



## **International RedManglar letter against WWF certification of shrimp acuaculture**

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### **Doctora**

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Since some time ago, peoples and communities that have always lived among and used mangroves, and Latin-American organizations that defend human rights and the environment, have witnessed, with ever increasing preoccupation, the processes that seek to certify industrial shrimping as responsible acuaculture.

The shrimp industry is responsible for the loss of thousands of hectares of coastal tropical and subtropical wetlands (mangroves, marshes and estuaries) in the countries where it has installed operations. It has generated innumerable environmental and social impacts, such as the loss of food sovereignty for thousands of families that inhabit coastal marine zones, the contamination of estuaries and fishing grounds, the loss of strategic habitats of great importance for biodiversity, and the loss of most valuable natural shock absorbers against climate change effects.

Industrial shrimping is responsible of systematic and recurrent violation of human rights of local populations. Citizens of many tropical countries have been the victims of violent actions committed by shrimp producing companies, which continue operating with impunity.

Brasil, Ecuador, Guatemala and Honduras are examples of countries where there have been murders associated to the shrimp industry. In Honduras, the number of people murdered with impunity in mangrove ecosystems, in events related with shrimp industries, ascends to 12.

Threats, persecutions and disappearances are common practices used by such companies to intimidate and terrify those who justly seek to defend collective rights and that denounce the illegalities of the industry.

Shrimp industrial aquaculture has settled operations in countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa, taking advantage, in the beginning, of ignorance and poverty amongst the people, and then of weak justice systems, the corruption that permeates in much of our countries and the

lack of monitoring capacities and control from government institutions that should protect our environment. This situation has contributed to the impunity that surrounds the environmental and social crimes that the shrimp industry generates.

The growth and expansion of industrial shrimping is responsible for the loss of one of the most productive ecosystems in our planet, one that represents only 1% of the world's "forests". Earth's mangroves are being lost at accelerated paces in the last decades.

More than 50% has been lost in the last 25 years, which coincides with the increase of shrimp pools. With the disappearance of mangroves, the livelihood of many local communities has been lost as well as the ecological basis that supports thousands of families that depend –directly or indirectly- on fishing, that collect shells, shrimp and other benefits offered by this important natural ecosystem.

The shrimp industry has accumulated an ecological debt and historical responsibility with ancestral communities and peoples of the mangroves, who have suffered for years the accumulative impacts of the loss and degradation of the ecosystem and the changes in land uses in order to satisfy the superfluous "needs of delicate palates" satisfied thousands of kilometers away from where these impacts are generated and suffered.

Industrial shrimping socializes the losses this monoculture generates while it privatizes the gains. The vast majority of the shrimp that comes from our countries is an export item. In Ecuador, over 95% of the production is exported, 75% of which goes to the USA while only 5% remains in the country.

Industrial shrimping is a high environmental and social impact generating activity, so it should never be viewed, and less, certified or regulated as a responsible activity. It does not bear the political, social or environmental conditions to provide it with the option of being certified.

The paradigm of certification of shrimp industry is the same as for other industries: it means washing the image of an industry that has devastated natural heritage of the people where it is installed, by trying to convey an vision of environmental responsibility for the consumers. The processes of certification sell the idea of protecting the consumers health, when in fact the residues, contamination and violation of human rights and other impacts remain in the countries where the industry operates.

Certifying the shrimp industry is an environmentally irresponsible process, immoral, antiethical and it lacks respect to local processes. Certification will only maintain and reinforce an unequal scheme, which will affect mainly the communities and benefit certain powerful sectors, disturbing local and national sovereignty.

Therefore the International RedManglar, organizations and community members and partners, reiterate our opposition and rejection of the intentions of WWF through ShAD (Dialogue of Shrimp Aquaculture) to certify industrial shrimp farming as a responsible activity.

We call fishing communities, ngo,s local populations and environmental organizations to publicly declare opposition and rejection of such an illegitimate process.

We exhort environmental authorities in our countries to defend sovereignty and the right of ancestral users, communities and the means of life of the mangrove peoples of the world.

For the protection of coastal marine ecosystems and community life!

International Redmanglar



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