



## SHRIMP MEDIA MONITORING

April 2004

“A Synthesis of Shrimp News From the International Media and Internet”

This newsletter includes news on shrimp farming, and related issues of trade, environment and development, obtained from NACA and STREAM media monitoring program. This media monitoring program tracks some of the major news items on aquaculture and aquatic resources management, with an emphasis on issues relevant to the Asia-Pacific region. The source of the news item is provided and for those interested in the media-monitoring program, please check out information sources at [www.streaminitiative.org](http://www.streaminitiative.org)

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#### **1. US industry moves to protect shrimp trade from cheap S. American, Asian imports**

A coalition of US restaurants, grocers, seafood distributors and others has been launched to fight a US trade panel ruling that could lead to anti-dumping tariffs against six countries, Agence France-Presse reported. The newly formed Shrimp Task Force said the case could end up hurting many US industries and consumers.

The case, involving 2.4 bln US\$ in imports, "could make shrimp once again a delicacy only the rich can afford and adversely impact thousands of American workers," the task force said in a statement. The quasi-judicial US International Trade Commission voted in February for a finding against shrimp and prawns from Brazil, China, Ecuador, India, Thailand and Vietnam.

It said there was a "reasonable indication" that the imported crustaceans, allegedly being dumped in the US at unfair prices, harm or threaten the local industry. That means the Department of Commerce will press ahead with anti-dumping investigations and make a preliminary finding, which could mean import tariffs or quotas by about June 8, the ITC said. The industries petitioning in the case are seeking duties of 30 pct to over 200 pct.

The new coalition includes the Consuming Industries Trade Action Coalition, which fought the hotly-contested US steel tariffs. "The goal of the Shrimp Task Force is to guarantee that shrimp continues to be widely available at a reasonable price for American consumers, and to ensure that the 250,000 American workers employed in shrimp consuming industries are not harmed by this petition," said Erik Autor of the National Retail Federation, part of the new coalition.

"When it boils down to it, this trade case is nothing more than an attempt by a small group to convince the US government to place a food tax on consumers, which in turn, provides petitioners with a hefty financial windfall all at the expense of American consumers." American Seafood Distributors Association president Wally Stevens added: "This petition could take three quarters of this country's shrimp out of restaurants and grocery stores. The only way American consumers can be assured of a steady supply of shrimp, as they have become accustomed to, is to defeat this petition." The Southern Shrimp Alliance, which represents the industry in eight US states, disputed the Task Force's claims, saying thousands of fishermen and shrimp farmers have lost their jobs. "The US shrimp industry is not seeking a government handout," Eddie Gordon, the alliance's president, said in a statement. "We are asking that the Department of Commerce and the International Trade Commission determine whether or not the rules of trade have been violated and the US shrimp industry has been harmed," he said.

Gordon said the cost of shrimp entrees at US restaurants increased by 28 pct from 2000 to 2003, despite a major drop in wholesale prices. "It is hypocritical for restaurants and retailers to claim that fair trade would be the cause of increasing consumer prices for shrimp, when the glut of low priced shrimp has not made shrimp more affordable for the average American," he said.

(Source: AFX European Focus, April 2, 2004 Friday, [www.afxnews.com](http://www.afxnews.com) and [www.afxpress.com](http://www.afxpress.com))

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## **2. Tariff Debate Adds to Woes of Vietnamese Shrimp Farms**

Before January, shrimp farmer Mr. Pham Van Long had not heard of the US International Trade Administration. Long, his wife, and their two children live here in a two-room house on a mud dike next to the 20-acre pond that is their main source of income. Washington is 12,000 miles away.

But since January, the ITA has been considering a decision that intimately concerns Long's livelihood. The Southern Shrimp Alliance, a coalition of US shrimp fishermen, has petitioned the ITA to impose antidumping tariffs on shrimp imports from Vietnam, as well as those from Brazil, China, Ecuador, India, and Thailand. From Vietnam, the US fishermen have asked for tariffs of as much as 93 percent.

The United States is Vietnam's biggest customer for shrimp, so if tariffs are imposed, Long's income probably will drop. "I'm disappointed with the American action," Long said, in the courteous voice of a man accustomed to hardship. "We Vietnamese farmers are already living in poor conditions." Today's globalized economy gives farmers like Long an opportunity to make it out of poverty by selling to distant markets. But it also makes them vulnerable to decisions by distant governments.

