

The Hawaii Fishing Industry Controls for Worker Risk of Forced Labor and Human Trafficking.

December 6, 2018

Hawaii Fishing Industry Task Force

Overview:

Forced Labor (FL) and Human Trafficking (HT) are forms of modern-day slavery that are concerns for producers, exporters, importers, marketers and consumers of a variety of goods, including wild-caught seafood. On September 8, 2016, the Associated Press published an article with allegations of FL and HT in the Hawaii longline fishing industry. This industry is Hawaii's single highest value food producing system based on dockside or farm gate value. The Port of Honolulu ranks 5th in the nation in terms of annual dockside value of fish landed (>\$100 million). It is an important American fishery supplying the Hawaii and U.S. seafood market that is increasingly dominated by imported seafood.

The Hawaii longline fishing industry has hired foreign workers for over 20 years. These are documented, non-immigrant contract workers. U.S. law allows American vessels fishing for widely-migratory species in international waters to use foreign crew. Customs and Border Protection (US DHS) is responsible for documenting the identity, arrival and departure of foreign crew employed in the Hawaii longline fishery. There are over 600 crew jobs, but few, if any Americans with experience are willing to do this work. Access to foreign crew is essential to the U.S. tuna industry catching fish with purse seine and trolling gear for tuna canneries and for the Hawaii longline fishery producing fresh tuna and associated species.

Industry Actions taken:

Formed an industry Task Force. Includes the Hawaii Longline Association, key supply businesses, the Hawaii Seafood Council and an advisor (Katrina Nakamura, Sustainability Incubator, Inc.) specializing in addressing social impacts of supply chains including forced labor in fishing. The Task Force has coordinated with local community organizations to strengthen grievance mechanisms for the workers.

Designed a Universal Crew Contract, translated it into the languages of the crew, and implemented it at the Honolulu Fish Auction as a new requirement for selling fish through the Honolulu fish auction.

Outreach to the Workers. Commissioned an independent Rapid Crew Assessment. A uniquely-qualified social research surveyor (Amy Gough) conducted 207 crew interviews (33% of 622) from 102 active vessels (74% of the 141). No evidence of FL or HT was revealed by the workers during this process.

Developed a Document System for Controls and increasing awareness of FL and HT. The three interdependent documents include an improved Model Crew Contract, a Crew Handbook and an Employer's Code of Conduct for Decent Work in Fishing based on international (UN-ILO) and domestic (US DOL) fair labor guidance. The document system now links the workers, labor agencies and employers (vessel owners and captains) in a commitment and paper trail to ensure fair labor practices.

Implementation in the Hawaii Fishing Industry. The Code of Conduct, Model Contracts and Crew Handbooks translated into the languages of the workers, have been distributed to all active Hawaii longline vessel owners. Letters of Assurance (LOA) from captains and owners are being collected attesting to their adoption of the Code. All workers have access to Crew Handbooks explaining the workplace, FL and HT, and grievance mechanisms. LOA's from workers are being collected, giving each individual a voice to express whether or not they are satisfied with their jobs and contracts.