



THE INDIAN SHRIMP SECTOR

Fact Sheet

U.S. Shrimp Market Share

- Shrimp is America's favorite seafood. The average per capita consumption is about 5 pounds per person, [according to NOAA](#).
- Most shrimp is imported. More than 90% of the U.S. shrimp market is imported and mostly farm-raised. The wild-caught U.S. shrimp industry supplies less than 10% of the U.S. shrimp market.
- India is the largest supplier of shrimp to the U.S. market. In 2023, India supplied 40.8% of all shrimp imports (and more than half of all peeled shrimp imports), worth more than \$2 billion.
- The dominance of Indian shrimp is a recent phenomenon--the result of fifteen years of corporate and government investment and artificially low costs of production.
- Abuses are built into the cost structure of producing farm-raised shrimp. While countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Thailand and Vietnam have faced criticism for forced labor, India has remained under the radar with little public scrutiny—until now.

Largest Indian Suppliers

- Nekkanti Sea Foods is the largest supplier of shrimp to the U.S. market for the past nine consecutive years, according to the company's executives. Devi Fisheries Limited, Apex Frozen Foods, Avanti Feeds Limited, and Sandhya Aqua are other major Indian shrimp producers.
- CAL spoke to workers at facilities owned by these large companies as well as companies owned by individuals and subcontractors
- India exported 45% of its shrimp production to the United States in 2022.

Known U.S. Buyers

- Supermarkets such as Aldi, Costco, Hannaford, Kroger, Stop & Shop, Walmart, and Whole Foods, as well as food supply companies like Sysco and U.S. Foods, market and sell Indian shrimp in the U.S..
- CAL has linked U.S. retailers, grocery stores and restaurants to specific companies operating in India that use exploitative labor practices. CAL used bills of lading, Indian company websites that highlight its customers, publicly-available information, and interviews to establish these links. (LINK) The list is not comprehensive.



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India's Shrimp Workforce

▲ Large

An estimated 1.2 million Indian families rely directly or indirectly on the shrimp sector for income.

▲ Vulnerable

Companies target vulnerable populations for their workforce with few other employment options. Migration status, caste, and gender play significant roles that make shrimp workers more susceptible to exploitation.

▲ Informal

- Much of the Indian shrimp sector functions within the informal economy.
 - Workers report receiving payments indirectly, infrequently, and without recordkeeping of hours worked or amounts owed, making it hard to challenge or understand their compensation.
 - Very few workers have employment contracts, pay slips, or official relationships with their employers.
 - Very few workers have Provident Fund (PF) and Employees' State Insurance (ESI) cards, even though workers in the sector should be covered under Indian law.



Documented Violations

1

LABOR ABUSES

- Labor Abuses - Across the supply chain, workers are exploited, underpaid and verbally abused. Interviews and field investigations revealed:
 - Workers in hatcheries and shrimp farms report working long hours, often upwards of twelve hours a day.
 - Injuries are common from handling hazardous chemicals, brine, and prolonged contact with near-frozen shrimp without proper safety gear.
 - Many migrant workers live in overcrowded, unsanitary company hostels.
 - Workers report verbal abuse and sexual harassment.

2

FORCED LABOR

The Forced Labor Convention of 1930 defines forced labor as work conducted “under the menace of penalty” and that is not done voluntarily. Indian law takes an even broader definition and includes economic coercion. CAL found:

- **Debt Bondage** - Workers pay recruitment fees that tie them to the job until the debt can be repaid. The recruiter receives additional payment from the company for each day their recruit works.
- **Controlled Movement** - Workers in company housing are rarely allowed to leave the premises, often for only a few hours at a time once or twice a month..
- **Fear of Penalty** - Workers report being intimidated and threatened. Many avoid speaking to anyone outside the company due to fear of retaliation and job loss.

3

HAZARDOUS CHILD LABOR

Hazardous Child Labor – children and young teenagers have been found processing, grading, and packing shrimp instead of receiving an education.

4

ENVIRONMENTAL ABUSES

Groundwater Contamination - The seepage of salt from shrimp ponds into groundwater contaminates domestic and agricultural water supplies.

Coastal Pollution – Shrimp hatcheries and farms release discharge into groundwater or other coastal estuaries, resulting in algae blooms, the decrease of local fish production, and the marginalization of coastal fishers.

Mangrove Destruction - Shrimp farming replaces vital mangrove forests with short-lived ponds, harming global and local ecosystems. Mangroves sequester carbon up to four times the rate of terrestrial forests, provide vital nursery grounds for a variety of animals, and buffer damage from major weather events.