Long raises more than a ton of black tiger shrimp each year, depending on the weather, on his farm 70 miles east of Hanoi in Quang Ninh Province. He sells his shrimp to a local seafood merchant, who resells them either to local markets and restaurants or to large seafood distributors. The distributors freeze or can the shrimp and ship them abroad.

In a good year, after family living costs of \$400, Long clears perhaps \$200. With his family of four, Long is not doing well, even by Vietnamese standards. But US shrimp fishermen are hurting, too. The average price for shrimp at dockside in the United States has fallen from \$5.80 per pound in 2000 to less than \$3.50 per pound in 2003. This spring, much of America's shrimp fishing fleet has been idled by low prices.

"The boats cannot continue to fish," said Eddie Gordon, head of the Southern Shrimp Alliance. "A lot of folks can't cover their bills. Boats are being repossessed." The reason, US shrimpers say, is imports from countries like Vietnam. Vietnam's shrimp-farming industry has exploded in the past five years. All across the country, farmers have been turning their rice fields into shrimp ponds. From 1998 to

2003, exports rose from 720 tons to 11,500 tons. US shrimp imports from Vietnam went from less than \$70 million to more than \$500 million, a substantial amount in Vietnam's \$36 billion economy.

On Feb. 17, the US International Trade Commission, an agency separate from the ITA, ruled that imported shrimp indeed may have damaged the American industry. The case now moves on to the ITA, which must decide the heart of the matter: whether Vietnam and the five other accused countries have been dumping shrimp. The question, under US antidumping law, is whether shrimp were sold in the United States for less than their fair value in the home market.

The Vietnamese fishing industry dismisses the allegation. "It's impossible for me to sell in the US at prices below the market price here," said Dinh Duc Huu, CEO and owner of American Technologies Inc., whose vast, high-tech shrimp farms in northern and central Vietnam pumped out more than 2,000 tons of shrimp last year. "I have to make money, you know, to pay the bank." Dinh, a Vietnamese-American who started his business in Vietnam in 1999, says his shrimp farms run a profit of about 20 percent.

"Vietnam's competitive advantages are based on geography, and cheap labor and materials," not subsidies or dumping, said Nguyen Van Kich, chairman of the Vietnamese Shrimp Commission. Labor costs in Vietnam are certainly low. Long, the family farmer, pays three seasonal workers \$35 each per month to help out during shrimp season. At larger, high-tech shrimp farms like American Technologies, monthly wages may reach \$70. But with intensive feeding and antibiotics for disease control, these farms yield dozens of times as much shrimp - up to 4 tons per acre per year.

The Vietnamese industry says it is these rock-bottom labor costs and efficient production technology that keep their prices low, not dumping. Indeed, in 2003 shrimp prices in Vietnam were slightly lower than the price of Vietnamese shrimp sold in the United States, according to figures from the Vietnamese government. But whether Vietnam sells shrimp in the United States for less than its domestic price is not really the issue. Because the ITA considers Vietnam, with its Communist government, a nonmarket economy, it does not trust a product's price there as a benchmark of fair value. Instead, it compares the price of Vietnam's exported shrimp with prices in a surrogate, market-economy country at a relatively similar level of development. Bangladesh and India have been mentioned as possible surrogates.

First, the ITA will examine how shrimp in Vietnam are raised. For each "factor of production" fish food, pond maintenance, labor, electricity the agency will note the corresponding cost in the surrogate country. It will use these costs to calculate Vietnamese shrimp's "normal value." If Vietnamese shrimp have been sold in the United States for prices lower than the ITA-determined normal value, the ITA will find that dumping has occurred. The decision is expected by June 8.

Free-trade advocates frequently criticize American antidumping law. "US law assumes prices in nonmarket economies don't represent fair value, so they take a step toward the absurd and say, 'Let's use prices from this other country,'" said Dan Ikenson, a trade specialist at the libertarian Cato Institute. Also, critics say, the formulas used by the ITA are prejudiced. Particularly controversial is a practice called "zeroing." Each time a product sells in the United States for less than its ITA-determined normal value, the ITA registers a positive dumping margin. But when it sells for more than that normal value, the ITA registers not a negative dumping margin, but a margin of zero. So even if the average sale price is higher than the normal value, the ITA may find that dumping has occurred.

