

# Carrefour stops buying prawns from CP Foods following slavery revelations

French supermarket group suspends purchases from Thai company while it audits its complex supply chain

- Revealed: Asian slave labour producing prawns for supermarkets in US, UK

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**Felicity Lawrence**

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Carrefour is one of the four largest retailers in the world. Photograph: Christophe Ena/AP

Supermarket group Carrefour has decided to stop buying prawns from the Thai company CP Foods, following a Guardian investigation which revealed slavery in the supply chain.

The French retailer, which is one of the four largest in the world, announced that it had suspended purchases while it audited the complex chain. Other European retailers are reportedly vetting their own supply chain to verify whether slaves are involved at any stage in the process.

The Guardian [investigation](#) found that large numbers of men who have been bought and sold like animals and held against their will on fishing boats off [Thailand](#) are integral to the production of prawns sold in leading [supermarkets](#) around the world.

Carrefour said it strongly condemns the conditions and had decided to take action.

"As a precautionary measure, Carrefour has decided to immediately suspend its direct or indirect purchases from this company until light has been shed on the situation," the group said. "Carrefour, as it has done regularly, conducted in July 2013 a social audit of the company's processing plant, which revealed nothing abnormal at that time."

Belgian media identified more leading [supermarkets](#) as customers of CP Foods. Daniel Bral, the audit manager of one of the largest, Colruyt, told the Guardian that he had ordered a complete check of his company's tropical prawn supply chain. Bral said that Colruyt had bought prawns from CP Foods indirectly in the past through a trader when it had a problem with its normal supplies from India and Bangladesh but was not a current customer of CP.

Bral said he had decided to investigate the full chain as a matter of urgency, down to the origin of fishmeal supplied to its current prawn producers. "It's insupportable to have such a situation. It's no secret that working conditions in southeast Asia are very harsh but we did not know it was [as bad as] slavery; that's very shocking," he said.

CP Foods has said that it believed the right thing is to use its commercial weight to try to influence the Thai government to act rather than walk away from the Thai fishing industry, although it is putting in place plans to use alternative proteins in its feed so that it can eliminate Thai fishmeal by 2021 if necessary.

While it recognises that workers on boats are exploited, it added that the Thai department of fisheries continues to deny that unregistered boats are a problem. "We can do nothing and witness these social and environmental issues destroy the seas around Thailand, or we can help drive improvement plans. We are making good progress," it said.



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