country in which they are registered, or their "flag state." Under the practice known as "flags of convenience," fishing vessels may be registered in countries with no meaningful link to their operations, including in countries with severely limited interest or capacity to enforce fishing-related laws on vessels flying their flag.⁵ This structural loop-hole built into the regulation and enforcement of fishing practices has led to increased environmental and social abuses in the sector, as the prevalence of IUU fishing has contributed to sharply declining world fish stocks through overfishing, leading vessels to undertake longer and longer voyages in order to find fish, and thereby increasing the vulnerability of workers who are stuck aboard for longer and longer periods of time. Declining stocks also increase the precariousness of employment for workers involved in fish processing, by threatening the overall viability of the industry.

1 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2014: Part 1: World Review of Fisheries and Aquaculture. May 2014. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3720e/i3720e01.pdf>

2 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2014: Part 1: World Review of Fisheries and Aquaculture. May 2014. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3720e/i3720e01.pdf>

3 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2014: Part 1: World Review of Fisheries and Aquaculture*. May 2014. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3720e/i3720e01.pdf>

4 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Many of the world's poorest people depend on fish. June 7, 2005. <http://www.fao.org/NEWSROOM/en/news/2005/102911/index.html>

5 International Transport Workers' Federation. What are Flags of Convenience? <https://www.itfglobal.org/flags-convenience/sub-page.cfm>

This sector has the following risk factors:

- Hazardous/undesirable work
- Vulnerable, easily replaced, and/or low-skilled workforce
- Migrant workforce



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As overfishing has reduced the biomass of many fish species, aquaculture has emerged as a way to fill rising demands for fish, and the FAO predicts that aquaculture harvests will surpass wild catches in the relatively near future.⁶ By 2030, more than 60 percent of consumed fish, mollusks, and crustaceans may come from aquaculture. Like fishing, aquaculture is particularly strong in developing economies, and over 90 percent of aquaculture activities take place in Asia. While not contributing to overfishing, aquaculture can lead to other kinds of environmental degradation through chemical inputs, disease, contamination of wild stocks, land conversion, and water pollution. Some aquaculture species are fed fishmeal, which is often derived from wild caught stocks, thus contributing to the problem. If their development is not well managed, aquaculture operations may also risk depriving local populations of previously arable farm land, potentially leading to land conflicts.⁷



Supply Chain Overview:

Fish and shellfish are harvested in open waters or raised via aquaculture in ponds, tanks, or bounded coastal waters. After harvest, fish are packed and transported to processing facilities or wholesalers. Processors convert the fish to consumer products such as canned, frozen, or smoked products, and fillets or other fresh products. Some fish may pass through multiple levels of processing, while others, such as certain kinds of shellfish, are transported live. Wholesalers receive both processed products, as well as more minimally processed fresh fish, from both foreign and domestic sources. The wholesalers then distribute the products to retailers and restaurants. Some fish products and by-products are not used for human consumption, but are instead used in fish and animal feed.⁸

US Seafood Supply Chain:

The US has the largest Exclusive Economic Zone fishing rights in the world and fishing regions include the Northeast, Southeast, Alaska, Pacific Coast, and South Pacific. Top species include crabs, shrimp, salmon, lobsters, cod, flatfish, scallops, hake, scallops, oysters, herring, and sardines. Catfish is by far the most common aquaculture-raised product in the US followed by crawfish, salmon, trout, oysters, tilapia, striped bass, clams, shrimp and mussels.⁹



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⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture: opportunities and challenges. 2014. <http://www.fao.org/3/d1eaa9a1-5a71-4e42-86c0-f2111f07de16/i3720e.pdf>

⁷ World Wildlife Fund. Farmed Seafood. <http://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/farmed-seafood>

⁸ SeafoodHealthFacts.org. Seafood Choices: Overview of the Seafood Industry. http://dyson.cornell.edu/special_programs/seafood4health/seafood_choices/overview_industry.php

⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture: opportunities and challenges. 2014. <http://www.fao.org/3/d1eaa9a1-5a71-4e42-86c0-f2111f07de16/i3720e.pdf>