The ITA says its procedures are transparent and open to appeal by either side. It will rely heavily on information gathered by both the Vietnamese and US industries. "A lot of people have the misperception that we just take the information, put it in a black box, and come out with a decision," a

senior Commerce Department official said on condition of anonymity. "That's not the case." The ITA's procedures may be transparent, but to Long they seem foggy. "We want the United States to consider higher prices for Vietnamese products, so that farmers can have higher profits," Long said, when asked what he would like to tell the US government.

If the United States decides to levy tariffs, the price of Vietnamese shrimp will indeed go up. But Long's profits will not.

(Source: The Boston Globe, April 4, 2004, Sunday)

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### **3. Shrimp, Prawn Sector Told to Boost Global Market Share**

Shrimp growers should pour in more investments and increase production to 200,000 metric tons by 2010 to put the Philippines back on the global map. Grace C. Mercado, president and managing director of Integrated Aquaculture Specialists, Inc. (Intaq), said current production volumes are just "a small inconsequential drop in a big bucket of shrimp production figures." In 2002, Philippine prawn exports to Japan reached only 8,742 tons. Japan, which is the biggest market for the Philippines, imported a total of 249,184 tons that year. Philippine prawn exports to Japan last year went down to 6,795 tons.

The European Union, which is the largest market for shrimp in the world, has hardly been tapped, Ms. Mercado added. The US, which is the single largest market for shrimp, imported about 500,000 tons of tropical shrimp last year. The Philippines, however, supplied only 1,588 tons. "Our production figures are so uninteresting to seafood buyers that the mention of the Philippines elicits a yawn. The Philippines has ceased to be mentioned as a prawn producer in almost all tables and statistical figures," she told delegates to the Philippine Shrimp Congress last week.

Ms. Mercado said growers should not be afraid of upgrading their farms and infrastructure as well as investing in new technology and employing modern farm management techniques. "With such a large and ready market for shrimps, one could never go wrong in pouring in investments on a product that has such a large developed global market," she said.

"All prawn industry sectors, government agencies, public officials and private stakeholders should start working together as a team to put the Philippines back on the map of prawn-producing countries. Let us not allow countries like Thailand, Vietnam and India who learned prawn culture from us to beat us like this and leave us to eat their dust," Ms. Mercado said. She said the Philippines, which has a longer coastline than Malaysia, can produce more shrimps. Malaysia aims to produce 150,000 tons in 2010, thus the Philippines should aim for 200,000 tons.

(Source: BusinessWorld (Philippines), April 6, 2004)

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### **4. Philippine Shrimp Growers told to be Selective in Adopting Technology**

Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo has urged shrimp growers to adopt environmentally-sustainable technologies in raising shrimp to ensure long term viability of the country's multi-million peso industry.

During a recent three-day convention of the shrimp industry here, Lorenzo advised the stakeholder to be more selective in implementing prawn growing technology appropriate under local condition. He also encouraged the local growers to use the indigenous species of shrimp rather than the imported one. Imported species might bring diseases into the country, he said.

Lorenzo said the use of appropriate technology to prawn growing could help the industry recover the lost market. The Philippines used to be among the leading supplier of shrimps in the global market but its market share shrunk after a disease spread at the country's prawn farms.

To address this problem, the DA had come up with a road map designed to help revive the shrimp industry. For one, the DA and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources created an inter-agency task force the 'Oplan Sagip Sugpo' to help the ailing industry recover. However, Lorenzo maintained that the private sector should be the one to take the lead while government would just lend its support.

The Philippine attained the highest production of shrimp in 1994, averaging 90,000 metric tons. At that time, the Philippines ranked as the third largest shrimp producer in the world. The country's shrimp industry experienced its downturn in 1996 due to the rise of environment degradation as well as the emergence of luminous bacteria and the white spot syndrome virus (WSSV). Because of this, the Philippines now ranked number 11 in world production. When the shrimp growers encountered production problems due to the emergence of diseases, majority of the shrimp farms were either abandoned or the owners shifted to fish culture. However, the industry stakeholders would like to revive the country's past dominance in the world market.

Lorenzo noted that prawns and shrimp are the country's biggest agricultural export next to tuna. He also encouraged the growers to come up with production and export strategies that meet the changing preferences in the world market.

