



Press Release: Royal Thai Embassy, Washington, D.C.

At Seattle Seafood Summit, Thailand joins NGOs, corporate and partners to fight illegal fishing and labor abuses



Thailand will further strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships to combat IUU fishing and labor abuses in the fisheries sector, and ensure sustainability.

This firm message of commitment was conveyed by Thai Government representatives at the SeaWeb Seafood Summit on June 5-7, 2017 in Seattle. Throughout the meeting, the Thai delegation updated partners in private sector, civil society and international organizations on Thailand's progress in achieving fisheries sustainability and ensuring protection of workers' rights and strengthened Thailand's partnership to work with them.

The Thai delegation was led by Ambassador Pisan Manawapat and included representatives from relevant agencies working on the ground in Thailand. This included Deputy Chief of Secretary Office of the Command Center for Combating Illegal Fishing (CCCIF), Commissioner of Legal Affairs and Litigation, Royal Thai Police, Director for Foreign Affairs of the Department of Fisheries, and Director for Labor Protection of the Department of Labor Protection and Welfare.

The Thai side met with representatives from the ILO office in Bangkok, major U.S. retailers and NGOs working on anti-IUU fishing and labor protection. They also discussed with the Executive Director of iRespond, a Seattle-based international non-profit technology solutions organization, recently entered into a contract with the Thai Marine Department on how to use its IRIS scan software to develop a complete database of migrant workers in the fisheries sector.

During the past two years, Thailand has adopted several measures under its Fisheries Management Plan (2015-2019) to tackle overcapacity of Thai fishing fleets and preserve marine resources. 6,873 vessels of 30 gross tonnages and above have been equipped with vessel monitoring system, 100 per cent of which have been sealed. Thailand is also party to FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), South Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) and UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA).

To better protect workers in the fisheries sector, most of whom are from neighboring countries, Thailand has strengthened its legal framework and issued them a Sea Book with one-on-one interviews to identify potential victims of human trafficking, forced labor and debt bondage. Thailand has also worked with NGOs, international organizations and private sector on the protection of migrant workers' rights. (See attached for further information.)

Washington, D.C.
June 15, 2017

Thailand: Highlights of Anti-IUU Fishing Measures

Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) (2015-2019)

- Adopted in December 2015 to (1) tackle overcapacity of Thai fishing fleets and overfishing and (2) preserve marine resources
- Transition from open-access to limited-access fisheries

Fleet Management

- Nation-wide survey of Thai-flagged fishing vessels and up-to-date electronic vessel database “Fishing Info”
- Estimate catch from Thai licensed commercial and artisanal vessels does not exceed Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) and Total Allowable Catch (TAC) calculated in 2016.
- Thai commercial fishing fleet is now reduced to 10,967 vessels with a valid fishing license to operate in Thai waters and 17 vessels to operate in foreign waters or high seas.
- Since 3 March 2017, all 17 overseas fishing vessels have been returned to ports in Thailand.
- Illegal vessels will be impounded, locked, painted and banned from fishing.

Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS)

- VMS Center has been upgraded to Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC), operational 24/7 as a central command and control center for all MCS activities.
- 6,873 vessels of 30 GT and above have been equipped with VMS. 100% of all VMS equipment have been sealed. VMS vessels are required to report to one of 32 Port-In Port-Out (PIPO) control centers in 22 coastal provinces for each trip to check document, vessel, catch and crew.
- After acceding to FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), Thailand has designated 27 ports in 10 provinces for foreign vessels and applied strict import control measures on foreign vessels whose catch, mainly tuna, are to be processed in Thailand.
- Additional MCS measures
 - ⇒ Training of 50 observers-on-board on Thai overseas fishing vessels, with some deployed since July 2016
 - ⇒ Electronic Reporting System (ERS) and Electronic Monitoring System (EM) to be operationalized by end of 2017 in all overseas fishing and transshipment vessels
 - ⇒ Banning of transshipments of fishing products outside Thai waters until December 31, 2017

Traceability and Catch Certificate Scheme

- Development of an IT traceability system for both marine catch from Thai flagged vessels through Thai Flagged Catch Certification System and for imported fish

and fishery products through PSM Linked and Processing Statement System (PPS), currently undergoing a test run

- Requirement of additional documents in line with Port State Measures for imported fish and fishery products

Staff / Budget

- Staff: FMC - 83 / PIPO - 796 / Inspectors - 123 / Observers-on-board - 50
- Budget for anti-IUU activities around 70.8 million USD since 2015 to September 2017

Contributing to Responsible Ocean Governance

- Party to FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), South Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) and UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA)
- MOU / Joint Statement on fisheries cooperation with Fiji, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, and Japan, with many more under negotiation

Partnership with NGOs, international organizations, and other partners

- Series of training were carried out throughout 2016 with support of Catapult UK, Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) and FMC of Republic of Korea. More training programs, with the EU's support, are in the pipeline to further enhance FMC's capacity as well as to foster "investigative mind" of its staff to be able to fully utilize all MCS tools available.
- Working with private sector and NGOs such as EJF, Seafood Task Force, Thai Union and Nestle to prevent IUU fishing and to promote standard working conditions on board fishing vessels.

