

A close-up photograph of two tuna fish lying on a bed of white ice cubes. The fish are positioned diagonally, with their heads pointing towards the bottom left. The fish on the right is more prominent, showing its dark, glistening scales and large, clear eye. The fish on the left is partially obscured. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white, suggesting a clean, cold environment.

FAIR TRADE CENTER

REPORT ON CANNED

TUNA

THE WORKING CONDITIONS IN A GLOBAL INDUSTRY

Report on Canned Tuna

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Summary

This is a report about the people who catch, clean and can the tuna fish we eat. Fair Trade Center has met with fishing boat and factory workers who describe the working conditions in Thailand's tuna industry.

Factory owners and purchasing managers who represent Swedish import companies also get the chance to speak out in this report. Fair Trade Center's goal with this report is to start a discussion about how conditions could be improved for people and for the environment in the production of canned tuna fish.

Tuna is the most fished species in the world, and by the 1990's it had passed cod as the most economically important fish. Tuna fish is sold fresh, frozen or canned. The largest import of tuna fish to Sweden is as a canned product. The biggest Swedish importers of canned tuna fish are the companies Abba, Axfood (owner of Hemköp and Willys), B&S Foods, Coop, Ica, Lantmännen Doggy and Piwa. All of these importers purchase the majority of their tuna fish from one or more of eight identified tuna fish factories in Thailand.

Thailand developed their production of canned tuna fish when consumption first got underway in the middle of the 1960's at a time when the demand was great from both the U.S. and Europe. Thailand had excellent conditions for developing production and meeting the demand of the export markets and is today the world's largest exporter of canned tuna fish. The production of canned tuna fish is labour-intensive but the chain of production is short and basically only consists of fishing and the canning factory. The tuna fish that is canned in Thailand is imported from international merchants. It is mainly the Taiwanese fishing fleet that catches the most common tuna fish species, skipjack and yellowfin tuna, in the western Pacific Ocean. The tongol species, which is imported to Sweden by Abba and Axfood, is also caught locally in Thailand.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) writes in their report *Safety and Health in the Fishing Industry*¹ that fishing is the most dangerous profession in the world. Many fishing boat workers, especially from Asia, work on ships that are registered in countries other than their own and in foreign waters, and these workers are especially vulnerable. The report describes extensive problems like unregulated working hours, low wages and inadequate safety on international fishing ships. Such problems came to the forefront again in August 2006 when 30 fishing boat workers died from malnutrition on their trip back to Thailand. Most of the men who died were migrant workers and their bodies were thrown overboard.²

For the tuna fish species tongol, which is caught locally in Thailand, it has been shown that many of the people who work on the fishing ships work under unacceptable con-

1. Safety and Health in the Fishing Industry from 1999, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/techmeet/tmf99/tmfir.htm>

2. US State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report (June 2007)
http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/human_trafficking/traffick_report.html

ditions. Local fishing boat workers in Thailand tell of wages under the legal minimum, dangerous working conditions and systematic discrimination of migrant workers on the fishing boats. The canned tuna fish that we buy in the store is easy to trace to the factories where the fish is canned, since all of the cans that are sold have a number that allows them to be traced back to the factory. Using these numbers, and with the help of the Seafarer's Union of Burma, Fair Trade Center was able to conduct interviews with workers at three canning factories that supply the Swedish market with tuna.

At all of the factories that were investigated, the wages were set at the statutory minimum or somewhat higher. Since the minimum wage is very low, the workers would have a hard time managing on only an eight hour work day, something that was seen clearly since at all three factories they worked ten hours a day or more, six days a week. At two of the factories the workers were required to work overtime, and factory managers had different ways of punishing those who did not want to work overtime. Many migrant workers work in the tuna fish industry in Thailand, most of them from Burma. At two of the three factories, migrant workers had to pay "brokers" in order to get hired. At one of the factories the migrant workers were also discriminated against by receiving lower wages and facing stricter rules. At this same factory, workers told of how harsh the managers were towards them. One woman told of how she had been beaten by her supervisor and had a day's wage deducted because she had worked too slowly. One of the three factories distinguished itself by being better than not only the others in this investigation, but also in the region in general. Even at this factory, however, the wages were low and the working hours long.

With Ica's help, Fair Trade Center was also able to visit two of the factories in order to interview the managers and see the production facilities. The managers at both of these factories claimed to be well aware of what rules applied for the employees, but at one of the factories, the employees described the reality of their conditions in a completely different way than the managers did.

Of the Swedish companies that import tuna fish, only three of seven companies, Axfood, Coop and Ica, have a code of conduct that includes wages, working hours and respect for ILO's (International Labour Organisation's) core conventions.³ Abba writes in its contract that no child labour of any kind is allowed. The other companies, B&S Foods, Lantmännen Doggy and Piwa, make no formal demands of the factories, but all of them claim that the demands of high quality that they place on the factories also promotes better working conditions.

3. See Appendix 2 for more information.

Trade involving canned tuna

Although tuna are migratory while swimming the oceans, they often travel far greater distances canned, chilled or frozen. The tuna on your plate may be fished in the Indian Ocean by Philippine fishers on board a Spanish-owned vessel registered in Belize, before being processed in Thailand and then sold in Europe.⁴

Tuna is actually an umbrella term for many different species of fish. The main tuna species that are fished commercially are skipjack, yellowfin, albacore, bigeye and different species of bluefin tuna. Tongol is yet another species that has gained economical significance of late in the international trade of canned⁵ products. The most common species that appear on the European market are described in Appendix 1. For the canned products and especially the flake products, the species that are in the can vary depending on which happen to be the cheapest at the time of production.

Today tuna is the economically most important fish species because of its global significance in international trade, as fresh, frozen or canned. It is mainly caught in the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans. The commercial significance of tuna is vital for the fishing business of many countries. A large industry has been built up around tuna, from

suppliers who sell to the processing industry who then sell to the consumer.

“Tuna is an important and increasing commodity. There are tuna fish factories in Europe, but most of the production takes place in Thailand or the Philippines. Maybe production in the ACP countries⁶ will increase since they benefit from low customs costs,” says Erik Wirell, purchasing manager at Ica.

Sweden’s fishing product imports come mainly from Norway and Denmark. Of the import from countries outside the EU, only seven percent come from developing countries.⁷ Thailand dominates the Swedish import of fish from the south. More than half of the import from Thailand is tuna.⁸ According to SCB’s statistics, canned tuna fish was imported to Sweden for 145 million SEK in the year 2006. Of this total, tuna for a value of 74 million SEK came from Thailand. The next biggest country was the Philippines with 37 million SEK,⁹

4. Fishing in Europe, No 23, September 2004 http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/publications/magaz/fishing/mag23_en.pdf

5. Majkowski J, Global status of Tuna and Tuna-like Species, FAO Rome, 2007

6. ACP countries stands for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries. The ACP countries are 77 of Europe’s former colonies, 40 of which are classified as some of the least developed in the world.

7. The Swedish Fishing Authority:
<http://www.fiskeriverket.se/vansternemy/konsumentinfo/importeradearter.4.1490463310f1930632e80006683.html>

8. The import from Thailand also consists of sardines, small amounts of canned crab and tropical shrimp.

9. The other top ten exporters to Sweden are Vietnam (3.8 million), Colombia (3.5 million), Ghana (1,6 million), Great Britain (0.7 million) and Finland (0.5 million).

after which there is a large gap to the remaining exporters (Germany 11 million, Papua New Guinea 5.9 million, and Denmark 5.7 million SEK).

The annual global catch of commercial tuna species has increased from 0.2 million tons in the beginning of the 1950's to reach a peak of 4.3 million tons in the year 2003 (9.5 million tons if you count all of the tuna-like species). The majority of tuna was caught in the Pacific Ocean, which stood for 2.3 million tons or 66 percent of the total catch in 2006. From the Indian Ocean came 20.7 percent, from the Atlantic came 12.5 percent and from the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea came 0.7 percent of the total tuna catch.¹⁰

The most significant nations that catch tuna in the three oceans are Japan and Taiwan with 500,000 and 400,000 tons. Other large fishing nations are Indonesia (340,000 tons), the Philippines (280,000 tons), Korea (230,000 tons), Papua New Guinea (200,000 tons) and France (165,000 tons).¹¹ Today tuna fish is not only caught by the large industrial fleets from Taiwan, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines and Spain, but also by small-scale coast fishermen in developing countries. The large industrial fleets mainly fish in international waters and in other countries' fishing waters.

Industrial fishing for the canning industry got underway in the 1940's and 50's through Japanese fishing fleets in the Pacific Ocean and by U.S. fishing fleets outside of California and along the coast of Mexico. In the 1960's Japan expanded its fishing to all the oceans of the world in pursuit of tuna for canning.

In the middle of the 1960's, Korea and Taiwan began large-scale tuna fishing. Also, EU countries like France and Spain began to catch tuna in the eastern Atlantic and then in the Indian Ocean. During the 1990's, countries like Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela also began large-scale tuna fishing. The small-scale fishing by coast countries developed more around the Mediterranean, the Philippines and Indonesia. From the early part of 2000 and until now, tuna fishing has expanded to small island nations in the Pacific Ocean that sign fishing contracts with long-distance fleets so that they can fish in these countries' economic zones.

Five regional international fishing bodies¹² are currently responsible for the administration of tuna. Their combined task is to conserve and manage the world's tuna in a sustainable way.

The majority of the tuna that is sold to the canning factories is purchased through international raw material trading companies for tuna. Some of the largest trading companies for tuna are in Taiwan and Japan. That is where the majority of the tuna is bought that is then sold to Sweden by the factories.

