

Terms of Reference

Human rights risks in shrimp supply chains: Assessment of alignment with the ETI Base Code

1. Background

The seafood sector, and shrimp aquaculture in particular, has been associated with significant human rights risks. These include forced labour, recruitment fees and debt bondage among migrant workers, excessive working hours, and poor or unsafe working conditions across supply chains.

There is growing recognition that purchasing practices—such as short lead times, cost pressures, and delayed payments—directly contribute to human rights risks in food and farming supply chains. Whilst many food retailers and brands have strengthened ethical sourcing policies, a critical gap remains: the alignment of commercial decision-making with human rights due diligence (HRDD).

Recent investigations from shrimp aquaculture industries in Vietnam, Thailand, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Ecuador highlight how purchasing pressures are a contributing factor to wholesale prices falling below production costs, negatively impacting worker wages and conditions. Whilst major supermarkets and food companies in the UK, Europe, Australia and US have made important commitments to ethical sourcing, there remain challenges in fully aligning purchasing practices with these goals. There is an opportunity for companies to build on their leadership by adopting more responsible purchasing practices. By enhancing transparency, strengthening labour standards, and working collaboratively across the supply chain, these businesses can help ensure fairer livelihoods and a more sustainable, ethical shrimp aquaculture industry.

However, as purchasing practices impacts are a relatively new phenomenon for buyers of shrimp, an increased understanding and consolidation of existing research is needed to identify linkages between purchasing practice and known human rights impacts.

For this reason, ETI is seeking a consultant to undertake desk-based research to:

- Conduct a focused literature review to examine how the purchasing practices of UK, EU, and Australian retailers affect the ability of suppliers in farmed shrimp supply chains to meet the ETI Base Code. The review should assess how these practices enable or hinder compliance, with only a brief overview of general supplier conditions for context.
- Provide recommendations for UK, EU and Australian retailers/supermarkets on commercial practices that enable suppliers to comply with the ETI Base Code. These recommendations should be structured using the Food Framework to guide responsible purchasing behaviours across the supply chain.

2. Scope of Work

The research will consolidate and assess the interconnectedness of known human rights impacts and the purchasing practices of major UK, EU and Australian retailers / supermarkets. The scope of the research includes:

- Conduct a desk-based review of known human rights impacts in key shrimp sourcing regions (South Asia, Southeast Asia, Latin America) to provide context on sector challenges.
- Map these impacts against the ETI Base Code, highlighting how retailers' purchasing practices can enable or hinder suppliers' compliance.
- Examine sector-wide and retailer-specific purchasing practices using primary and secondary sources, focusing on buyer behaviour rather than supplier failings.
- Conduct a rapid, high-level assessment of the effectiveness and limitations of existing retailer approaches (e.g., certifications) to mitigate human rights risks.
- Develop a short list of self-assessment questions for retailers' shrimp buying teams to evaluate whether their purchasing practices support compliance with the ETI Base Code.
- Provide recommendations for retailers' responsible sourcing or sustainability teams on how to adopt commercial practices that facilitate supplier adherence to the ETI Base Code, structured using the Food Framework where relevant.

The consultant may propose a limited number of key informant interviews (KIIs) or other primary research methods to complement the research findings. Please note, however, that the scope of this research is deliberately limited given the volume of existing studies.

3. Outputs

- X1 synthesis report (c5-7 pages)
- X2 co-hosted remote webinars to share findings from the report, maximum x2 hours each

Timeline:

- Report finalised by 24 October 2025
- Webinars will be delivered, on dates to be confirmed, in November and December 2025.

4. Budget

The consultant is requested to provide an estimate of costs and a work plan for delivering the assignment. It is anticipated this assignment will require 5–10 days of research time, with a rough budget in the range of £4,000 – £10,000. Payment schedule:

- 50% upon contract signing / initiation of work
- 50% upon submission and approval of the final synthesis report

5. Criteria

Applicants should demonstrate:

- Expertise in business and human rights.
- Expertise in shrimp and fishery supply chains.
- Experience engaging with industry stakeholders, including conducting interviews.
- Strong ability to synthesise and analyse data sets for compelling cases of support
- Familiarity with ETI Base Code, responsible purchasing practices, and relevant labour standards and due diligence legislation (CSDDD, Modern Slavery Act, EUFLR, GSCOP).
- Knowledge of responsible purchasing practices in retail.
- Strong report writing in English

6. Application and deadline

We welcome applications from both individual consultants and organisations.

Applicants should prepare a short expression of interest or proposal and email the following to be considered:

- CV(s).
- A short proposal (2–3 pages) with explanation of how requirements will be met, including action plan, timeline, and budget.

Deadline for applications: Wednesday, 10 September 2025

Please submit your application to **hr@eti.org.uk**.