The US imports between 80-90 percent of its fish, about half of which is sourced from aquaculture.¹⁰ The top imported products are shrimp, freshwater fish, tuna, salmon, groundfish (such as cod, flounder, and halibut), crab, and squid. Shrimp constitutes the US's largest seafood import, with over \$3.4 billion worth of shrimp imported to the US from the top producing countries of Thailand, Indonesia, India, Ecuador, Vietnam, Malaysia and China in 2012.¹¹ Tuna is the second most imported fish product, with canned, fresh, and frozen tuna coming from Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Ecuador.¹² Other important products in order by volume imported include: salmon from Norway, Canada, and Chile; groundfish species like cod, haddock, pollock and hake from Canada and Northern Europe, crabs and crabmeat from Southeast Asia, and frozen fish from China, Russia, Canada, and Iceland.¹³

Although domestic fishing is heavily regulated in the US, an estimated 20-32 percent of wild-caught fish imported to the US comes from IUU fishing.¹⁴ One recent study found that Thailand had the most illegal fishing, with 25-40 percent of Thai tuna being illegally caught. Pollack and salmon from China, as well as tuna from the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia also registered high rates of illegality.¹⁵ Imports from Canada all had levels of illegal catches below ten percent, as did imports of clams from Vietnam and toothfish from Chile.

Risks of Human Trafficking in this Sector:

The US Department of State 2014 Trafficking in Persons report noted evidence of human trafficking in the fishing and aquaculture sector in the following countries: Angola, Bangladesh, Belize, Burma, Burundi, Cambodia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mongolia, Namibia, Federated States of Micronesia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United Kingdom, and Vietnam.¹⁶

Hazardous/Undesirable Work:

The ILO identifies fishing as a highly hazardous sector.¹⁷ Fishers on vessels routinely face hazards and conditions of work that are exacerbated by poor weather conditions, a constantly moving work environment and the lack of medical care on the open water. While on vessels, fishers are exposed to sun and salt water without protective clothing, slippery/moving work surfaces, malfunctioning gear, regular use of knives/other sharp objects, entanglement in nets, large waves, inadequate sleeping quarters, inadequate sanitation, and a lack of fresh food and water. Should someone become ill while on board a vessel, it can be difficult to seek medical care in a timely manner. When setting nets or hauling in a catch, workers may be required to work around the clock without breaks for days. Collisions or shipwrecks are also a risk.¹⁸

10 FishWatch. Outside the US http://www.fishwatch.gov/wild_seafood/outside_the_us.htm

Howard, Brian Clark "One in Three Fish Imported Into US May Be Illegal." National Geographic. Updated on April 10, 2014. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/04/140409-illegal-seafood-pirate-fishing-fisheries-marine-conservation/>

11 Palmer, Doug. "US sets shrimp duties on five countries, spares Thailand, Indonesia." Reuters. August 13, 2013. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/13/us-usa-shrimp-duties-idUSBRE97C10420130813>

12 SeafoodHealthFacts.org. Seafood Choices: Overview of the Seafood Industry. http://dyson.cornell.edu/special_programs/seafood4health/seafood_choices/overview_industry.php

13 SeafoodHealthFacts.org. Seafood Choices: Overview of the Seafood Industry. http://dyson.cornell.edu/special_programs/seafood4health/seafood_choices/overview_industry.php

14 Howard, Brian Clark "One in Three Fish Imported Into US May Be Illegal." National Geographic. Updated on April 10, 2014. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/04/140409-illegal-seafood-pirate-fishing-fisheries-marine-conservation/>

15 Howard, Brian Clark "One in Three Fish Imported Into US May Be Illegal." National Geographic. Updated on April 10, 2014. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/04/140409-illegal-seafood-pirate-fishing-fisheries-marine-conservation/>

16 US Department of State. Trafficking in Persons Report. 2014 http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2014/?utm_source=NEW+RESOURCE%3A+Trafficking+in+Persons+Report+2014&utm_campaign=2014.07.16+NEW+RESOURCE%3A+Trafficking+in+Persons+Report+2014+&utm_medium=email