As far as the actual production of canned tuna fish goes, the U.S. and Thailand are the sites of the largest production. Tuna fish is also processed in Spain, Italy and France, and countries like the Ivory Coast, Ecuador and Indonesia are increasing their portion of world production. The largest exporter of canned tuna fish is Thailand, with over 30 percent of world export. The Ivory Coast, Ecuador, Indonesia, the Philippines and Seychelles have a smaller but increasing portion of the world market. Some of these countries benefit financially from lower customs costs to the EU since they belong to the ACP countries. The largest importer of canned tuna fish is the USA (17%), followed by France (15%), Great Britain (14%) and Germany and Italy (both ca 10%).

Each delivery of canned tuna fish to the Swedish buyers includes a Captain's statement, which is a verification in which the captain of the boat fills in the following: catching zone (divided up according to FAO's fishing zones), which nation the boat is registered in, the species of tuna and its weight.

THE CANNING PROCESS FOR TUNA

Most of the factories that produce tuna for export are large facilities with over one thousand employees. Since large portions of the work, like cleaning the fish, must be done manually, production is very labour-intensive. The increasing demands on food safety and quality have led to the factories becoming more modern and organised.

"A lot has happened in these factories in the past few years. In the beginning of the 1990's, for example, none of the factories had air-conditioning,

10. http://foodmarketexchange.com/datacenter/product/seafood/tuna/detail/dc_pi_sf_tuna0301.php

11. FAO 2004

12. CCSBT (Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna), IATTC (Interamerican Tropical Tuna Commission), ICCAT (Internationell Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas), IOTC (Indian Ocean Tuna Commission bildades) and WCPFC (Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission).

13. http://www.foodmarketexchange.com/datacenter/product/seafood/tuna/dc_pi_sf_tuna03.htm

and it could be 45°C in the factories. The increasing demands on food safety have also improved the situation for the workers,” says Erik Wirell, purchasing manager at Ica. The industry is placing high demands on food safety so that consumers will be provided with a safe and healthy product. The reason for this is to minimise the risk that foods will be contaminated. These demands have led to an increase in the standard at factories, which has also benefited the employees at the factories by giving them a better and cleaner working environment. Tuna is canned in many different forms: whole, in pieces, shredded or in flakes, and it can be packaged in water, oil, stock or flavoured sauce. The latter alternative of packaging tuna fish in sauces and refining the product, called “value-added tuna”, is a way to increase profit margins from tuna production. An example of “value-added tuna” is Ica’s Gott liv series, which contains for example tuna fish in curry sauce.

The managers at one of the factories in Thailand say that they lose money by selling normal canned tuna fish in water and oil since these products are sold at such a low price. The raw material, tuna, makes up fifty to sixty percent of the production cost and the price of tuna has gone up lately. There is also an overcapacity for the canning of tuna which reduces prices for the factories even more. According to the factory, the only items they make money on are value-added tuna, which is tuna fish in different flavoured sauces, but they still have to sell normal tuna fish at a reduced price to keep the factory going.

“It could be true that the factories don’t make very much money on the simpler products, which are often more vulnerable to competitive pricing, but I don’t think they lose money on them. The prices of raw materials go up and down so much. I don’t think they fluctuate this much in any other branch. Prices can vary between 450 dollars and 1,635 dollars per ton,” says Erik Wirell, purchasing manager at Ica.

Every part of the tuna fish can be utilized. In most of the factories, the only waste product is the waste water. For example, the fish scraps are used to make fish meal for animal feed, fish oil is made from other parts and liver meal is used for shrimp farming. You can also make stock and other flavours with scrap products.

THE PRODUCTION OF CANNED TUNA FOLLOWS NINE STEPS.¹⁴

1. The tuna is delivered and placed in frozen storage (in this step, the tuna is inspected for mercury contents from environmental impurities and histamine contents. Histamine is an enzyme that forms if the fish has been out on the deck in the sun).
2. Preparation of cans (the cans are inspected and cleaned).
3. Delivery of ingredients and preparations (like quality control tests).
4. Cleaning and treating the tuna.
5. Filling the cans with tuna fish and chosen ingredients.
6. Sealing and sterilising the cans.
7. Incubation time and random quality control tests.
8. Labelling.
9. Loading and shipping the tuna fish.

Step four is the most labour intensive process where the fish is defrosted, the gills and entrails are removed, the fish is treated (tuna is steam cooked under high pressure), cleaned, the head, fins, tail and skin are removed and then separated into light and dark meat for canning.

According to the factories, the biggest environmental problem in production of canned tuna is what to do with the waste water. All of the factories in the Samut Sakhon province have to do their own cleaning of the waste water, and once a month the authorities come to make sure it falls within legal limits. At one of the factories investigated by Fair Trade Center (factory B), they have installed sewage treatment that can exploit the methane gas that is produced. This gas is then used instead of oil for heating up the factory.

THAILAND’S TUNA INDUSTRY

As mentioned above, Thailand is the world’s largest exporter of canned tuna with 32 percent of the global export market. The U.S. is still the largest market for Thailand’s export, followed by EU and Canada.¹⁵ Nearly all of the tuna that is produced in Thailand is exported. The most important tuna species are skipjack, yellowfin, albacore and tongol.¹⁶ Most of the canning factories are in the province Samut Sakhon, one hour’s drive southwest of Bangkok. The most important city in the area is also called Samut Sakhon and is

14. Food Market Exchange: http://foodmarketexchange.com/datacenter/product/seafood/tuna/detail/dc_pi_sf_tuna0306_01.htm

15. http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/casestudies_e/case40_e.htm#fnt1

16. http://www.agrofoodasia.com/Food_Industry.html

Thailand's center for the fish process industry. The fish canning industry is very labour-intensive and there is a high demand for cheap labour in the area to keep the prices competitive.

Despite their impressive export of tuna fish, Thailand itself does not catch very much tuna, and the canning industry is therefore dependent on import. The main reason for this import dependency can be attributed to inadequate fishing equipment, lack of deep-sea fishing skills, limited access to tuna in Thai waters and difficulties in localising the fish. The Thai government has now set up a program to increase Thailand's ability to catch tuna.¹⁷

In 2002, Thailand imported over 490,000 tons of frozen tuna, mainly from Taiwan.¹⁸ The two factories that Fair Trade Center visited purchase all of their skipjack through trading companies. Factory B and Factory C purchase the majority from a Taiwanese (F.C.F. Fishery Co. Ltd) and a Japanese (Itochu) trading company. Sometimes they purchase fish from the European fleets, but this is uncommon. Most of their fish are sold back to Europe.

WORKERS' RIGHTS LEGISLATION, MIGRANT WORKERS AND LABOUR UNIONS

The Thai economy has many successful export industries, including computers, radios/stereos, fish/shellfish, clothes and rice. The U.S. is Thailand's most important export market but Japan is its largest commerce and economic partner.¹⁹ Other large export countries are Singapore (8%), China (6%), Hong Kong (5%) and Malaysia (4%).

Thailand's recovery from the Asian crisis in 1997-98 depended to a large part on export to the west and countries in Asia. The government implemented a policy that focused on export and free trade and that was less dependent on foreign capital.²⁰ In 2003, the GNP growth rate was 7.1%. Since that time the growth rate has decreased and was five percent in 2006. Since the military coup in September of 2006, the economy in many areas has gotten worse.²¹

About 12 percent of Thailand's population live in extreme poverty, which is less than one US dollar per day. Even for those who work, it can be hard to manage on their current wages. In Thailand the legal minimum wage is different in different regions. For example, the factories that produce canned tuna fish for the Swedish market are located in the Bangkok, Nakornpathom and Samut Sakhon provinces, where the minimum wage is 191 bath (4.1 euro) per eight hour workday (4.1 euro per day) and in Songkhla where the minimum wage is 152 bath per day (3.3 euro per day).²²

Such low wages mean that many have to have longer workdays in order to be able to afford to provide for their families. It is not uncommon to have a workday of over 12 hours. Many young people from the country move into to the industrial areas to earn money for their families and among these it is common to work as much as possible in order to save money. In Thailand it is more common for employees to demand that they can work more hours than it is to demand increased wages. One explanation for this can be that only about 3 percent of the total workforce is organised in a labour union. Among the industry workers, labour union organisation is only 12 percent.²³

MIGRANT WORKERS

Because of its relatively strong economy, Thailand has become a natural destination for migrant workers from the neighbouring countries of Burma, Laos and Cambodia. Thailand has approximately 2.5 million migrant workers, and of those about 80 percent come from Burma (for information on Burma, see Appendix 3). About 2 million Burmese work in the fishing and fish processing industry and the textile factories along the northern border.

In order to handle the large number of migrant workers, Thailand's government has introduced a system for registering guest workers. The system is mainly designed to have control over the guest workers, for example how many there are, where they go, and to make sure they don't threaten

17. "The Thai government wants upgrade all deep-sea fishing ships, assist in finding a low-interest loan for ship owners to replace their fishing equipment and provide training to fishermen to be more efficient in deep-sea fishing techniques", for more information see: Sector Overview, The Fishery Industry in Thailand, April, 2007 <http://www.ambangkok.um.dk/NR/rdonlyres/5CE2A89A-6708-43E0-90BD-37F924C3C71B/0/SectorOverviewFisheryIndustryinThailandApril2007.pdf>

18. 81 percent of the tuna import was skipjack, 12 percent yellowfin tuna and 7 percent albacore. Taiwan stands for 24 percent of the export of skipjack to Thailand, followed by the Marshall Islands (20 percent) and Micronesia (13 percent). http://foodmarketexchange.com/datacenter/product/seafood/tuna/detail/dc_pi_sf_tuna0503_01.php

19. http://www.swedenabroad.com/Page____50788.aspx

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. http://eng.mol.go.th/statistic_01.html

23. <http://www.lotcobistand.org/country/109>

Thailand's job market. Despite this stance, the legislation has brought about improvements for the migrant workers both in terms of legal rights and privileges. The total cost for registration is 3800 bath (82.3 euro) per year, which includes health insurance. Many employers pay this registration fee for their migrant workers and then deduct this expense from their wages. For the migrant workers who have children in Thailand, it is often not possible to send them to school.

