



## **Atlantic Menhaden**

# **Certificate Holder Forced and Child Labour Policies, Practices and Measures**

## Marine Stewardship Council certificate holder forced and child labour policies, practices and measures

1	Composition of fishery client group on behalf of who the statement is provided
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Characterise the composition of the fishery client group, including cost sharing entities.</li> <li>- Describe the relationship between cost sharing members of the fishery client group and the vessel owners and operators of the Unit of Certification (UoC).</li> </ul>
CH	<p>Omega Protein Corporation is the Client Group. Omega Protein is a century old, nutritional product company that develops, produces and delivers healthy products throughout the world to improve the nutritional integrity of foods, dietary supplements and animal feeds. Omega Protein’s mission is to help people lead healthier lives with better nutrition through sustainably sourced ingredients such as highly-refined specialty oils, specialty proteins products and nutraceuticals. Omega Protein is a division of Cooke Inc., a family owned fishery company based in New Brunswick, Canada.</p> <p>The Company operates seven manufacturing facilities located in the United States, Canada and Europe. The Company also has a long-term supply contract with Alpha VesselCo, LLC which owns 30 vessels which harvest menhaden, a fish abundantly found off the coasts of the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. All fishing vessels formerly owned by Omega Protein are owned and operated by Alpha VesselCo, LLC, an independent company.</p>
2	Responsibility for labour regulation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What management authorities and laws, including flag state authorities, control labour-related regulations in the unit of assessment area?</li> <li>- How are laws enforced?</li> </ul>
CH	<p>Labor regulation for the Atlantic menhaden fishery falls under the control of the US Government Department of Labor. Laws are enforced through required reporting and random inspection by the Department. We work under the department of wage and hourly laws and are in full compliance with all National labor laws, including supplying all employees with access to their rights under the law in the US. However, fishing crew members are considered independent contractors. Ultimately US labor laws cover all workers, whether directly employed or working as independent contractors. Fishermen are covered by the Jones Act for injury or death claims, which is different than the Workers Compensation laws for direct employees. However, for child labor and forced labor issues, the US Department of Labor laws will control those areas.</p>
3	Risk identification and mitigation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe the processes, including government and certificate holder measures, that are in place in the UoC to identify and mitigate any risk of child and forced labour.</li> </ul>
CH	<p>Child labour is strictly prohibited in the United States. The manifest of our fishing vessels are often reviewed by the U.S. Coast Guard to ensure our fishermen have legal status to work on our vessels.</p>

4	Crew recruitment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe the typical methods used to recruit crew in the UoC and describe the migrant composition of crew if any.</li> </ul>
CH	All hiring decisions are ultimately the decision of the Alpha VesselCo LLC General Manager of the facility in consultation with the vessel’s captain. Alpha Vesselco’s Human Resources Department will assist with recruiting, interviews, background checks and in securing legally-abled fishermen to serve on the fishing vessel. Vessel Captains and Crew members are seasonally employed. The Atlantic Menhaden fishing fleet has no migrant, foreign workers.
5	Engagement with fish worker groups
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where there is known engagement with fisher, migrant, and worker rights groups, describe how this occurs and the organisations engaged with workers in the Unit of Assessment (UoA).</li> </ul>
CH	Fishermen aboard the Atlantic menhaden fishing vessels are members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 400 union. Alpha VesselCo and the UFCW collectively bargain every three years and the relationship between the two entities are amicable. These union members are considered vessel employees.
6	Crew contracts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe the nature of contracts or legal work agreements in place in the UoC and the issues addressed in such agreements.</li> </ul>
CH	Employment in the US is at will. The company provides an employee handbook which contains an employment-at-will statement and other policies of the company, including the company’s adherence to all federal, state, and local laws.
7	Audits and labour inspections
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe any 3rd Party audits and certifications on labour, or labour inspections conducted within the UoC in the last two years.</li> </ul>
CH	On January 12, 2018, the Virginia facility of Omega Protein was audited by SGS and found to comply with the Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit (SMETA) 4 Pillars requirements. The audit focuses on the companies compliance with labour standards, health and safety, environment, and business ethics. This audit is completed every 3 years to maintain compliance.
8	National minimum age requirements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe national minimum age requirements for crew members serving on vessels within the UoC.</li> <li>- Describe systems in place, both regulatory and private sector systems, to ensure that crew members meet national minimum age requirements.</li> <li>- Describe how this is checked, including enforcement within the UoC by the responsible governing authority or oversight body such as labour inspectors.</li> </ul>
CH	There is a policy that contracted fishermen aboard menhaden fishing vessels must be at least 18 years of age. Sufficient documentation is required prior to employment to ensure individuals are 18 years or older and citizens of the USA or resident aliens. Additionally, the U.S. Coast Guard routinely reviews ship’s manifests.

9	Repatriation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe how repatriation issues are dealt with in the UoC with respect visits end of contract, voluntary and involuntary termination, and freedom of movement and the extent to which these are included in contracts.</li> </ul>
CH	Whether the employee resides in the US or is here with an approved visa from another country, the company provides compensation for travel in the form of a bonus at the start of employment. Employees are then responsible for their own travel home.
10	Debt bondage
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe if there is evidence of systemic practices to impose costs on crew members for placement or brokerage fees, travel to the workplace, visa, medical, safety gear, clothing/protective gear, food at the workplace, communications access, remittance fees, repatriation, etc.</li> <li>- If so, describe such practices and how debt bondage is avoided.</li> </ul>
CH	Travel to the workplace, along with any visa costs, are covered by the company. Safety gear and other PPE is provided by the company. The company provides a weekly stipend for food and any costs of food over that amount are deducted from the employee's paycheck with the employee's consent.
11	Grievance and remedy mechanisms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please list any policies or measures (e.g. hotline) that are in place for crew voices to be heard and to report and remediate any instances of forced or child labour.</li> </ul>
CH	The employee handbook provides a grievance policy along with a hotline number in order to report any concerns.
12	Identification documents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe policies and practice in place across the UoC to ensure that crew members have free and timely access to their identification documents, including National ID, passports, visas, etc.</li> </ul>
CH	The employee is responsible for maintaining their documentation. The company never retains an employee's visa or other documentation.
13	Additional comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you have additional comments on labour practices within the UoC?</li> </ul>
CH	