

October 20, 2021

Dear Senator/Representative,

We are a coalition of chefs who collectively serve seafood to millions of customers per year. We take pride in feeding our communities the highest-quality seafood that is not only delicious but also harvested ethically with minimal environmental cost. We are committed to serving dishes that are good for both people and the planet.

**Therefore, we call on Congress to crack down on illegal fishing and related forced labor abuses.**

Our ability to reliably provide sustainable and ethical seafood to our customers is at risk. More than a third of global fish populations are overfished, and illegal fishing poses a grave threat to their survival. When vessels ignore regulations and international boundaries, fish with prohibited gear, or target prohibited species, they undermine sustainably managed fisheries. The catch from these vessels also floods the U.S. market with billions of dollars of illegally caught seafood every year, undercutting U.S. fishermen.

Illegal fishing can also be a driver of forced labor and other human rights abuses. Human trafficking is common in the illegal fishing industry, and many crew members are subject to despicable conditions, held against their will, and deprived of wages. This system brazenly exploits some of the world's most vulnerable citizens and has gone largely unchecked.

When chefs look for seafood that avoids enabling these harmful practices, they face daunting obstacles. As much as a third of the seafood sold in the United States is mislabeled as a different species, a result of the opaque and complex path that seafood travels from boat to plate. Chefs want to be able to verify that their seafood is accurately labeled, legally caught, and ethically sourced.

The Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP), a documentation and traceability system for imported seafood, was created to exclude illegally caught and fraudulently labeled fish from U.S. markets. However, the program only applies to a handful of seafood types, leaving more than 60% of seafood imports untraced. Major loopholes in SIMP's reporting requirements still allow illegally caught seafood to make its way into our kitchens and onto our customers' plates.

**Fortunately, Congress can address these issues by passing legislation that stops illegally caught seafood from reaching U.S. markets.**

Congress can leverage the buying power of the United States, which is the world's largest seafood importer, to crack down on illegal fishing and related labor abuses. By expanding SIMP data collection to all species, requiring importers to report additional catch data, and including labor conditions in reporting requirements, we can close loopholes that have facilitated illegal fishing. Congress should also increase traceability throughout the seafood supply chain by ensuring that accurate labeling and catch data follows each fish all the way from boat to plate. These measures will allow chefs to confidently stand behind the seafood we serve.

Congress has the opportunity and responsibility to ensure that seafood served across the United States is safe, legally caught, responsibly sourced, and honestly labeled for both our consumers and our oceans. **We urge you to take swift action against illegal fishing and forced labor abuses.**

Sincerely,

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