LABOUR RIGHTS LEGISLATION²⁴

Despite some deficiencies, Thailand has relatively good labour laws in many areas. Thailand's Labour Protection Act (LPA) from 1998 establishes that a workday is eight hours long, overtime can only take place with employee consent, it is forbidden to require working on public holidays, it is required to have one day off out of seven, paid vacation after one year of employment, paid sick leave, overtime and holiday compensation, and maternity leave, it is forbidden to fire an employee because of pregnancy, nothing less than minimum wage may be paid, there must be a mechanism in place for complaints at workplaces with more than 10 employees, and there must be severance pay when an employee is given notice.

Employing children younger than fifteen is forbidden. Those between fifteen and eighteen are allowed to work under safe conditions. This means that the child cannot work more than four hours without one hour of rest, and may not work between ten at night and six in the morning if they have not received special permission from the Ministry of Labour. Children cannot work overtime or on holidays, and their wages may not be paid to anyone other than the child.

However, these laws do not include everyone. For example, agricultural workers and fishing boat workers are completely excluded from LPA. However, LPA is to be in full force for everyone who works in the tuna factories.

According to the Labour Relation Act of 1975, it is forbidden for workers in agriculture, hous-

ehold work and on fishing boats to organise labour unions, whether they are Thai or migrant workers. It is also illegal for migrant workers to start labour unions in Thailand. They can, however, become members of already existing labour unions as long as they do not hold any official positions in them.

THE ILO CONVENTIONS AND THAILAND²⁵

Thailand has ratified fourteen ILO conventions, which include five of ILO's eight core conventions. The three core conventions they have not ratified are nr. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, nr. 98 on The Right to Organise and Collectively Bargain and nr. 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation). Despite this, Thailand is required as a member of ILO to maintain respect for all of the core conventions. These conventions apply to their own country's workers as well as for migrant workers. The right to form and become members of labour unions is also protected in Article 8 of the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which has been ratified by Thailand.

Other conventions that Thailand has not ratified are ILO's convention nr. 97 on Migration for Employment Convention, convention nr. 143 on Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers, or the UN's Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Thailand has, however, ratified convention nr. 122 on Employment Policy. Article 3 in this convention (which also applies to migrant workers) states that employment policies should be designed "with a view to taking fully into account their experience and views and securing their full cooperation in formulating and enlisting support for such policies." By forbidding migrant workers from starting labour unions or having positions in them, they are basically being excluded from actively participating in the design of "employment policies," which means that Thailand is basically breaching convention 122.

24. The information in this section is taken from the ILO report: The Mekong Challenge Underpaid, Overworked and Overlooked The realities of young migrant workers in Thailand (Volume 1) 2006, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/child/trafficking/downloads/underpaid-factsheet-eng.pdf>

25. Ibid.

Working conditions on the fishing ships

We work all day and all night on the boat. During working hours, we are not allowed to rest. If we do rest, we risk punishment. We try to be diligent and do our work without rest, but if we must [rest], we make sure that no one is around because stealing just one second of work time to look out at the sea means that we will be yelled at. Neither of us has been physically beaten – only yelled at. But we are scared because we have seen some crew members thrown off the boat or beaten with hooks and anchors that weigh close to one kilo and are as long as our arms. The crew who were beaten with these sharp and heavy objects bled profusely, especially when the sharp end of the hooks grabbed onto their skin. They could crack your skull open if they hit you too hard.

14 YEAR OLD MIGRANT FISHING BOAT WORKER AND 15 YEAR OLD MIGRANT FISHING BOAT WORKER²⁶

Some of the worst crimes against human rights in the chain of production for tuna fish are found in the fishing sector. An example of the often inhumane working conditions on fishing boats is given in a report from the American State Department tells of a number of Thai fishing boats that returned to port in August of 2006. During the trip back, 30 of the crew had died of diseases and inadequate health care. Their bodies had been thrown overboard into the sea.²⁷ A trial is currently underway in Thailand against the owners of the boats. In its report Safety and Health in the Fishing Industry, ILO describes the work on fishing boats as the most dangerous profession in the world.²⁸

WORKING CONDITIONS ON FISHING BOATS WORKING OUTSIDE THAILAND

According to reports from ILO, Asian fishing boat

workers often work on long distance fishing boats registered in other countries. Many are treated well, but a considerable number suffer under tough conditions. These fishing boat workers are forced to work long, monotonous shifts, for a wage that is unfair in a workplace that is unsafe, and where their human rights are frequently violated.

Their insurance, if they have any, is often limited to certain specific illnesses or accidents, and large deductions are taken from their wages for expenses their employers claim they incur while at sea. Workers on boats outside of Indonesia suffer some of the worst working conditions. On the boats that go from Thailand to Indonesia, fishing boat workers are enlisted for up to three to four years at a time. During the years on the boat, they often live in tight quarters, work very long workdays and often do not get enough food or water. The captain

26. The Mekong Challenge Underpaid, Overworked and Overlooked The realities of young migrant workers in Thailand (Volume 1) 2006, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/child/trafficking/downloads/underpaid-factsheet-eng.pdf>

27. US State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report (June 2007) http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/human_trafficking/traffick_report.html

28. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/techmeet/tmf99/tmfir.htm>

is often a Thai and the crew consists of migrant workers.

It is common that when the fishermen first set off they are given 10,000 bath (216.6 euro) in advance, which they often leave with their families. During the years on the boat they only receive a small wage that is supposed to cover the expenses they have on the boat. Many times the fishing boat workers only receive parts of the payments they have been promised, or no payment at all until they have returned to their home ports after many years of work. Migrant workers simply get deported to their home countries as soon as they have finished their work, without receiving any wages.

WORKING CONDITIONS ON FISHING SHIPS IN THAILAND

As mentioned above, the Thai fishing fleet is involved in catching the species of tuna called tongol. It is very difficult to trace tongol from the canning factories to the local fishing boats, but reports from the Thai fishing boats show that there are widespread problems with the working conditions on the boats. It is therefore high time for the import companies to begin inspecting the conditions on the boats.

According to the management at one of the investigated factories (factory C), the majority of the tongol that is canned is caught in Thailand (80%), but also around the coasts of Malaysia and Burma. That factory also explains how their own purchasing department goes around and purchases the fish, sometimes directly from the boat owner and sometimes in the harbour. Most of the tongol is purchased from Trat in southeast Thailand, Samui, Surat Thani and Patani in the south, Ranong in the west and Phuket in the southwest.

In January of 2007, Fair Trade Center met a group of fishing boat workers and talked about the situation at their workplace. A young worker reported that a person died the day before on a fishing boat when he was hit by falling fishing equipment on the boat. The body was thrown overboard before they returned to port and the skipper ordered the crew not to tell anyone what had happened. None of the fishing boat workers around the table seemed surprised by this. They say that is what happens if a migrant worker has an accident at sea.

Most of the crew have never had training in

how to handle the equipment on the boat in a safe way. They complain that they don't receive any overtime compensation and that the working hours are long and irregular. The wages are often paid irregularly and sometimes they do not receive the wages they have been promised. The boats are often cramped for space and sometimes there is no first aid kit.

In March of 2007, Fair Trade Center met a fishing boat worker through a partner organisation in Thailand who had worked for many years on boats along the coast of Thailand.²⁹ The fishing boats vary in size, and sometimes he worked on boats with up to 60 crew, and other times on boats with only six people. Now he works on a local boat that catches many different kinds of fish. The boat goes out at five in the afternoon and comes back to port at six in the morning. He told us that the boat catches everything from fish the size of a finger to fish the size of barrels. Sometimes they also catch tongol.

When he started working, he was told that he would make 4,500 bath (97.5 euro) per month, but in the end he only received 3,500 bath (75.8 euro). The majority of the crew on the boat are Burmese. He says that there is hardly any safety equipment on the boat. Sometimes accidents happen when they are going to pull in the net, like when fishing equipment falls on and injures a worker. The boat does not return to port as long as a Thai crewman has not been injured. A couple of years ago, a Burmese migrant worker got his arm crushed by a winch when they were out fishing. It was midnight, but the boat continued to fish and did not return to the harbour until seven in the morning.

This man's stories are confirmed by ILO's report *The Mekong Challenge*³⁰ from 2006, that investigates the working conditions for workers on the fishing ships along the coasts of Thailand. For the ILO report, 21 migrant workers who work on fishing boats were interviewed.

THE RESULTS SHOWED THAT:

- 20% answered that they were "required to work"
- 45% answered that they worked more than 12 hours per day
- 14% had been physically attacked
- 65% were between 15 and 17 years old
- 43% could not speak Thai

29. Interview arranged by S.U.B. in Samut Sakhon on March 11, 2007

30. *The Mekong Challenge Underpaid, Overworked and Overlooked The realities of young migrant workers in Thailand* (Volume 1) 2006, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/child/trafficking/downloads/underpaid-factsheet-eng.pdf>

The working conditions in canning factories

The wages in the fishing industry in Thailand are low, which leads to long workdays. The norm is ten hour workdays, six days a week, and the employees often work around twelve hours per day. The low wages cause many in the industry to live in poor conditions. Four to five workers can live in rooms of 10 m². The poor conditions have meant that the industry is largely dependent on workforce from the neighbouring countries, mainly Burma. Around 70,000 Burmese work in the fishing industry in Samut Sakhon and only 30-40,000 have work permits. Many of the Burmese work in the tuna fish factories.