17 International Labour Organization. Industries and Sectors. Shipping, ports, fisheries, inland waterways. <http://www.ilo.org/global/industries-and-sectors/shipping-ports-fisheries-inland-waterways/lang--en/index.htm>

18 Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor. Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition. Fishers and Related Fishing Workers. 2014. <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/farming-fishing-and-forestry/fishers-and-related-fishing-workers.htm#tab-3>



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Fishing crews are generally overseen by a captain or boss. The captain or boss has a high financial stake in a profitable voyage, incentivizing abusive management practices including actual or threatened physical abuse (hitting, threats, or actual violence with weapons, denial of rest), verbal abuse (yelling, threats), and other forms of intimidation. In some cases, captains may force workers to use amphetamines or other drugs as a way to combat fatigue.¹⁹ In extreme cases, crew members have reported witnessing murders of crew members at the hands of bosses.²⁰

Fish and shrimp processing workers also face a high exposure to hazardous work conditions. Previous studies of the sector have identified a wide variety of risks including mechanical and electrical accidents, excessive noise levels, extreme cold, aggravation of respiratory conditions including asthma, skin and eye infections, and musculoskeletal injuries. Workers may also be exposed to “bioaerosols containing seafood allergens, microorganisms and toxins.”²¹ Workers in shrimp processing facilities in Bangladesh interviewed by Verité reported being denied access to bathroom facilities for entire shifts, which can cause urinary tract infections and gastrointestinal disorders.

Vulnerable, Easily Replaced, and/or Low-Skilled Workforce:

Workforce vulnerability in fishing derives from a variety of causes, some of which have to do with the typical structure of employment relationships in the industry, and some of which have to do with the economic and education levels of the worker populations in question.

On small fishing boats, employment relationships are predominantly casual.²² Sometimes relationships between captains and crews are rooted in traditional patronage dynamics, leading to a high degree of dependence for workers, who may belong to families with historically subservient, dependent relationships to their boss’s family, on whom their kin might depend for access to things like school fees or land rights, severely limiting the employee’s ability to advocate for better working conditions on the fishing boat.²³ Further complicating employment relationships in fishing, payment on both large and small fishing vessels is often based on the traditional “share” system, in which worker pay is based on an allotment of net proceeds from the catch after expenses for output (food, fuel, etc.) are deducted. Under the “share” system, workers are considered ‘partners’ in the fishing venture rather than employees, and are therefore denied legal protections available to other classes of workers. The “share” system also means that crew members share the risks normally associated with being owners. If a voyage does not clear a profit, workers may not be compensated, leaving them vulnerable to debt.²⁴ Fishers may also have their pay docked for items consumed on board, including cigarettes, alcohol, medicine, and in some cases, food.

These items are often deducted at highly inflated rates, and in situations where fishers already have debt to money lenders, labor brokers, or the boat operators, this can tip them over into a situation of debt bondage. In some cases, a worker’s family at home may also take loans from the boat ownership while the fisher is at sea; this too is deducted from the fisher’s pay and workers are

19 Service, Shannon; Palmstrom, Becky. “Confined To A Thai Fishing Boat, For Three Years.” National Public Radio. June 19, 2012. <http://www.npr.org/2012/06/19/155045295/confined-to-a-thai-fishing-boat-for-three-years>

20 International Labour Organization. Caught at Sea: Forced labour and trafficking in fisheries. 2013. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_214472.pdf

21 Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Shrimp in Bangladesh. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Bangladesh%20Shrimp%20Sector__9.16.pdf

Jeebhay, M.F.; Robins, T.G.; Lopata, A.L.. World at work: Fish processing workers. Occupational & Environmental Medicine. May 2004. <http://oem.bmj.com/content/61/5/471.full>

22 International Labor Organization. Conditions of Work in the Fishing Sector. 2004. <http://www.ilo.org/public/portugue/region/eurpro/lisbon/pdf/rep-v-1.pdf>