Roberto Gatuslao, president of the Philippines Shrimp Industry (PhilShrimp), said that more than 80 per cent of the growers have learned how to handle the presence of luminous bacteria due to the emergence of new technology. Gatuslao also noted that the industry is facing several concerns. One of the concerns, he said, is the increasing competition in the market for black tiger prawns, which are in demand in Japan and South Korea. Nevertheless, the local shrimp industry continues to have a strong potential in the export market.

Asia remains the leading shrimp producing region, accounting for 84 per cent of the total global market while South America's share reached only 8.79 per cent and North America only has 5.37 share.

Thailand is the top exporter with close to 300,000 metric tons shipped or 28 per cent share of the world prawn market followed by China and Indonesia with 217,994 metric tons and 138,023 metric tons, respectively.

(Source: Asia Pulse, April 14, 2004 Wednesday)

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## **5. Disease Threatens Sorsogon Aquaculture Industry**

The deadly White Spot Syndrome Virus has infected prawn farms here, threatening to wipe out Sorsogon's aquaculture industry in the Philippines.

The WSSV was first reported in 1993 in China and Japan and the disease has spread to the other Asian regions from the hatcheries in these countries. With no available cure, the highly infectious WSSV can wipe out the whole prawn stock within a few days from a single infection.

Bienvenido Villaroya Jr., a prawn raiser here, said the WSSV has spread among mud crabs, causing the stock harvest to decline by 30 percent. Villaroya said the spread of WSSV has been hastened through the waterways where water from infected ponds found its way to other ponds or prawn farms.

According to the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (Seafdec) Aquaculture Department, the spread of the WSSV was "due to loose compliance with regulations on transfer of live shrimp." It added, "the spread (of WSSV) throughout the world (is) a matter of time. It is now in the country to stay." The Seafdec described indications of infection as "affected shrimp loses appetite, followed by appearance of moribund shrimp in a few days. Moribund shrimp has white inclusions or spots in the cuticle sometimes accompanied with red body coloration." It further advised that it is best to harvest the shrimps immediately once infection sets in to recover whatever value is left of the prawn stock.

Villaroya said the persisting infection of the WSSV, costly preventive measures of disinfecting the ponds and the high possibility of re-infection have driven most pond owners here to abandon prawn culture and upped for sale the pond areas leased from the government.

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) regional director Jaime de la Vega, however, disclosed that the emergence of the WSSV is but ordinary though the outbreak of it started since the early '90s in the country.

"The virus could threaten to wipe out the aquaculture industry if, and only if, people, especially fishermen and prawn farmers, near the area are not fully aware of the sanitary preventive measures," De la Vega said. Juan Escandor Jr. and Gil Francis Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

(Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer, April 19, 2004)

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#### **6. National Fisheries Institute: Farmed Shrimp Is Safe; Meets Same High Safety Standards as Wild-Caught Shrimp**

President of the National Fisheries Institute (NFI) of USA John Connelly stated today that the safety of shrimp consumed in the U.S. whether farmed or wild caught, imported or domestic is assured as a result of joint efforts by the U.S. government and the seafood industry, and warned that attempts to use safety issues for political advantage could harm all seafood manufacturers domestic and foreign.

NFI is the fish and seafood industry's leading trade association, representing a range of firms from small family- owned businesses to large multinational corporations. NFI members include U.S. firms that operate fishing vessels and aquaculture facilities, buy and sell, process, pack, import, export and distribute fish and seafood, and operate retail stores and restaurants.

"From a seafood standpoint, there is no difference in terms of safety between farmed shrimp and wild-caught shrimp," said Connelly. "Seafood, whether imported or domestic, wild caught or farm grown, is subject to the same demanding Food & Drug Administration (FDA) inspection and testing standards." The NFI's statement was prompted by recent allegations that imported shrimp, much of which is harvested using a technique known as aquaculture, is somehow less safe than wild-caught shrimp.