There is no fisherman's union in Thailand, so there are no labour unions and no collective bargaining at any of the factories. The workers themselves feel that the low wages are the biggest problem with the job. The statutory minimum wage in Samut Sakhon of 191 bath (4.1 euro) per day hardly covers their expenses. In certain factories wages are far under the statutory minimum wage, some as low as 130 bath (2.8 euro) per day. For the migrant workers it is also a big problem that many deductions are taken from their wages. Even though they receive a wage slip, they do not understand why these deductions have been made since they cannot read the Thai language.

Another widespread problem is discrimination. Bonus payments, working hours, and rules for vacation and sick leave are often worse for the migrant workers. Many of them also have to pay a "broker" to get employed at the factory. In order to afford these expenses, many must borrow money. If they are lucky, they can borrow from friends, or otherwise they will have to take out loans at high interest, sometimes from supervisors at the factories where they are looking for a job.

There are, however, organisations in Thailand

that are working to improve the working conditions in the industry. With the help of the International Transport Federation (ITF), the Seafarers' Union of Burma (S.U.B.) was formed in 1991 in Thailand (in 1993 S.U.B. was officially associated with ITF). The reason that the labour union was formed in Thailand is that labour unions are not allowed in Burma and Burmese seafarers that have been in contact with ITF abroad risk punishment if they return to Burma.

S.U.B. is trying to help Burmese seafarers by meeting them in harbours outside of Burma. The labour union now has about one thousand members, but they cannot legally register in Thailand since it is forbidden for non-Thais to start labour unions in the country or to hold official positions in the unions. It was soon clear to S.U.B. that many Burmese in Thailand were working under tough conditions in fish factories and on fishing boats. So in 2002, S.U.B. helped to start Burma Fishery Workers' Union (BFWU) to organise workers in the fish processing industry, and one year later the Burma Fishing Seafarers' Union was started to organise fishing boat workers. Today the organisations have around one thousand members each.

With the help of S.U.B. in 2007, Fair Trade Center could conduct an investigation of the working conditions at three factories that deliver canned tuna fish to Swedish companies. The table below is based on information that was gathered through interviews conducted by Fair Trade Center and through questionnaires that were distributed by S.U.B. All of the interviews were conducted in secret places and the workers' anonymity was guaranteed. Only a few workers from each factory were interviewed. Even though they are not a representative sample, the results are still an indication of what problems there are at the factories.

The working situation at three Thai tuna fish factories

	Factory A	Factory B	Factory C
Number of workers interviewed	19*	5	4
Forced overtime	Yes	No	Yes
Fees to "brokers"	Yes	Nej	Yes
Working hours	10 hours/day 6 days/week	10 hours/day 6 days/week	10 hours/day 6 days/week
Discrimination	Yes	No	Yes
Wage deductions	Yes	No	Yes
Verbal abuse	Yes	No	Yes
Physical attacks	Yes	No	No
Knowledge of the code of conduct	No	No	No
Complaints about health and safety	Yes	No	No
Swedish purchasers that use the factory	B&S Foods Coop Ica Piwa Food	ABBA ICA	ABBA COOP ICA LANTMÄNNEN DOGGY

* Fair Trade Centers interviewed nine workers in March 2007, in November 2007 S.U.B. carried out interviews with another ten workers at factory A.

It is difficult to come to any conclusions about how socially responsible the Swedish companies are based on which of them have used the investigated factories during the past year, since they often switch suppliers and most of them use the same suppliers.

"The big price differences between different suppliers causes us to switch suppliers, since we only make purchases for 3-4 months at a time," says Erik Wirell, purchasing manager at Ica.

Factory A

Factory A is a large fish factory that belongs to the same owner as factory B. The factory is located in Samut Sakhon right next to factory B. In March 2007, Fair Trade Center met four women and five men through S.U.B. who work for factory A. In November 2007 S.U.B. interviewed another ten workers at the factory.

Fair Trade Center first contact with the workers from factory A was in March 2007 when we met nine workers in an apartment where three of the women live. The flat, which is located in a large building filled with identical flats, is no larger than 3 m x 4 m. Most of the people who live in the building work for the factory, but the building is owned by a private landlord. According to the workers factory A employs several thousand workers of which the majority are migrant workers.

All of them say that they had to pay a "broker" in order to get a job at factory A. They have paid between 8,000 and 10,000 bath (173.3 and 216.6 euro), which is about two months' wages. They say that they pay the broker, who then gives the money to a supervisor at the factory. But they do not believe that the managers of the factory are aware of what is going on. In order to afford to pay the fees, they borrow money from their friends, and some have to take out loans from somewhere else.

They make 192 (4.2 euro) per day and 36 bath (0.8 euro) per hour for overtime. Per month they make about 6,000 bath (230 euro) including extra payment for overtime etc. They pay 2,500 bath (54.2 euro) per month for their flat. The factory has a bus service for the employees, but the busses are overcrowded. The workers have to pay 100 bath

(2.2 euro) per week even if they don't use the bus, since the cost for the bus is automatically deducted from their wages. They get one T-shirt per year from the company. Each week they also receive a pair of rubber gloves (in certain departments every other week), and if they need more gloves they have to buy them for 36 bath (0.8 euro) per pair.

The workers say that the wage they receive for a normal working day is not enough to meet their needs. Only to buy food costs them about 75 bath (1.6 euro) per day for. They say they have to eat in the company's cafeteria and cannot eat outside of the factory even though it would be cheaper.

Those that work the night shift receive a bonus of 30 bath (0.6 euro) per night. The normal working hours of the night shift are between 19:30 and 4:30 and after that they usually do two to two and a half hours of overtime. One woman says that she has worked at the factory for six years and during that time has only worked the night shift. If she wanted to change shifts she would have to give up her job and reapply for a job at the factory.

Do you send money home to your families?

"Yes, we have to because our families are very poor. Sometimes we even send home 3,000 bath (65 euro) a month, but that is a lot of money for us so we can only do that sometimes."

Do you want to stay in Thailand?

"We want to move back to Burma, but we can't because of the political situation there, and besides there are no jobs in Burma."

How much do you work?

"After a normal workday of eight hours we have to work overtime. Each day we do between one to two and a half hours of overtime. If I refuse to, I don't get any wages for that day where I work," says a woman who puts tuna fish into the cans. She usually works six days a week but sometimes she works every day of the week.

Another woman who cleans the tuna says that if she refuses to work overtime one day then she isn't allowed to work overtime for seven days. This is a big problem since they need the overtime in order to make enough money. A man who cuts off the heads of the tuna says that in his department it is no problem if there is a day when they do not want to work overtime.

He says that the supervisors in his department always try to push them to work faster. If they succeed in meeting their quota before the appointed time, then the supervisor sets a higher goal for

them. When they cut the heads off the big fish, they have to be able to do 4,000 kg of fish per hour, and if they are smaller fish they have to cut 2,000 kg per hour. The others agree that the supervisors are always pushing them to work more quickly.

"Most of the supervisors are Thai. They don't treat Thai workers in the same way as the Burmese. The Thai workers get 195 bath per day, not 192 as we do. The Thai workers also have the opportunity to switch shifts. They also get to go to the bathroom up to 30 minutes per day while the Burmese can only take 15 minutes for toilet breaks during the day. We also get less compensation if we are sick. Even if we have a doctor's note, we only get compensation for 2-3 days if we have been sick for 10 days.

What do you think of this factory compared with other factories in the area?

"This factory is very bad. The supervisors always push us to work harder. Sometimes they scream at us and hit us," says one of the men. They agree that the only thing that is good about the factory is that the wages are paid on a weekly basis.

One woman tells of how she was hit by her supervisor a week ago. It happened when she moved from one department to another because there wasn't enough to do at the department where she usually worked. She was not used to the new work and was therefore working slowly. The supervisor there got angry and yelled at her and then hit her. He also called her department and told them to deduct a day's wages.

Do accidents happen at the factory?

"People have gotten stuck in the machines. Sometimes I work at a machine that removes the skin from the fish, and many times I have come close to getting my hand stuck, but so far no accidents have happened to me."

One of the group's friends had a cart full of fish fall on his foot and had to get three stitches. Two months ago a Thai group leader's arm got stuck in a machine when she was cleaning it. The same accident happened to a Burmese worker six months ago. According to the workers she only got one month's compensation and still has not recovered completely.

They say that they do not know of any health and safety committee at the factory, but that the managers often tell them to be careful. Twice a year they also show them a video about health and safety.

Do the purchasers ever inspect the working conditions at the factory?

“Yes, but we prepare two days before the inspections and during the inspections we do not have to work as much.”

Do the inspectors talk to you?

The group laughs and says that the inspectors never speak with any of the workers.

How old are the workers in the factories?

“Most are around twenty years old. They do not hire anyone who is over thirty-five years old. The youngest are fourteen or fifteen years old, but there are only a few who are that young. They have lied to the managers and told them they are eighteen so that they can get a job.”

Are there problems with safety where you live?

“Thefts are a problem, but there is nothing that we can do about that. We know that we can get robbed any time.”

Do you have a contract of employment?

“I don’t know. When we are hired, they just ask our name, age, our address in Burma and our parents’ name.”

Before I leave, I ask them what they would like to change at the factory.

“We want them to treat Thai and Burmese workers the same way,” one of them says. Another

adds that they wish they had the opportunity to organise a labour union at the factory.