23 Verite. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Fish in Indonesia: Platform (Jermal) Fishing, Small-Boat Anchovy Fishing, and Blast Fishing. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Indonesian%20Fishing%20Sector__9.16.pdf

24 Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Tuna in the Philippines. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Philippines%20Tuna%20Sector__9.16.pdf



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typically charged high rates of interest. The many fishers who are paid under some version of the “share” system often lack visibility into the calculation of boat profits, and therefore of their wages. For example, workers interviewed by Verité in the Philippines’ tuna sector noted that they are barred from observing the catch being weighed, leaving them reliant on employer promises, and leading to a perception of being cheated in the payment of their wages.²⁵

Fish processing facilities are increasingly reliant on “casual” labor rather than permanent employees, allowing them flexibility to respond to lower and unpredictable catches. For example, Verité research into the tuna sector in the Philippines found that canning facilities have shifted to hiring nearly all of their workers through labor cooperatives, which provides them with a highly flexible labor pool and allows them to avoid a direct employment relationship and the ensuing benefits for workers that that relationship would entail. The growing casualization of the canning work force has had a particular impact on women, who make up the bulk of the canning workforce and are often the wives or female family members of the fishers. Workers employed through employment agencies face constant labor insecurity, as their contracts generally range from five to six months. Workers employed by cooperatives also face job insecurity, since one of the requirements for them to maintain their cooperative membership is to keep themselves employed. They may reapply at the end of each employment period, but there is no guarantee they will be re-hired. Due to the decrease in catch due to overfishing, employees across the tuna sector in the Philippines expressed fear that voicing any grievance would result in “black-listing” from the entire industry, a fear that seriously limits workers’ capacity for self advocacy. In areas such as the General Santos Region of the Philippines, where the fishing sector represents the vast majority of economic activity, the threat of black-listing is experienced as a severe menace.²⁶



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²⁵ For a further discussion of profit sharing schemes, see: Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Tuna in the Philippines. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Philippines%20Tuna%20Sector__9.16.pdf

²⁶ Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Tuna in the Philippines. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Philippines%20Tuna%20Sector__9.16.pdf

Workers aboard fishing vessels are inherently isolated. Fishing vessels, particularly those involved in long-distance fishing, have an increasing capability to stay at sea for long periods of time – even up to several years. Rather than regularly docking, these vessels can “transship” caught fish and fuel via smaller vessels. This may mean that the crew of these ships has no access to port, leaving them unable to escape, report abuse, or seek assistance.²⁷ While aboard vessels, workers rarely have access to means of communication with the outside world. They may be out of reach of cell phone communication, and barred from using other on-board communication devices such as radios or satellite phones. Depletion of fish stocks may also contribute to longer voyages, as vessels journey further and further from port, leaving workers on board for longer periods of time. Verité research has found that in some cases, vessel operators may deceive workers regarding the length of the voyage or the geographic itinerary, taking workers into illegal fishing zones or the sovereign waters of other countries, where workers may face detention or arrest.²⁸

In fact, workers engaged in illegal fishing are especially vulnerable to labor trafficking and other forms of exploitation. They often use prohibited fishing techniques, such as explosives, which are extremely hazardous. They are sometimes employed by, or owe money to, criminal groups, making it hard for them to escape from exploitative situations without a perceived threat of violent reprisal. Also, because they are engaged in illegal activities, it is unlikely that they will complain to authorities about violations of their rights for fear of arrest. Fishermen are also vulnerable to maritime drug traffickers and piracy. Verité research in Ecuador indicated that drug traffickers sometimes killed or intimidated fishermen or forced them to traffic drugs. There were also reports that pirates robbed fishermen of their boats, catches, or motors, making them vulnerable to debt bondage. In some cases, their employers deducted the amount of these goods from their pay. In other cases, self-employed fishermen had obtained loans from informal money lenders for their boats, and upon losing them, had to work in fishing for prolonged periods to pay off the debt.