Royal Thai Embassy, Washington, D.C.
5 June 2017

Thailand: Highlights of Efforts to Protect Workers in the Fisheries Sector

Legal Framework

- Owner of fishing vessel or seafood processing factory hiring illegal migrant workers is subject to around 24,300 USD fine per each unlawful employed person. (Royal Ordinance on Fisheries, 2015 and Labor Protection Act, 1998)
- Employment of those under 18 years old on fishing vessels and at seafood processing factories is prohibited. Compulsory rest hours and holidays, mandatory signed work contract, crew list, and requirements on training and welfare of workers are stipulated in line with ILO Convention No. 188 (Work in Fishing) (Ministerial Regulation on Labor Protection in Sea Fishery Work, 2014)
- Definition of “exploitation” is revised to include practices similar to slavery and “forced labor or services” to include seizure of identification documents and debt bondage. (Amendment of Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2017)
- Recruitment agencies are regulated, cost and complexity of process reduced to eliminate labor brokers leading to debt bondage and exploitation. (Royal Ordinance concerning Rules on Bringing Migrant Workers to Work with Employers in Thailand, 2016)
(As of March 2017, 4 months after the Royal Ordinance was effective, 59 licensed recruitment agencies and 2,697 employers have requested to bring in 34,140 migrant workers to work in Thailand. Security deposits are collected from licensed agencies and employers.)

Prevention

- Migrant workers can change employers under 1 of 5 conditions; being abused by employer, employer violates work contract, employer deceased, employer is bankrupted, working conditions believed to cause harm to employee’s life, body, mental or health. (42,903 have done so from November 2016 – February 2017.)
- Sea book is issued for migrant workers, with one-on-one interviews to identify potential victims of human trafficking, forced labor and debt bondage. (From September 2016 to March 2017, 51,378 migrant workers from 5,492 fishing vessels have applied.)
- Workers’ awareness on their rights is promoted through, for example, pamphlets in the workers’ languages on labor rights (minimum wages, legal age of employees, contracts, holiday pay, sick leave, rest periods, health and hygiene, etc.).
- Three border centers were set up along the border of Thailand and its neighboring countries in 2016 to manage the arrival / departure of migrant workers and educate them about Thai labor laws.
- Labor inspection at port & sea is intensified.
 - ⇒ All commercial fishing vessels of 30 GT and above, operated in Thai water, have to return to designated port within 30 days for inspection.
 - ⇒ Thailand Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center (THAI-MECC) conducts daily inspection on vessels identified by Fisheries Monitoring Center as at-risk group.
 - ⇒ Observers-on-board are deployed to monitor activities of Thai fishing vessels outside Thai waters.

Prosecution

- Cases on human trafficking in fisheries sector (January 2015 to May 2017) : 83 cases; 3 under investigation, 14 at public prosecutors, 31 in court proceedings, 35 with verdict from court of first instance, and 7 finalized
- Cases on inspection of seafood processing factories (November 2015 – May 2017) : 64 cases; 31 under investigation, 6 at public prosecutors, 6 in court proceedings, 21 with verdict from court of first instance, and 18 finalized
- Cases on labor transshipment at sea (September – May 2017) : 7 fishing vessels arrested, with legal procedures against captains and vessels owners underway
- Kantang case: In March 2017, court sentenced Chairman of Trang Province Fishing Association and 5 others to 14 years imprisonment on human trafficking charges, and order defendants to pay around 57,000 USD compensation to victims. Thailand received evidence of exploitation and testimonies of trafficked workers on this case from Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF).

Ratification of ILO Conventions

- 23 March 2016 Convention No. 187 (Promotional framework for occupational safety and health)
- 7 June 2016 Maritime Labor Convention
- By end of 2017 Convention No. 98 (Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining)
Convention No. 188 (Work in Fishing)
Protocol to Convention No. 29 (Forced Labor)
- Under consultation Convention No. 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize)

Regularization of migrant workers

- 45,441 sea fishery and 143,528 seafood processing migrant workers registered (As of January 2017)

Bringing in sea fishery migrant workers through MOUs with CLMV countries

- 6,878 sea fishery and 28,384 seafood processing migrant workers employed through MOUs (As of March 2017)

Partnership with NGOs, international organizations, and other partners

- Establishment of Fishermen's Life Enhancement Center (FLEC) in Songkhla province in May 2016 in cooperation with Fish Marketing Organization, Family Planning Association of Thailand, Stella Maris, and Charoen Pokphand Foods PLC. Three additional centers are planned to be set up in 2017.
- Working with Labor Rights Promotion Network (LPN) to (1) establish Fishery Crew Center in Samut Sakhon province to assist fishery workers and (2) jointly inspect suspected cases of child labor, debt bondage, forced labor and human trafficking
- Working with iRespond, Seattle-based international non-profit technology solutions organization, to use IRIS scan software application to develop a complete database of migrant workers in fisheries sector.