In another building nearby we meet a woman there who lives in a house that is owned by factory A. She lives in a room together with twelve people. At least ten people live in the rooms and sometimes as many as sixteen. They sleep on the floor and buy a storage box for their personal items.

She likes living there because it is cheap and because it is forbidden for men to come in. She only pays 100 bath (2.2 euro) per month for the room. One problem is that the rooms often get robbed. She says that she has not seen any smoke alarm in the building and that they do not have a fire extinguisher. There is no emergency exit, only one entrance and exit, and many of the windows have bars on them.

She has worked in the factory for five years and says that she thinks it is okay. She only speaks Thai so the supervisors treat her better. Most of the Burmese don’t speak Thai as well as she does.

After Fair Trade Centers first published the results of this investigation in Sweden, the owners of factory A and factory B came out with a statement claiming that most of the reported abuses were incorrect. Fair Trade Center and S.U.B. have done new research after this and more workers have confirmed the findings in this report. In late 2007 workers reported some improvements at the factory, but during early 2008 we received new complaints about verbal and physical abuse at factory A.

Factory B

Factory B was founded in 1977 and belongs to the same owner as factory A. Today factory B has 6,416 employees, 4,500 of whom are women and 400 migrant workers. Ninety percent of the production goes to export. Factory B also has many of its own trademark products that are marketed in the USA and Europe. North America is their largest export market and stands for 40 percent of sales. Europe and Russia stand for 25 percent. The biggest customers in Europe are Tesco and Sainsbury.

The information about factory B was gathered when Fair Trade Center visited the factory and through interviews with the factory manager, sales and marketing manager, quality control manager and a regional marketing manager responsible for countries including Sweden. This information was

complemented with five employee interviews that were conducted in secret.³¹

WAGES

The workers are paid per day and make about 6,000 bath (130 euro) per month before overtime compensation and other bonuses. The employees get their wages every Saturday and also receive a wage slip. No deductions are taken from their wages. For overtime they make 36.5 bath (0.8 euro) per hour. They also receive 18 days of vacation per year. Thai and other workers are paid the same wages.

WORKING HOURS

Normal working hours are eight hours a day plus

two hours of overtime, six days a week. If the employees don't want to work overtime one day, they have to report this in advance but they can only miss working overtime once a week. At the factory there is a day and night shift, but the workers do not rotate between shifts. The normal working hours are ten hours a day, six days a week. Two of the workers say that they sometimes work 66 hours a week and one says that sometimes it is 72 hours a week.

According to the managers, it is common to work one hour of overtime per day. They also say that many switch between the day and night shift while others always work the same shift.

BROKERS

During Fair Trade Center's visit in Samut Sakhon³², a twenty-two year old Burmese girl who works at Factory B was interviewed. She had to pay 3,800 bath (82.3 euro) to get the job. Besides this she also had to pay 3,800 bath (82.3 euro) for her work permit. In order to afford this she had to borrow money from a friend. The other four interviewed workers at factory B did not, however, say that they had to pay money to brokers.

Factory B employs mostly Thai workers because they say that they work more efficiently and that it is easier to communicate with them. They recruit workers by setting up notices in town. The managers have heard about workers who pay in order to get hired, but they say that this does not happen in their factory. They pay the migrant workers' registration fees and the worker does not have to pay back that amount. In the staff department there is a person who speaks Burmese and all of the signs are also in Burmese.

WORK RELATIONS

There is no labour union in the factory but there is a so-called labour relations team. According to the managers, the team speaks directly with the workers, not just with the supervisors. In this way they can double check the information in case there is a dispute in the factory. The managers say that the workers can also come directly to management if there are any problems. What is discussed most often is conflicts with group leaders. The managers

also say that no big work conflicts have arisen at the factory and they do not have any problems with discrimination.

Group leaders are trained in how they should communicate with the workers. The managers say that problems with verbal abuse by the group leaders has decreased as a new generation of work leaders with higher education have been employed. This was confirmed by several employees, who say that there is an open atmosphere at the factory.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The company has a health and safety video and presentation that they show new employees. The workers say that there are good emergency exits and that the toilets are good and clean. There is also access to clean drinking water. They think that the factory is noisy, but say that they are provided with earplugs. Some accidents have taken place in the factory, but nothing serious according to them, and they feel safe at the factory. The factory has a sickroom and they say that it is easy to visit it.

One of the workers says that he sometimes uses strong chemicals that burn when they come in contact with his skin, and that sometimes gas leaks out of the walk-in refrigerator, making it hard to breathe.

The managers say that the biggest health and safety problem is that it is so hard to oversee so many people. That is why all of the new employees get information about safety procedures and all the staff are trained annually. They also have a health and safety committee with twenty representatives from the different departments in the factory. This has led to certain changes. The floor has been replaced to make it less slippery, for example. The most common accident at the factory is that someone punctures their skin with a sharp fish bone. All of the safety equipment is provided free of charge. The factory also has a suggestion box where they take suggestions from their employees.

The managers say that purchasers sometimes send third party inspectors to inspect the working conditions. The biggest complaint they have is that the working hours are too long. That is the main reason they have not been allowed to certify the factory according to SA8000.

31. One of the interviews was conducted by Fair Trade Center on February 21, 2007, others were conducted by S.U.B. on April 15, 2007.

32 February 21, 2007.

Factory C

Factory C has been around since 1979 and mainly produces canned tuna fish. The factory has a capacity of 150 tons per day. Fifty percent of the production is normal tuna fish (in oil or water), thirty percent is value-added tuna and twenty percent is cat food. Nearly all of the production is exported to the U.S. and Europe.

Information about Factory C was gathered when Fair Trade Center visited the factory and interviewed the quality control manager and the personnel manager. The information has been complemented with answers to a questionnaire that workers at Factory C answered. The questionnaire was prepared by S.U.B., who also gathered the answers.

The factory had both a personnel and environmental policy, but is not certified according to ISO 14 000. They plan to get ISO 22 000 certification for food safety in 2007. In total, 2,800 people work at the factory, where 80 percent are women and 550 are migrant workers.

WAGES

Thai and Burmese workers get the same wages. They are paid per day and they make between 4,000 and 5,200 bath (86.7 and 112.7 euro) per month. Including overtime and bonuses, they can make 268 bath (5.8 euro) per day. The basic wage is 191 bath (4.1 euro) per day, and they get a bonus for the night shift and if they work quickly.

All of the four interviewed workers said that 200 bath (4.3 euro) are deducted from their wages each month. Two of them don't know why since they do not understand Thai, while the other two say that it is for transport. One of the workers says that sometimes 600 bath (13 euro) is deducted from his wages but that he doesn't understand why. According to management, no deductions are made from the wages and all of the employees get a wage slip when the wages are paid.

WORKING HOURS

The factory has a day shift and a night shift and workers do not rotate between shifts. It is common to work ten hours a day, six days a week. The workers say that they do not have a choice in whether they want to work overtime or not. Two of the workers say that if they refuse then they are punished by not being allowed to work the next day.

BROKERS

All four of the workers said that they had paid between 5,000 and 10,000 bath (108.3 and 216.6 euro) to a broker with connections to the Thai supervisors. In order to finance this, the workers took out loans. Two of them borrowed money from a supervisor and paid 20 percent interest on the loan.

According to the managers, brokers are not used, but the migrant workers must pay for their work permits themselves. New employees are recruited by putting up notices in town. They are hired on probation for one month, after which they can be permanently employed.

WORK RELATIONS

One of the workers complained that the supervisors insult them and threaten to fire them. The factory managers say that they have previously had problems with supervisors who have been too harsh toward employees and insulted them, but that now they train them in treating the workers in a better way. Two of the workers say that they don't know if there is a union at the factory, the other two say that there is none. None of them know what a code of conduct is or has ever heard of one. The factory managers say that there is a labour union that has 1,400 members, but that there is no collective agreement. They describe the union as having a friendly attitude toward the company and say that no conflict has arisen with the union.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The managers say that the biggest accident risk at the factory is puncturing the skin with a fish bone. They say that there is no risk for accidents in handling and cleaning the machines since the employees are trained to do so in a safe manner. Last year one person had a cart roll over their foot, which was followed up with an accident report so that similar accidents would not happen again. There is also a health and safety committee with members from the different departments that meet once a month to discuss the situation in the factory.

Two of the workers think that the workplace is noisy and that it is hard to hear. Sometimes they use strong chemicals in their work that make it hard to breathe and that irritate their skin. They say that accidents happen sometimes but that they feel safe at the workplace.

Companies that import to Sweden

The main importers in Sweden are the big food chains Axfood, Coop and Ica who import canned tuna fish for their own product labels (like Euroshopper, Eldorado, X-tra and so on). There are also certain trademark products on the market, the largest being Abba, Piwa (sells tuna fish under the brand Buffé) and B&S Foods (sells tuna fish under the brand Pride and Chrystal). A smaller portion of tuna fish is also imported from the Philippines. One of the companies, Lantmännen Doggy, imports cat food only.

The cat food mainly consists of brown meat from tuna. Axfood, Ica and Coop also have their own brands in animal food, and the biggest competitors are Masterfood and Nestlé.

All of the companies that import tuna fish to Sweden and that Fair Trade Center has investigated require that the tuna fish be marked as “dolphin-safe” (see Appendix 2 for an explanation) by the Earth Island Institute (EII). EII monitors both the factories and the companies that purchase the fish.