A final point is that child labor is common in fishing and aquaculture across the globe. Many children who are engaged in fishing or aquaculture participate on an informal basis, and it is common for children to enter the sector working alongside their parents or other adult family members.²⁹ Some children may seek out work in the fishing sector as a means to earn money or support their family, particularly when this is considered a culturally appropriate way for boys to prove their maturity.³⁰ Children may enter the sector as a means to pay off family debt owed to boat captains or ownership. In some contexts, such as fishing around Lake Volta in Ghana, children are recruited through traffickers who make upfront payments to the child’s parents and deceive

27 International Labour Organization. Caught at Sea: Forced labour and trafficking in fisheries. 2013. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_214472.pdf

Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Fish in Indonesia: Platform (Jermal) Fishing, Small-Boat Anchovy Fishing, and Blast Fishing. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Indonesian%20Fishing%20Sector__9.16.pdf

Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Tuna in the Philippines. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Philippines%20Tuna%20Sector__9.16.pdf

28 Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Tuna in the Philippines. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Philippines%20Tuna%20Sector__9.16.pdf

29 Verité. Research into Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Shrimp in Bangladesh. 2012. <http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/DOL-BANGLADESH-FINAL-%20ADA%20COMPLIANT.pdf>

Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Fish in Indonesia: Platform (Jermal) Fishing, Small-Boat Anchovy Fishing, and Blast Fishing. 2012.

http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Indonesian%20Fishing%20Sector__9.16.pdf

30 Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Fish in Indonesia: Platform (Jermal) Fishing, Small-Boat Anchovy Fishing, and Blast Fishing. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Indonesian%20Fishing%20Sector__9.16.pdf

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Labour Organization. Guidance on Addressing Child Labour in Fisheries and Aquaculture. 2013. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3318e/i3318e.pdf>



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families regarding working conditions.³¹ Like adults, children participating in fishing may also be subjected to deductions for provisions, such as food and cigarettes, leaving them in debt.³² In some cases, children may be recruited for fishing activities because of a perceived advantage in lung capacity (i.e. their capacity diving for fish) or hand dexterity.³³ Children may also be recruited because of a perception that they are more docile.

Migrant Workforce:

Migrant labor is increasingly used in the fishing, aquaculture and fish processing sector as a means of cost savings. Abuse of migrant workers in the fishing sector has been well documented. Fishers are generally recruited in their home villages or ports and a worker may pass through a series of agents, each adding an additional debt burden through fees for their services.³⁴ This recruitment-related debt burden can act as a binding force for fishers, preventing them from resigning or advocating for better conditions, for fear of losing their jobs.

Working conditions are often obscured until the worker is on board the vessel, possibly already in international waters, with no means of recourse. All workers, including migrant workers, on vessels are routinely required to surrender identity documents such as passports, thereby restricting their freedom of movement in foreign ports.³⁵ Some larger vessels can stay at sea for a year or more at a time, and lack of access to legal documentation can powerfully inhibit a worker's ability to escape, even if he does gain access to port. Cases of foreign fishers being forcibly trafficked into the sector have also been reported.³⁶

Thailand, where trafficking has been well documented in both fishing and fish processing, has one of the lowest rates of unemployment in the region,³⁷ leaving it dependent on a low-skilled work force composed of foreign workers. Up to 80 percent of migrant workers in Thailand are from Burma, and the general migrant worker population is vulnerable to a variety of abuses, including killings, torture in detention, extortion, sexual abuse, forced labor, and restrictions on organizing.³⁸ There are estimated to be thousands of Burmese migrants working aboard Thai vessels, many in conditions tantamount to slavery.³⁹

In the US, fish processing, like other forms of meat processing, relies heavily on the labor of migrant workers. Documented migrant workers in US fish processing are classified as H2-B workers (a visa category intended for guestworkers in sectors other than agriculture), who are generally not afforded the same protections as H2-A workers. In 2012, the US Department of Labor found a Louisiana seafood processing company employing H2-B guestworkers in violation of a number

31 Free the Slaves. Ghana. 2013. <https://www.freetheslaves.net/SSLPage.aspx?pid=676>

32 Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Fish in Indonesia: Platform (Jermal) Fishing, Small-Boat Anchovy Fishing, and Blast Fishing. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Indonesian%20Fishing%20Sector__9.16.pdf