"The federal government and the seafood industry have a zero tolerance policy regarding the use of antibiotics. There are no antibiotics approved by the FDA for use with any farm-raised shrimp. The FDA increased its testing of all shrimp for chloramphenicol in 2002 and, in 2003, established equivalent test levels to the European Union. The standard now in use testing at 0.3 parts per billion (ppb) is among the toughest in the world, able to detect even the faintest traces of antibiotics," stated Connelly. "In addition, the FDA's rigorous Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point inspection system requires processors to identify food safety hazards, maintain control measures that prevent them, and require all U.S. seafood companies to verify that their products are produced in accordance with FDA requirements, wherever sourced. "False statements regarding farm-raised shrimp safety could potentially damage the entire shrimp industry by undermining consumer confidence in all shrimp

products," added Connelly. "Aquaculture is an important technology that enables us to help feed the world with delicious, safe, and nutritious seafood."

(Source: U.S. Newswire, April 22, 2004 Thursday, <http://www.nfi.org> <http://www.usnewswire.com>)

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### **7. Shrimp Research Centre to Boost Thailand's Competitive Edge**

Thailand is launching a new research centre dedicated to the development of shrimp breeding in a bid to boost the kingdom's competitive edge in the lucrative international shrimp market. The new centre represents collaboration between four agencies: the Royal Thai Navy, Prince of Songkhla University, Mahidol University and the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Under the auspices of the National Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (BIOTEC), the centre will conduct research and development into shrimp breeding and transmit this knowledge to Thai shrimp farmers, while at the same time supporting the development of Thailand's black tiger prawn farming industry.

The centre will be based in two separate locations- one in a naval base in the north-eastern province of Nakhon Ratchasima, the other in Prince of Songkhla University's Surat Thani campus.

According to BIOTEC Director Prof. Morakot Tanticharoen, the most pressing problems facing shrimp farmers in Thailand today are the lack of parent broodstock, the environmental impact of shrimp farming, and concerns over chemical residues. Prof. Morakot has warned that unless these problems are addressed, Thailand's shrimp farming industry could face ruin within the next 12 years.

The new centre hopes to be able to reduce the production costs for broodstock from Bt8,000 per pair at present to only Bt3,000, while cutting the maturation period from four months to three. Not only should the programme save the country around Bt9.8 billion each year in broodstock production costs, but could also help save Bt4 billion in medical bills and chemical costs for shrimp farmers.

(Source: Thai Press Reports, April 23, 2004)

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### **8. Good Prospects for Prawn Culture**

The fast growth rate and acceptability of supplementary feed have made prawn culture an ideal farming activity and a profitable proposition in an attractive export market.

The preference of the European markets for fresh-water prawn has enhanced the prospects of prawn culture. In its Potential Linked Credit Plan for 2004-2005, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has said, "Fresh-water prawn (*Macrobrachium rosenbergii*) is suitable for inland aqua culture." Fish farmers are entitled to a bank loan of Rs. 3.12 Lakhs, provided they contribute 15 per cent of the margin money (Rs. 53,000). Loans can be repaid over four years, with a grace of one year. Seeds and pelleted feed are sourced from the hatcheries in Chennai and Nellore. The buoyant export market and favourable physical endowments available for fresh water prawn culture is all set to put this an eco-friendly activity on a fast growth path.

The total inland fish production during 2002-2003 in the district was 4,284 tonne. About 618 persons are engaged in this activity, and there is scope for setting up an ornamental fish-breeding unit, the NABARD has said. The Office of the Assistant Director of Fisheries in Tiruchi also caters to the needs of Karur, Perambalur and Pudukottai districts.

Block-level inland fishermen cooperative societies function in Tiruchi, Lalgudi, Manapparai and Musiri with a total membership of 626. A seed-rearing centre is functioning at Asoor in Tiruverumbur block. Fifteen progressive farmers have already taken to commercial fish culture.

The Veterinary University Training and Research Centre of Tamil Nadu state here is offering training in ornamental fish culture. There is a good scope for promoting sewage-fed fish culture in the bigger townships such as the BHEL Township.

According to the NABARD, a capital subsidy ranging from Rs. 1.5 lakh to Rs.5 lakhs is provided for setting up small- and medium-scale hatcheries having an annual seed production of 10 million and 30 million pot larvae respectively. The anticipated credit flow during 2004-2005 has been put at Rs. 12 lakhs. The Fisheries department along with the Agricultural Engineering department has identified hundreds of ponds and has been training farmers in fish breeding. The NABARD has suggested that the one-year lease of common water areas must be increased to enable farmers to make long-term investments and get more productivity.

