



## Costco, Walmart still standing behind Thai shrimp

Despite TIP downgrade, retailers working to require industry to take corrective action and make reforms.

Drew Cherry , Josh Stilts

Published: 23.06.2014 15:11 Updated:  
23.06.2014 14:27

US retailer Costco will continue to source shrimp from Thailand as officials say it's better to stay and help create change than abandon the cause.

One of the company's seafood buyers told **IntraFish**, Costco has not changed its stance to work with Thai suppliers in the wake of news the US State Department downgraded the country's Trafficking In Persons (TIP) Report status claiming government officials hadn't done enough to combat human trafficking and slavery.

"We have not changed our position," the buyer said.

According to a Costco spokesperson, the company has reviewed recent media reports concerning labor abuses in the Thai fishing industry, specifically those revealed in a recent series of stories from UK news agency *The Guardian*.

Costco's agreements with its suppliers prohibit, among other things, the use of slave labor, human trafficking and other violations of labor law.

"We are committed to working with our suppliers of Thai shrimp to require them to take corrective action to police their feedstock sources with respect to poor labor practices," the company stated.

"This commitment so far has involved visits by our buying staff to Thailand and discussions with the Thai government, our suppliers, and other

### Associated Articles

- Cutting relationships with suppliers not right approach, says labor rights body
- Shrimp were GlobalGAP certified, Aldi supplier says in wake of Thai slavery reports
- CP Foods' suspended Carrefour contract valued at \$4 million

industry participants. We are continuing those discussions, which are impacted by the state of domestic affairs in Thailand."

No US retailers have come rejecting Thai shrimp or pulling the product from shelves, despite some buyers reporting a move away from Thai shrimp, and **Gulf shrimpers' conviction Americans will turn to its product as an alternative.**

**French retailer Carrefour** and **Scandinavian retail giant ICA** both stopped sourcing Thai shrimp from CP Foods pending an investigation into the supply chain.

Walmart said its US and UK operations -- Asda -- have joined a group coordinated by Anti-Slavery International, Project Issara, "designed to eliminate modern slavery from the Thai seafood industry.

"We are also identifying additional reforms that can be made by working with retailers, restaurants and the seafood industry," the retailer told **IntraFish.**

---