33 Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Fish in Indonesia: Platform (Jermal) Fishing, Small-Boat Anchovy Fishing, and Blast Fishing. 2012. http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Research%20on%20Indicators%20of%20Forced%20Labor%20in%20the%20Indonesian%20Fishing%20Sector__9.16.pdf

34 International Labour Organization. Caught at Sea: Forced labour and trafficking in fisheries. 2013. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_214472.pdf

35 International Transport Workers' Federation. Out of sight, out of mind. Seafarers, fishers & human rights (London). 2006. <http://www.itfglobal.org/files/publications/2259/HumanRights.pdf>

36 International Labour Organization. Caught at Sea: Forced labour and trafficking in fisheries. 2013. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_214472.pdf

37 The World Bank. Unemployment Data. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>

38 Human Rights Watch. From the Tiger to the Crocodile: Abuse of Migrant Workers in Thailand. February 23, 2010. <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/02/23/tiger-crocodile-0>

39 Leithead, Alastair, "Burmese 'slavery' fishermen are trafficked and abused," BBC News: Asia-Pacific. April 25, 2011. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12881982>.



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of labor protections – including health and safety and minimum wage violations.⁴⁰ Workers also alleged that management made threats of retaliation against them, including threats of deportation and threats against their families in Mexico through their labor brokers.⁴¹ A recent report from Centro de los Derechos de Migrante, Inc and the American University Washington College of Law Human Rights Clinic detailed abuses faced by female H2-B workers in the Maryland crab processing sector. The workers interviewed for the report were indebted to labor brokers who recruited them for the jobs. Wages were much lower than promised by recruiters, and workers reported wage deductions and piece-rate wage structures that made it nearly impossible to attain the minimum wage. Further deductions were taken for the purchase of basic personal protective equipment. Although the workers face abuse and harassment in addition to low wages and hazardous working conditions, they had no viable grievance mechanism, and feared retaliation from their employer.⁴²

In Japan, labor exploitation has been identified in the fishing sector in conjunction with the Industrial Trainee and Technical Internship Program, whose stated purpose of is nurturing talent from developing countries. However, the program allegedly encourages the exploitation of inexpensive migrant labor.⁴³ Many of the workers placed within the foreign trainee program work on fishing boats.⁴⁴ The training program lasts for up to three years.⁴⁵ These workers are initially recruited and hired by labor brokers in their home country, and the US Department of State reports that workers in the training program often pay substantial fees to secure their jobs, leaving them vulnerable to bonded labor, even though such fees are illegal.⁴⁶ The majority of foreign trainee workers in the Japanese fishing sector are Indonesians⁴⁷ and Filipinos, with some Chinese fishers also present.⁴⁸ Though less media attention has been paid to abuses committed against foreign trainees working within the fishing and aquaculture sector in Japan, it appears that these individuals face the same abuses as those working on farms and in factories. Like other fishermen, the trainees face long hours and hazardous conditions. Foreign trainees in the fishing sector are paid approximately 25 percent of the wages of Japanese fishers.⁴⁹

Migrant workers are also reportedly exploited in the Irish and Scottish fishing sectors where they are subject to underpaid wages, physical abuse, and intimidation. In one publicized case, Filipino men were recruited illegally on transport visas, were charged fees for recruitment, and had their passports confiscated and their wages withheld upon arrival.⁵⁰ Nigerian fishers in UK waters have

40 “C.J.’s Seafood of Breau Bridge, La., instructed to pay fines and back wages after US Department of Labor investigations.” US Department of Labor. July 24, 2012. <http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/whd/WHD20121511.htm>

41 National Guestworkers Alliance. <http://www.guestworkeralliance.org/>

42 Centro de los Derechos de Migrante, Inc; American University Washington College of Law Human Rights Clinic. Picked Apart: The Hidden Struggles Of Migrant Worker Women In The Maryland Crab Industry. 2012. <http://www.cdmigrante.org/picked-apart-the-hidden-struggles-of-migrant-worker-women-in-the-maryland-crab-industry/#sthash.nukL4K4o.dpuf>