COMPARISON TABLE, SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Company	Abba	Axfood	Coop	Ica	Lantmännen Doggy	Piwa	B&S
Trademark	Abba	Eldorado, Willys, Hemköp	Coop X-tra, Rainbow	Ica, Gottliv, Euroshopper	Kattuna	Buffé	Pride, Chrystal
Import per year in tons	645	800	480-600	-	400	300	200
Code of conduct	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
- Does the code contain ILO's core conventions	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
- Does the code limit maximum working hours	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Child labour forbidden	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Inspects its suppliers	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
Inspects all of its suppliers	-	No	No	Yes	-	-	-
Information for factory workers	-	No	No	No	-	-	-
Information on homepage	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

33. Yellowfin tuna and skipjack are the species mainly used.

ABBA SEAFOOD

Abba Seafood is a part of the Orkla group³⁴, Norway's largest privately-owned company listed on the stock market. Orkla had a turnover of almost 7 billion euro in 2006 and has three different areas of business: brand name goods, chemicals and financial investments.

Abba imports 3.1 million 200g cans of tuna fish each year (about 620 tons). The tuna fish is sold under the brand name Abba. The cans contain only tuna of the tongol variety that is caught locally in Thailand, especially in southern Thailand. They also import bags of tuna fish that are used in patés. Each year they also import 8,400 3-kg bags of tuna fish (about 25 tons per year³⁵).

SUPPLIERS

The tuna fish cans are imported from Thailand. All of the cans are marked with country of production and where the tuna was caught. In 2006, Abba received deliveries from two Thai suppliers, one of which was factory B. Both of these suppliers have delivered to Abba for over 10 years. Abba has also used factory C.

WORKING CONDITIONS IN PRODUCTION

Abba does not have a code of conduct for its suppliers, but in their purchasing contract they have a statement that no child labour is allowed in production and that Abba has the right to inspect this.³⁶ According to Abba, their suppliers only employ personnel over 18 years old.

How do you make sure that the requirements in the contract are met?

“Before we buy from a factory, we assess how well the factory is running and part of that is that I look at the rooms like the cafeterias, etc. Once we have connected with a supplier, we try to work long-term with them,” says Bengt Ahlström, who has been the quality control manager at Abba for 20 years.³⁷

“We do a scheduled technical audit on location either once a year or every other year. When we audit we look at issues of product safety as well as issues of environment, working environment, sustainable fishing and fishing methods. We always ask if the company is SA8000 certified and include that in our assessment.

In the technical audit, where importance is placed on product safety, we also assess the workers' changing rooms and the catering conditions. After the audit a complete assessment is made, after which the factory either passes or fails. We also have local representatives in Bangkok who can help us.”

What are the most common problems that you have found in production and what measures have you taken?

“At Factory B a pre-audit was done according to SA8000 and I know that they were criticised for having working hours that were too long,” says Bengt Ahlström.

“We are working long-term with our suppliers by pointing out areas they could improve in before they become problems. We encourage them to work more actively with special issues regarding how we manage our fishing resources. We also encourage them to get certified for working environment (SA8000) and outer environment (ISO 14001). So far it is not a requirement, but we use it as a factor when choosing suppliers.”

Do you have any idea of how things look at the sub suppliers, i.e. on the boats?

“We haven't come so far as to check on the working conditions on the boats. In connection with the technical audits, I do traces to see where and how the fish are caught. These go back to the fishing boat's

34. www.orkla.no

35. These consist of the Skipjack species that is caught in the western Pacific

36. From Abba's purchasing agreement: “Minimum age requirements: 1.1 The Seller guarantees that all persons employed in the manufacture of products, whether or not employed by the Seller directly or indirectly, are above the minimum age for employment within the jurisdiction of the Seller. Furthermore, the Seller also guarantees that the Seller complies with the 1973 ILO Convention No. 138 – “The Minimum Age Convention” – with respect to all persons employed in the manufacture of the products. 1.2 Abba or its authorised Agent is entitled to inspect the business premises of the Seller and the Seller's suppliers and in either case to include books and records concerning employment matters at any time without notice for the purpose of making enquiry as to whether or not the guarantee set out in clause 7.1 above is being complied with or not.”

37. All quotes are from Abba Seafood AB's Food Safety Auditor Bengt Ahlström (in writing on February 15, 2007 and by telephone interview on February 15, 2007).

“Captain’s Statement.” A Captain’s Statement always certifies that everything has been done properly when catching the tuna.

FAIR TRADE CENTER’S COMMENTS

At Abba’s suppliers there were problems for the employees. Abba should adopt a serious code of conduct regarding working conditions and actively follow it up. Abba should also put together information for its customers regarding working conditions in production.

AXFOOD (HEMKÖP OCH WILLYS)

Axfood is one of the largest food retailers and wholesale traders in Sweden. The company owns the Willys and Hemköp chains with over 200 stores, and also works with over 500 proprietor-run stores in the Hemköp and Willys chains, but also under the trademarks Handlar’n and Tempo. Axfood also operates wholesale trade through Dagab and Axfood Närlivs.³⁸

In total, Axfood imports ca 800 tons of tuna per year. The tuna fish is sold under the trademarks Willys, Eldorado and Hemköp. Axfood also imports and sells tuna fish of the brand Happy Tuna that is owned by the company that owns factory A and B. Willys and Hemköp’s tuna are of the tongol variety that is caught locally around the coast of Thailand. Eldorado’s tuna mainly consists of skipjack that is caught around the Philippines.³⁹

SUPPLIERS

Axfood imports most of its tuna from Thailand, where they only use one company and mainly a factory in southern Thailand (the same owners as factory A and B). The tuna fish that is produced under the trademark Eldorado is made in the Philippines. Eldorado’s cat food is produced in Thailand. Willys and Hemköp’s cat food is produced in France and contains less than four percent tuna fish.

WORKING CONDITIONS IN PRODUCTION

Axfood has an ethical code of conduct for the working conditions at its suppliers. The code includes maximum working hours, ILO’s core conventions and demands that the legal wages are to be paid.

Axfood has been on location at the Thai suppliers and inspected the working conditions. Upon inspection, there were observations that fire safety and possibility of escape from the lodgings weren’t adequate. They have asked the suppliers to come up with suggestions for how to improve these observations. They have still not done any inspections at the Philippine suppliers, but plan to do so in September.

38. <http://www.axfood.se/showdoc.asp?docid=453&setlanguageid=1>

39. Interview with Keneth Wall, PR manager and Lena Landen, project coordinator CSR 20/2 2007.

B&S FOODS

B&S Foods AB is an importer and wholesaler with a turnover of ca 300 million SEK per year.⁴¹ Their tuna fish is marketed under the trademarks Pride and Chrystal. B&S sells to wholesalers, chains in retail trade and the catering sectors. In total, a couple of hundred tons of tuna per year are imported from Thailand and the Philippines.⁴²

SUPPLIERS

In Thailand, B&S Foods uses mainly factory A.

WORKING CONDITIONS IN PRODUCTION

B&S Foods has no specific code of conduct for the working conditions in production.

“We don’t have anything about child labour in our contracts with the suppliers. Maybe the demand that no child labour should occur is something we could add to the contract,” says Åke Stigner, responsible for the import of tuna fish.⁴³

“We choose large, internationally known suppliers who have all the permits that are needed and that have been inspected by other large importers in Europe and the USA. Safe choices, in other words. We believe that their bigger customers do the inspections adequately and we just go along with that. That is what we have the capacity to handle.”

Åke Stigner travels to Asia each year and sometimes visits the factories where he can see how the workers are doing.

“It seems to be a terrible job to stand there in the heat and clean tuna.”

FAIR TRADE CENTER’S COMMENTS

At B&S suppliers there were serious problems for the employees. B&S should adopt a serious code of conduct for working conditions and actively follow it up. B&S should also put together information for its customers about the working conditions in production.

COOP

Coop Sverige operates the store chains Coop Forum, Coop Bygg, Coop Extra, Coop Konsum and Coop Nära. Coop Sverige has 370 stores and 420 consumer associations (independent stores). Coop Sverige is a daughter company to Coop Norden.⁴⁴ The purchase of tuna fish for all Nordic countries and stores is run by Coop Norden. A total of between 480 and 600 tons of tuna are purchased per year.

SUPPLIERS

All of Coop Sverige’s tuna comes from Thailand, where they have three suppliers. The factories used are mainly A, C and another factory in Thailand.

41. www.bsfoods.se

42. Only the tuna species skipjack is imported.

43. Interview with Åke Stigner B&S Foods on June 27, 2007.

44. The following store concepts are included in the Coop group: Coop Danmark: SuperBrugsen, Dagli’Brugsen, LokalBrugsen, Irma, Kvickly, Kvickly xtra och Fakta. Coop Norge: Coop Marked, Coop Mega, Coop Obs!, Coop Obs! Bygg and Coop Prix. (These stores are owned and operated by the proprietors.) Coop Sverige: Coop Forum, Coop Konsum, Coop Extra and Coop Nära.

WORKING CONDITIONS IN PRODUCTION

Coop has an ethical code of conduct for working conditions at the suppliers. The code includes maximum working hours, ILO's core conventions, and a demand that legal wages are to be paid.

“As regards checking up on the code of conduct, we haven't come as far as on the non-food side. We have done technical audits of the factories, but not all aspects of the code of conduct were investigated. If we were to see something suspicious, then of course we would look into it. The factory commits in writing to follow up our code of conduct. I travel down to Thailand once a year and often visit the factories at that time,” says Claus D. Larsen, purchasing manager for canned tuna fish in Coop Norden.

Do you have any control over the working conditions further up in production?

“We rely on the factories to purchase from good boats. We demand of the factories that they place demands on their sub suppliers regarding working conditions on the boats.

