



The University of British Columbia Sustainable Seafood Project
Assessing sustainability of SHRIMP purchasing at UBC
Executive Summary - May 2007

Shrimp exploitation is highly problematic in both ecological and social terms. We analysed recent records on shrimp purchases at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and reviewed methods of shrimp production and extraction. After assessing available options, our primary recommendation is that UBC food service providers should greatly reduce sales of all shrimp. Where business viability demands shrimp, they should be sourced in British Columbia (large gourmet shrimp) or the best North American fisheries (smaller salad and sandwich shrimp).

The UBC Sustainable Seafood project is a consortium that includes UBC Food Services, AMS Food and Beverage, Green College, Fisheries Centre, Faculty of Land and Food Systems, and UBC Sustainability Office¹. The partnership of students, faculty, and staff strives to make all UBC seafood purchases as ecologically, economical, and socially sustainable as possible. Having agreed on steps to increase sustainability of five other seafood products, the partners turned their attention to shrimp in September 2006.

Shrimp products are the most valuable seafood commodities traded globally, have an annual trading value of \$11 billion US, and come from both wild capture and aquaculture facilities. Both methods of shrimp production may have detrimental effects on ecosystems and the long-term economic viability of human communities. Nearly every coastal nation in the world sells shrimp. Currently, product traceability and accountability are very difficult to secure.

Wild-capture of shrimp comprises the most destructive fisheries. By-catch rates in trawlers range (conservatively) from 5-20 kg of non-target organisms for every kilogram of shrimp caught. In addition, bottom trawlers disrupt and damage ocean habitats. Some options may be slightly less damaging. Many North American shrimp trawlers, for example, use existing technology to reduce bycatch, and mid-water trawls have less impact on the ocean bottom.

Currently no options exist for the sustainable purchase of farmed shrimp. Shrimp farm operations are directly responsible for mangrove deforestation, introduction of exotic species, pollution from feed wastes and chemicals, and subsequent poisoning of coastal and inland aquatic environments. Shrimp raised in today's aquaculture operations are often fed more protein than they will ultimately yield. Moreover, protein inputs often come from other fisheries with their own unsolved sustainability issues.

Given grave concerns with all means of shrimp exploitation, UBC food service providers are encouraged to reduce the amounts of shrimp purchased and change the sources of their shrimp products. Shrimp should be removed from all UBC food service menus wherever possible. Shrimp products from Latin America and Asia should be phased out of purchasing entirely. North American sources are better options for small shrimp, because of their lower bycatch. Local B.C. shrimp that are trawled in midwater should replace the imported larger "tiger" prawns. Their consumption will assist local economies, reduce ecological issues related to long-distance storage and transport of goods, and support more ecologically-sound fishing practices. Their higher cost may be acceptable in the catering context in which they are sold.

¹ *This is a SEEDS initiative. The full report is available at <http://www.sustain.ubc.ca.seeds.html>*