43 Tabuchi, Hiroko. “Japan Training Program is Said to Exploit Workers.” The New York Times. July 20, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/21/business/global/21apprentice.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

44 Go, Fusako. “Japan’s Fishing Industry Offers Huge Opportunities for Young Indonesians.” The Asahi Shimbun. January 14, 2013. <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/economy/business/AJ201301140062>

Kakuchi, Suvendrini. “Male migrant workers in Japan have it tough.” Asia Times. June 9, 2005. <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/GF09Dh02.html>

45 “Japan Relies on ‘Trainee’ Fishermen to Bolster Aging Industry.” The Asahi Shimbun. September 27, 2012. http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201209270004

46 US Department of State. Human Rights Report. Japan. 2013. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>

47 Go, Fusako. “Japan’s fishing industry offers huge opportunities for young Indonesians.” The Asahi Shimbun. January 14, 2013. <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/economy/business/AJ201301140062>

48 “Japan relies on ‘trainee’ fishermen to bolster aging industry.” The Asahi Shimbun. September 27, 2012. http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201209270004

49 “Japan relies on ‘trainee’ fishermen to bolster aging industry.” The Asahi Shimbun. September 27, 2012. http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201209270004

50 Kelbie, Paul. “Scottish fishermen accused of exploiting migrant boat crew.” The Guardian. December 13, 2008. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/dec/14/immigration-fishing-scotland-filipinos>. Allamby et al. Forced labour in Northern Ireland: exploiting vulnerability. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. June 2011. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/forced-labour-Northern-Ireland-full.pdf>



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also reported exploitation, and a recent report suggested that migrants from North Africa, Russia, and Turkey may also be vulnerable.⁵¹

Presence of Labor Contractors, Recruiters, Agents or Other Middlemen in Labor Supply Chains:

Employment in the fishing sector is highly dependent on local context, the size of the vessel, and the type of fishing undertaken. Fishers employed on larger boats may have relatively formal employment agreements with the captain of the vessel or fleet ownership, but contracts are rare. Workers may be recruited through formal or informal labor recruiters, to whom they owe debt for their job placement. Often, workers recruited through brokers will have no advance knowledge of their actual employer, with whom they may be required to spend months at sea. Many trafficked workers on fishing vessels have reported incidents of violence, including homicide.⁵²

There have been many documented cases of Southeast Asian workers trafficked fishing sector from countries such as Cambodia, Burma and Indonesia through labor agents or brokers. In one case documented in Bloomberg News, an Indonesian man sought work through an employment agency in Jakarta specializing in placing crews on foreign fishing vessels. Promised a relatively high salary, he borrowed money to pay a fee to secure his job. The labor agent rushed him through a contract in English, which he could not read. The contract compelled the worker to surrender 30 percent of his salary, which he would forfeit unless he completed his contract. He was to be paid nothing for the first three months of work, and if he did not perform work to the fishing company's satisfaction, he could be sent home and charged for airfare. He was required to work as many hours as required by the boat captains.⁵³ This Indonesian worker was on a South Korean owned vessel operating in New Zealand waters, illustrating the complexity of relevant jurisdiction in the fishing sector.

In some regions, recruitment, trafficking, and abuse of migrant workers in the fishing sector is tied to organized crime. In one egregious example, in the Sea of Okhotsk, to the east of mainland Russia, at least two illegal crabbing vessels run by organized criminal organizations have made use of labor trafficked into Russia from the Ukraine. In that instance, Ukrainian crew members were recruited through employment agencies in the Ukraine, which charged workers between \$700 and \$1,000 to place them aboard ships. The agency also facilitated the contract signing process. Many workers were required to pay for their own transportation to the ship in Russia, where the men waited for roughly a month in a hotel before they were to embark. Once in Russia the crew members were told that the original contracts they had signed were no longer valid, and that they were required to sign new contracts agreeing to half the pay they had previously agreed upon. Crew members were delivered to the "mother boat" via a smaller vessel -- the crabbing operation that they had signed a contract for was illegitimate, and the crabbing ships were hiding out at sea to avoid the Russian authorities. Once on the crabbing boat the men were not allowed to leave unless they were willing to pay an additional fee of \$1,000 to have a ship come and pick them up. Workers were required to work seven days a week for 18 to 22 hours each day; some workers sustained injuries while working due to lack of sleep. Workers were not provided with sufficient food and water; at times workers ate the bait for the crabs, or attempted to catch fish to feed themselves. Workers were constantly in freezing conditions, working in water that covered their legs that was 30 degrees Fahrenheit. As a result of these conditions many of the men developed chronic illnesses, such as pneumonia, chronic bronchitis, prostatitis, and PTSD. Physical abuse was