FAIR TRADE'S COMMENTS

Coop has a good code of conduct, but they must immediately begin to check that their code of conduct is actually being followed since there are serious problems at their suppliers. In order to bring about more improvements they should discuss with their suppliers if they can allow training of the employees. It is also important that they investigate the indications of discrimination that have come about in Fair Trade Center's study.

ICA

The Ica group is one of Scandinavia's leading retail trade companies, with ca 2,300 of group-owned and proprietor-run stores in Sweden, Norway and the Baltic. Ica-Sverige is a retail trade company with 1,397 group-owned and proprietor-owned stores in Sweden. Hakon Invest AB owns 40% of Ica AB and Dutch Royal Ahold NV owns 60%. Ica Sverige is responsible for purchasing tuna for Sweden, Norway, the Baltic and Holland. Ica sells tuna fish under many different trademarks: Euroshopper, Gott liv and Ica.⁴⁵

SUPPLIERS

Ica has imported tuna from Thailand for at least 25 years. For the most part they have purchased from the same suppliers this entire time. The big difference is that the number of factories has decreased. Ica has purchased tuna from factory B, factory A and additionally two factories in Thailand.

WORKING CONDITIONS IN PRODUCTION

Ica has an ethical code of conduct for working conditions at their suppliers. The code includes maximum working hours, ILO's core conventions and a demand that legal wages be. Ica has inspected the working conditions of all of their suppliers (they have undergone a pre-audit according to SA8000 that was done by BvQI).

Ica worked previously to get their suppliers certified according to SA8000, but ever since a few years ago, they have switched to encouraging their suppliers to get audited according to BSCI. Ica felt that SA8000 was difficult to enforce since it placed such high demands on the factories. Many suppliers declined since they saw right away that they would not be able to reach SA8000 certification.

“We have tried to get the factories certified according to SA8000. It has not been possible since they have working hours that are too long, and if it weren't for that, they would have attained SA8000. Now

45. Basically only the tuna fish species skipjack comes to Sweden under Coop's own trademark products. In Denmark and Finland there is also a brand with tuna fish of the tongol and yellowfin tuna species. Most of the fish comes from the western Pacific because of the season. Some tuna fish also comes from the Indian Ocean.

46. Quotes and information from an interview with Claus Larsen on February 15, 2007.

47. The tuna species skipjack from the western (tropical) Pacific and Indian Oceans are used in Euroshopper and "Gott liv". Yellowfin tuna, which has whiter meat, is used in the tuna that is sold under the trademark Ica. Sometimes when the factories get in tongol this can also be used, depending on what is cheapest.

we have switched to BSCI.⁴⁸ BSCI's entry demands are not as high, so it is easy to get suppliers to join at first, and then to work on improvements later. Instead of landing in an "either-or situation," we purchasers see that the companies get going more quickly and can improve at a pace that is fair for that company in particular. The disadvantage can be that it takes longer. Long-term is important. Continually switching suppliers does not work with BSCI.

You say that working hours were the obstacle to an SA8000 certification. What do the working hours look like today?

"Basically they work in two shifts with a 12 hour workday. It is impossible to keep food safety at its peak if the workers are tired. The Burmese are those who have been the most critical to working hour limitations because they have such short contracts and don't know if they will have a job next month."

None of your suppliers have labour unions. Do you think that this is something that is being actively resisted by management?

"For us as purchasers, it is a given that workers at a supplier should have the right to form labour unions. This is a result of the social conventions that are the foundation for Ica's purchasing work," says Erik Wirell.

Are you checking on the working conditions on the boats?

"The issue of the working conditions on the boats has come up, but it isn't something that we have the possibility of investigating. We have contact with and the possibility to influence the supplier first and foremost. We can only check on the suppliers' supplier very little or not at all. Long-term is important here as well. Eventually we will certainly have better knowledge of the conditions at the sub suppliers."

FAIR TRADE CENTER'S COMMENTS

Ica takes its work seriously and is the only company that has inspected all of its suppliers. Despite this, there are serious problems with their suppliers. In order to bring about more improvements, they should discuss with their suppliers if they can allow training of the employees. It is also important that they investigate the indications of discrimination that have come up in Fair Trade Center's study.

LANTMÄNNEN DOGGY

Lantmännen Doggy AB is the largest dog and cat food producer in Sweden. Lantmännen Doggy AB buys 400 tons of finished canned product from Thailand each year. They have imported cat food from Thailand for 15 years. They are the biggest seller of cat food in Sweden and sell under the trademark Kattuna.

SUPPLIERS

Lantmännen Doggy's main supplier is factory C.

WORKING CONDITIONS IN PRODUCTION

Lantmännen Doggy has no specific code of conduct for the working conditions in production.

"Factory C has a policy on 'worker welfare' where it is clearly stated that they follow the national guidelines for wages, working hours, workdays, holidays and more. Since we are aware of this policy and feel that factory C is a serious supplier, we have not felt it necessary to write the same thing in our contract," says vice manager Roland Magnusson.⁴⁹

"We have no reason to check on working hours or different treatment of Thai workers and migrant workers, since we feel that our supplier is very serious," says vice manager Roland Magnusson.⁵⁰

"We strictly demand that all production is done according to a European standard, which is why we demand certification according to ISO 9000 and ISO 14000. Our hygiene demands are very strict, which is

48. See Appendix 2. Glossary of terms for explanation of BSCI or www.bsci-eu.org.

49. E-mail from vice managing director Roland Magnusson to Henrik Lindholm on February 8, 2007

50. Interview with vice managing director Roland Magnusson on February 8, 2007

why it is a given that it should be a modern facility, so something like working conditions is a natural part of that.”

FAIR TRADE CENTER'S COMMENTS

At Lantmännen Doggy's suppliers there were problems for the employees. Lantmännen Doggy should adopt a serious code of conduct for working conditions and actively follow it up. Lantmännen Doggy reasons that they do not need a code of conduct since factory C has its own policy on working conditions. But it is very important that the purchasing companies clearly show their suppliers that they are not willing to forego basic rights. Lantmännen Doggy should also put together information for its customers about the working conditions in production.

PIWA

Piwa Food is an importer, seller and wholesaler that mainly sells speciality foods. Piwa's suppliers are food producers from all over the world. Piwa sells tuna fish under the trademark Buffé. In 2006, Piwa imported 15-20 containers of canned tuna fish, which corresponds to 300 tons of tuna.⁵¹ Lukas Cronberg, the purchasing manager for Piwa, says that the skipjack they sell is caught in Thai waters or the waters in the vicinity where Thailand has quotas. Piwa also imports cat food under the name Festi.⁵²

SUPPLIERS

Piwa imports from two suppliers, one in Thailand and one in the Philippines. Eighty to ninety percent comes from Thailand, where they use the company that owns factory A and B. According to the number on the tuna fish cans, they have been produced at factory A.

WORKING CONDITIONS IN PRODUCTION

Piwa does not have a specific code of conduct for the working conditions in production, although they do say that they visit the factories relatively often, on average twice a year. They have worked with factory A for 15-20 years. At the meetings, there are often discussions about how much the workers earn, the living standard based on wage levels and the age limit for workers.

“Our suppliers are so big that they follow the rules and laws,” says Lukas Cronberg, purchasing manager at Piwa. He also says that BSCI has also done an audit of the working conditions of the suppliers.

“The cost level in Thailand is a fifth of Sweden's, and the wages are less as well. Exactly how many bath they earn I don't know.”

“My impression is that it is a clean, fresh, well-lit and good workplace. Of course it isn't the greatest job in the world to clean fish, but it pays relatively well and the people who work with it have good working conditions.”

FAIR TRADE CENTER'S COMMENTS

At Piwa's suppliers there were serious problems for the employees. Piwa should adopt a serious code of conduct for working conditions and actively follow it up. Piwa should also put together information for its customers about the working conditions in production.

51. Information and quotes from an interview with Lukas Cronberg, purchasing manager

52. In the clean varieties, only the tuna species skipjack is used, whereas in the flake products, different tuna species are mixed. Products like tuna flakes can contain more than one tuna species, like albacore, skipjack, yellowfin tuna and tongol.

How can the situation in the industry be improved?

As a consumer it can be hard to know what to do when you read about the problems in the production of goods in low wage regions. The solution is not to stop buying the products that are produced in the developing countries. The workers there need the jobs that the export industry offers, and that is the case for those who work in the tuna fish industry as well. The best thing for us to do is to try to improve the conditions in these countries, not to boycott them.

It may seem overwhelming as a consumer to try to imagine having any kind of influence over these things, but the fact is that we have every opportunity to bring about positive developments in global trade. One way is to show the companies that these issues are important to you as a consumer. As a consumer you have the right to know under what conditions the items you buy are produced. It isn't any different than asking about price and quality. By asking the companies questions, you are showing that you care.

EXAMPLES OF IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK ARE:

- ▶ Are human rights being respected in the factories where your goods are produced?
- ▶ Does your company have a code of conduct or ethical guidelines for operations?
- ▶ How do you check up on the factories to make sure that they are following your code of conduct/ethical guidelines?
- ▶ Do workers earn enough to support themselves and their families on a normal working week? (Do workers earn a living wage?)

Often those who sell the product do not even know anything about the conditions of production. You can then turn directly to the company. Write a letter, e-mail or call the main offices. If the company has a code of conduct, ask how well it is followed. Other suggestions for what questions you can ask the companies can be found under Fair Trade Center's comments to the companies.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INDUSTRY

Solving the problems that exist in the production of canned tuna fish is a responsibility that is shared by the importing companies, the factory owners, the authorities in the countries of production and consumers. The best solution is for the countries where the production is taking place to adequately follow up their legislation, and for the factory to carry on a functional dialogue between employees and employers, for example through collective bargaining. Unfortunately, we are far from this solution today, and the import companies must also take greater responsibility for inspecting working conditions.