(Source: The Hindu, April 25, 2004)

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### **9. Ocean Catch Payout Dwindles As U.S. Workers Battle Imports, Regulations**

That's what they called the 1950 discovery of pink shrimp near the Florida Keys. The prized pinks, which cast off the shrimpers' post-World War II slump, still anchor Florida's \$50 million catch, while brown and white shrimp dominate the landings of the seven other Southeastern states.

Shrimpers lately wonder whether any ocean-caught variety can compete with the imported shrimp that have captured 88 percent of the U.S. market. "You can't call it gold if you can't make any money on it," John DeLong said last month as his 90-foot boat, the Nancy Joy, chugged through the shrimp grounds 40 miles southwest of Cape Romano. He tossed a handful of pinks just plucked from 75 feet of water into a plastic basket. Soon the vast trawl nets would be lowered again for another three-hour drag along the sea floor. DeLong, 47, has spent most of his life trawling for shrimp.

He has hit the docks with a \$100,000 catch. Now he and other captains struggle to cover the cost of trips, even as they cut crews to save money. For this three-week trip, DeLong brought in a catch worth \$18,561 but the company he works for, Gulf Partners Ltd., lost money. "I will probably have to look at other options," DeLong said. "I love it. That's why I'm still here." But the flagship fleet of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic may be vanishing. The U.S. shrimp catch lost more than 50 percent of its value from 2000 to 2002. Dockside prices for medium-size shrimp have dropped from about \$6 per pound to \$2. Boats are for sale. Fish houses are shuttered. Imported shrimp are less expensive and more predictably available to giant wholesalers and restaurant chains. Most are raised in ponds in Asia and South America, where land and labor are cheap and environmental laws typically lax.

U.S. shrimpers must rely on fishing rather than farming because the climate is cooler and coastal real estate is highly valued for development. Pond-raised shrimp accounted for less than 5 percent of domestic production in 2001, the most recent figure available. The National Marine Fisheries Service has spent more than a year developing a business plan to salvage part of the domestic shrimp industry, but the agency is holding details close to the vest.

"We haven't seen the document," said Sal Versaggi, who runs a fleet of shrimp boats in Tampa. "It may never see the light of day." In fact, the federal agency may be counting on the shrimp industry's decline to meet its conservation goals for saving other marine species such as red snapper, according to Fisheries Service documents. But the shrimp industry also may suffer from its own stubbornness.



Last year the Sea Grant program suggested that the industry's resistance to change and its failure to embrace "the realities of the current global environment" have resulted in "conflict, confrontation and chaos."

### Risky Business

Deep-water shrimp fishing from engine-powered boats began at Fernandina Beach, in northeast Florida, in the early 1900s. Fishermen learned to pull their nets at night, when light-shy species such as pink shrimp emerge from muddy burrows and move out across the sea floor.

"The moon is my nemesis," DeLong said. So, sometimes, is the ocean. An average of 57 commercial fishermen die at sea each year. The latest local fatality, a 39-year-old shrimper working on a boat from Tarpon Springs, was killed Feb. 1 near Key West.

There also are the financial perils. Mechanical problems and the whims of weather often mean the difference between earning a living or losing money. DeLong's voyage in March from Tarpon Springs was delayed two days because of a temperamental clutch.

Today's U.S. shrimpers face more obstacles: gear regulations to protect marine life, seasonal and geographic fishing closures to assure healthy shrimp stocks and preserve habitat, dock space and support businesses lost to coastal development, rising fuel and insurance costs. Owners of smaller boats, who once trawled bays and areas closer to shore, were the first to feel the effects.

Now, with Americans eating more shrimp than ever, even the big deep-water boats are in "dire straits," according to the Southern Shrimp Alliance, which represents fishermen and processors. Tarpon Springs seafood dealer John Williams of Gulf Partners serves as secretary-treasurer of the organization.

The alliance asked federal regulators in December for trade sanctions against six shrimp-exporting countries. The organization accused China, Vietnam, Thailand, India, Ecuador and Brazil of selling shrimp in the United States for up to 200 percent less than at home.

"If the unfair practice of dumping continues, many more family businesses will fail, thousands more employees will be out of work and many coastal communities will be devastated," alliance President Eddie Gordon said.

The International Trade Commission in February handed the alliance a preliminary victory by ruling that there is "reasonable indication" the U.S. industry is being harmed by shrimp imports. A more detailed determination, which could mean tariffs, is due in June.