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51 Allamby et al. Forced labour in Northern Ireland: exploiting vulnerability. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. June 2011. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/forced-labour-Northern-Ireland-full.pdf>

52 Service, Shannon; Palmstrom, Becky. "Illegal Fishing, Molotov Cocktails, A Daring Escape." National Public Radio. June 20, 2012. <http://www.npr.org/2012/06/20/155048186/illegal-fishing-molotov-cocktails-a-daring-escape>
Environmental Justice Foundation. Sold To The Sea: Human Trafficking in Thailand's Fishing Industry. 2013. http://ejfoundation.org/sites/default/files/public/Sold_to_the_Sea_report_lo-res-v2.pdf

53 Skinner, E. Benjamin. The Fishing Industry's Cruellest Catch. Bloomberg Business Week. February 23, 2012. <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-02-23/the-fishing-industrys-cruellest-catch>

also prevalent on the ship, with workers being beaten to the point of having their teeth knocked out. Workers aboard these crabbing ships were unable to leave for extended periods of time, as they were not allowed to disembark when the boat went to port.⁵⁴

In addition to the risks posed by recruitment for migrants in the fishing sector, workers may be internally trafficking into forced labor by labor contractors or middlemen. In Bangladesh shrimp processing, Verité research found that labor contractors recruit workers both from local communities and from the population of internal migrants seeking work in the industry. Local Bangladeshi shrimp processors are generally extremely poor and thus seek any source of income. Shrimp processing plants use contractors to supply workers because it allows them access to a highly flexible labor pool, which is often necessary as plants work to meet the time and cost demands of buyers. Further, it allows plants to avoid any direct employment relationship with workers. Several contractors may provide workers to the same facility. Contractors act as their workers' supervisors within the facility (although the plant may provide its own supervisors as well), so contractors are often in a position to enforce disciplinary measures or fire workers. This makes expressing any grievance difficult for workers without fear of losing their job. Contractors are also in a position to control the payment of workers' wages. In a typical arrangement, the labor contractor is paid by the facility per unit of production. The contractor in turn pays the worker a percentage of the total amount he received from the facility, which incentivizes the contractor to underpay wages. For example, contract workers involved in de-heading shrimp are typically paid per basket of shrimp. Supervisors fill baskets with shrimp to a pre-established weight, and then give this basket to the worker for de-heading. The worker's pay is tied to the pre-established weight of the basket. In the Verité study, workers reported that supervisors would fill the baskets to exceed the predetermined weight, so that workers were forced to de-head more shrimp than they were being paid for.⁵⁵

VERITÉ is an international not-for-profit consulting, training, and research NGO that has been a leader in supply chain social responsibility and sustainability since 1995. Verité is a member of the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking in the United States, and has presented its solutions to forced labor at the Clinton Global Initiative. For its work, Verité was winner of the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship in 2007 and the Schwab Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award for 2010.

For more information on Verité's research in fishing and aquaculture, please contact us at research@verite.org.



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⁵⁴ Surtees, Rebecca. Trafficked at Sea: The exploitation of Ukrainian seafarers and fishers. International Organization for Migration. 2012.

⁵⁵ Verité. Research on Indicators of Forced Labor in the Supply Chain of Shrimp in Bangladesh. 2012. <http://verite.org/sites/default/files/images/DOL-BANGLADESH-FINAL-%20ADA%20COMPLIANT.pdf>