



The Shrimp e-Advocate

The Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA) is a non-profit alliance of members of the U.S. shrimp industry in eight states committed to preventing the continued deterioration of America's shrimp industry and to ensuring the industry's future viability. SSA serves as the national voice for the shrimp fishermen and processors in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas.

Scotland's Stevenson hammers pangasius

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Scotland's Stevenson hammers pangasius



By [Steven Hedlund](#), *SeafoodSource* editor

10 November, 2010 - Scottish MEP Struan Stevenson on Tuesday took a shot at pangasius, calling Vietnam's Mekong River where the fish is raised "filthy" and accusing the country's pangasius industry of "ruthlessly" exploiting workers.

In a keynote address to an aquaculture conference in the European Parliament, Stevenson urged members to persuade European consumers to support the continent's fish farmers and fishermen and buy local.

According to Stevenson, imported product represents

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60 percent of the EU's seafood supply, including 224,100 metric tons of pangasius farmed in Vietnam. In the past year, UK sales of frozen pangasius jumped 50 percent to nearly 1,500 metric tons, while sales of traditional species like cod, salmon and trout dropped, he said.

"Let's encourage more investment in innovative EU aquaculture projects so we can meet the rising consumer demand for first-class, fresh, healthy fish produced in a sustainable and carbon-efficient way," said Stevenson during the two-day aquaculture conference, which runs through Wednesday.

When it came to Vietnam's pangasius industry, Stevenson didn't mince words. He said the Mekong is "one of the most heavily polluted rivers on Earth" and is "teeming with bacteria and poisoned with industrial effluents, including arsenic, mercury and DDT."

He also accused the industry of employing "slave labor," paying workers around USD 1 a day, which allows exporters to "drastically" undercut European fish farmers and fishermen on price.

The U.S. catfish industry has also accused Vietnam's pangasius industry of raising fish in unsanitary conditions.

The Catfish Farmers of America (CFA) is in the midst of an [anti-pangasius campaign](#). Last month, the CFA began airing TV ads urging the Obama administration to implement a measure that would transfer the responsibility of inspecting catfish and pangasius imports from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the measure was included in the 2008 Farm Bill. In the ads, the CFA said the Mekong is "full of contaminants."

The National Fisheries Institute in McLean, Va., shot back, accusing the CFA of distorting the truth and scaring consumers into believing that imported catfish and pangasius are unsafe to eat.

The Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers last month reiterated that its pangasius is raised in farms that meet international standards like SQF1000 and Good Aquaculture Practice and that the country exports pangasius to more than 130 countries and territories.