The American Seafood Distributors Association, which represents importers, and allied retail and restaurant groups, opposes sanctions. They say tariffs will lead to a loss of jobs and higher shrimp prices.

### Aid For Shrimpers

A year ago Congress appropriated \$35 million in disaster relief for U.S. shrimpers in response to the sagging prices.

Florida, the nation's third-largest producer, received nearly \$7 million to be split among more than 1,000 shrimpers and 50 fish house owners. "This is the first time I ever received government aid," said Tampa shrimper Charles Parrish, 46, whose \$15,600 relief check arrived in February.

A little more than \$1 million of the relief money is being spent to promote Florida "wild caught" shrimp, a marketing campaign that kicks off this month. The idea is to create a niche market for Florida shrimp so consumers demand the state's fresh catch by name. Similar efforts have begun in other shrimping states, including Alabama, which is airing television commercials featuring "Forrest Gump" author Winston Groom.

"If more people would go into the restaurant and ask questions 'Is that shrimp imported or domestic?' that would change things," Parrish said.

Industry officials also want consumers to start turning over supermarket shrimp rings to read the tiny country-of-origin labels on the bottom. "I want shrimp from the Gulf," said Michigan real estate appraiser Michael Oakes, 51, vacationing in Key West. "But it doesn't surprise me globalization is hurting the shrimp industry like everything else."

#### Environmental Concerns

Imported shrimp began to surpass the domestic catch in the mid-1980s as U.S. shrimpers were caught up in the debate of regulations to protect sea turtles and other marine life, known as by-catch.

Turtle excluders in nets became law in 1989, but it was 1998 before federal regulators required shrimpers working from the Florida Panhandle to Texas to add openings to reduce the number of unwanted fish collected.

Regulators are most interested in protecting juvenile red snapper, a prized commercial and recreational fish that swims with shrimp in the western Gulf. But they also are concerned with the entire web of life at the bottom of the sea.

On Feb. 9 the federal government extended the requirement for by-catch gear to the eastern Gulf. It now affects all of Florida's west coast shrimpers; only near-to-shore shrimping had been affected before under state law.

When DeLong emptied his nets on two culling tables aboard the Nancy Joy, as much as 80 percent of the catch was marine life other than shrimp: crabs, eels, skates, grunts, porgy, scorpion fish, sea cucumber, even a small shark.

A rusty Pepsi can also was part of the mix.

Some shrimpers still resent the excluders, criticizing the need to poke holes in their nets and claiming they lose too much catch. Others say they've adapted.

After 20 years of fighting, shrimpers and environmentalists are close to becoming allies in fighting imported shrimp. The Gulf Restoration Network, a New Orleans-based environmental group, said the domestic shrimp catch is less damaging to oceans than imported shrimp is.

Foreign fleets typically don't use gear to protect turtles and other by-catch. And aquaculture operations have destroyed coastal mangrove habitats to make way for shrimp farms. The farms also use antibiotics to prevent disease in the ponds, which some fear creates health risks.

"We feel the domestic shrimpers have made the effort and it has cost them a lot," Jill Jensen of the Gulf Restoration Network said. "They've worked really hard to reduce the by-catch and turtle deaths." Shrimp Business Plan But the National Marine Fisheries Service wants more by-catch reduction. It also says the Southeastern shrimp industry has too many boats, thought to number 5,000 or more.

In one document the agency predicts a 30 percent to 50 percent decline in the shrimp fleet under prevailing economic conditions "without any management actions due to an inability to make a profit." An agency spokeswoman said it is premature to discuss the shrimp business plan since analyses and recommendations aren't complete. The agency did not respond to written requests for information.

Under current management strategy, the government could stop issuing federal permits to new shrimpers. Other options under discussion are paying fishermen to surrender permits or buying up shrimp boats to keep them off the water.

Some shrimp boats are likely to remain on the water. But it looks like sunset for others. "Sometimes I sit down and think how it used to be," said Dan Craft, 57, who shrimped for years from Hudson. "You live out there. It fascinated me. But as a way of life, it's over with."

(Source: Tampa Tribune (Florida), April 4, 2004 Sunday)

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**Prepared by NACA for the Consortium on [Shrimp Farming and the Environment](#).**