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Shrimp Industry Welcomes Congressional Attention to Seafood Safety

Tarpon Springs, FL—The Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA) applauds increased Congressional actions to address the problem of imported farm-raised shrimp that are contaminated with illegal antibiotics and chemicals. The legislative attention follows the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) import alert regarding adulterated seafood products and public scrutiny of the FDA's ability to inspect 1% of food imports.

“Legislation to strengthen seafood safety, such as the Foreign Seafood Safety Act of 2007 introduced by Congressman Jones of North Carolina, is necessary to protect U.S. consumers,” explains John Williams, executive director for the Southern Shrimp Alliance. “It also protects the U.S. shrimp industry from the unnecessary financial hardships that could come if consumers lost faith in the healthful benefits of wild-caught shrimp due to the illegal practices of unscrupulous shrimp farms overseas.”

The FDA's Import Alert on Chinese seafood was issued on June 28, 2007 after repeated findings that farm-raised seafood imported from China were contaminated with unapproved animal drugs or food additives from October 2006 through May 2007. Chinese shrimp products are now subject to “detention without physical examination” (DWPE), which means that U.S. importers must secure documentation from a private lab that products meet U.S. food safety standards before they can enter the U.S. market. Once importers demonstrate that five consecutive shipments are free of violations, the shrimp from that Chinese company are free of the import alert and again subject to the minimal inspections of FDA.

“When the United States fails to enforce our food safety laws, it becomes a much more desirable market for contaminated products that would be rejected from other major markets,” stated Williams. “SSA appreciates actions Congress is taking to make the U.S. food safety system more similar to those of other major markets for shrimp, such as the EU, Japan, and Canada.”

SSA is committed to working with Congress and the FDA to bring enforcement of food safety laws in the United States up to the levels found in the European Union, Japan, and Canada.

SSA is a non-profit alliance of members of the shrimp industry in eight states committed to preventing the continued deterioration of America's domestic shrimp industry and to ensuring the industry's future viability.