Social auditing of supplier factories does not lead to changes in and of itself – it just results in a list of the issues that need to be taken into consideration. In order to bring about change, a more far-reaching strategy is needed. The audits should be a part of an extensive and long-term program where a central component is teaching the employees about their work environment and what rights they have.

Social audits that haven't been well-planned can even have negative consequences, like when au-

dits have resulted in setting up employee “worker committees” that are not part of the labour union. Then all the labour union’s efforts risk being destroyed by the “yellow labour unions” controlled by the employers or by the state. An obvious risk is that superficial audits only lead to the companies making superficial changes.

One key aspect is for the employees and local union organisations to get involved in efforts to follow up the social audits. When the employees are a part of these efforts, then it can’t be controlled from above. When the workers contribute in this way, the result is that their demands and dissatisfaction come up on the agenda. If the employees are to participate, then it is also necessary that they have real employment contracts in a language that they understand and that they know what rights they have. It is also crucial that the employees are not punished by the company for participating in these processes, no matter what views they voice.

Social audits have to be followed up in such a way that the employees have the possibility of voicing their complaints. This should take place through union organisations first. But where there are no union organisations other methods can be used.

Codes of conduct are not effective if the employees do not know that they exist. Many companies that have had codes of conduct for a long time have not taken a single step in informing the employees working in the production that the codes exist. It is however crucial that such information is not controlled by the company but that, for example, labour unions have a possibility to teach the employees these things. According to the ILO, it has also been shown that the employees have the greatest amount of trust when their own organisations are the ones teaching them.

It is also crucial that companies’ purchasing strategies are associated with their codes of conduct. If the ordering company has purchasing methods that have no association with the ethical policy, then the code of conduct becomes meaningless. Openness and information should not just exist for the supplier companies and the employees, but also for the authorities in the countries in question.

IN CONCLUSION, IT CAN BE STATED THAT SOCIAL AUDITS SHOULD BE COMPLEMENTED WITH:

- ▶ A collaboration with local labour unions and other organisations

- ▶ Informing the suppliers’ employees about their rights
- ▶ Purchasers actively showing the suppliers that they welcome labour union organisation
- ▶ Giving an account of business and purchasing strategies
- ▶ Openness, where both companies and auditors give accounts of what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Many of the recommendations above come from the study *Looking for a quick fix – How weak social auditing is keeping workers in sweatshops*, published by Clean Clothes Campaign. The study can be downloaded from their homepage.

When the employees themselves get to discuss what their biggest problems are, low wages often emerge as the most important thing to improve. In association with this investigation, Seafarer’s Union of Burma organised a seminar along with workers from different factories in the fishing industry on the most important steps that need to be taken to improve the industry.

THERE ARE THREE THINGS THAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT..

1. Improve the minimum standards for all food workers regarding standards for minimum wage, overtime, working hours and breaks.
2. Give the workers the possibility of working with employee organisations whether Thai, Burmese or international, and remove restrictions against forming trade unions, both Thai and Burmese, in accordance with the democratic principle of freedom to organise, as long as the workers follow the Thai laws.
3. Give the workers access to training programs on health, safety and basic labour union freedom in the employees’ languages, so that their bargaining ability is strengthened.

Consumers don’t always have the opportunity to make demands because the companies are not very good at providing information on issues concerning the working conditions in production. Only three of the investigated companies, Ica, Coop and Axfood, offered information on their homepages. The companies must become better at giving consumers clear information, preferably starting in the store itself, so that consumers can make decisions based on their own values when they make their daily purchases.

Appendix 1.

Tuna

Tuna is actually an umbrella name for many different species of fish. Tuna is capable of making long migrations because, independent of the temperature of their surroundings, they can maintain a constant body temperature. This heat makes it easier for the blood to circulate to the muscles for swimming. No less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the body weight of the tuna consists of muscles. With the exception of the breeding season, tuna are basically always on the move.⁵⁴

SKIPJACK - KATSUWONUS PELAMIS

Skipjack can be found in the tropic and subtropic parts of the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean and the Atlantic. It forms large schools, often together with another tuna like the yellowfin tuna and bigeye tuna. As opposed to other tuna species, it has a short life cycle and probably only lives up to five years. The majority of the skipjack that is caught has already reproduced. Skipjack is the most common species of tuna and makes up over 50 percent of all of the tuna that is caught. Skipjack is used for example in Ica's Gott Liv and Euroshopper, Coop's Coop X-tra and Axfood's Eldorado.

YELLOWFIN TUNA - THUNNUS ALBACORA

Yellowfin tuna can be found in the tropic and subtropic parts of the ocean, where it forms large schools. The size of the fish that is caught varies from 30 to 180 cm. The species can be over two meters and weigh up to 200 kg. Yellowfin tuna is the second most common species that is caught and makes up 35 percent of all the tuna that is caught. Yellowfin tuna is used for example in Ica's Ica and in different flake products.

ALBACORE - THUNNUS ALALUNGA

Albacore can be found in the tropic and temperate oceans of the world, including the Mediterranean. Albacore reaches a size of 140 cm and can weigh up to 60 kg. Albacore is used in different flake products.

TONGOL - THUNNUS TONGOL

Can be found in the northwestern Pacific Ocean, the Red Sea, the coasts from eastern Africa to New Guinea and also the northern parts of Japan and around southern Australia. A season-dependent species that is mostly caught by small-scale fishing fleets in the waters near the Thai, Malaysian and Burmese coasts. There are also some local catches around the Indonesian islands. Tongol's white meat makes it popular in the canning industry. Tongol is used for example in Abba's canned products and in Axfood's Willys and Hemköp canned products.

BLUEFIN TUNA - THUNNUS THYNNUS

Bluefinned tuna can be found to the south in Europe along the entire Atlantic coast, the Mediterranean Sea and the southern Black Sea. Bluefin tuna are over-exploited and threatened today. The fish is very expensive and is mainly used fresh in sashimi or sushi.

54. Majkowski J, Global status of Tuna and Tuna-like Species, FAO Rome, 2007

Appendix 2.

Glossary of terms

The APC countries stands for Africa, Pacific and Caribbean countries. The APC countries are 77 of Europe's former colonies and of these, 40 of which are classified as some of the least developed countries in the world.

BSCI (Business for Social Compliance Initiative) is an initiative of European retail companies that have adopted one common code of conduct. Companies that become members have committed to purchasing two-thirds of all goods from BSCI-certified suppliers within three years. Suppliers get certified after a BSCI-approved auditor has inspected the factory. The advantage is that many companies now use the same code and all the companies that use one and the same supplier do not have to audit it. However, BSCI has gotten a lot of criticism, partly because they don't seriously involve the suppliers' employees enough and the suppliers have to cover all of the costs for improvements. The initiative is not living up to the demand of independent inspection since it is completely governed by the industry.

EII stands for Earth Island Institute, an American environmental organisation that certifies that tuna fish has been caught in a way that minimises the risk that dolphins have been harmed. However, the certification does not take into consideration any other aspects than the safety of dolphins.

ILO's core conventions are a minimum standard for working conditions all throughout the world. The eight core conventions uphold basic human rights in the workplace. ILO's conventions are :

Nr 29 – on Forced or Compulsory Labour

Nr 87 – on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise

Nr 98 – on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining

Nr 100 – on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value

Nr 105 – on the Abolition of Forced Labour

Nr 111 – on Discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation

Nr 138 – on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment

Nr 182 – on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the worst forms of Child Labour

ISO9000 is a quality standard that companies and factories can attain.

ISO14000 is an "environmental management" standard that can help companies minimise negative influences on the environment, follow relevant laws and improve their performance in the environmental area.

SA8000 is a factory certification started by Social Accountability International (SAI) that guarantees respectable working conditions in the factories. The factory is inspected by SAI-approved auditors to get SA8000 certification. The standard has high demands but has also gotten a lot of criticism for relying on factory inspections to too great an extent.

55. For more information see <http://www.lotcobistand.org/page/64>

56. For more information see <http://www.sa-intl.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageID=473>

Appendix 3. Burma

In 1948, Burma became an independent republic. After many politically tumultuous decades, the military junta called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) came to power in 1988 and abolished all of the state governing bodies that had been created in previous constitutions. A new constitution was promised, as well as a governing body chosen by the people in elections in 1990. In 1989 the military junta changed the name of the country to Myanmar. In the elections of 1990, the first multi-party election since 1960, the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won but was not allowed to come to power. In 1997 the SLORC was renamed the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), but this did not result in any change in the military junta's policies. That same year, Burma obtained membership in ASEAN and is also a member of ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) since 2004.

ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Burma is a country with rich natural resources whose economy has been destroyed after decades of tyrannical rule. This has caused the country to become one of the least developed countries in the world despite its excellent prospects and potential. One extensive problem is the country's large production of narcotics and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS.

VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Extensive and serious violations of human rights are occurring in Burma. Political arrests, forced labour and forced moves are examples of the transgressions that are taking place. There have been deep conflicts between the central power and the country's many ethnical minorities for a long time. The political pressure and the difficult humanitarian situation have led to a large number of refugees, both internally in the country and in the neighbouring countries.

The information above is from taken from the homepage of the Swedish ministry of foreign affairs.⁵⁷

CAMPAIGNS FOR A DEMOCRATIC BURMA

If you would like to get involved in these issues, there are several organisations working around the world to support the movement for democracy in Burma. The Burma Campaign in the UK has a good list of campaigns and organisations in different countries, please see: <http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/links.html>.

57. <http://www.regeringen.se:80/sb/d/2520/a/13747>

