

Labeling for Lent: Consumers Want the Choice to Buy Slave-Free Seafood

“Together with the social responsibility of businesses, there is also the social responsibility of consumers. Every person ought to have the awareness that purchasing is always a moral – and not simply an economic act.”

— Pope Francis, World Day of Peace, January 1, 2015

This past Lenten season, the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking* (CCOAHT) embarked on a campaign to combat human trafficking in seafood supply chains. As Catholics, our faith calls us to fight human trafficking, as it is an assault on the dignity of the human person.

CCOAHT believes that most consumers care about the supply chains of the products they buy, and that when given the opportunity, would preferentially chose to buy slave-free seafood. Currently, consumers are not given all the information they need to make moral purchasing decisions. CCOAHT intends to ask seafood producers, distributors and retailers to make public, through packaged product labeling, their efforts to fight human trafficking in their product supply chains.

“As a follower of Jesus I feel it is vital that we care about our brothers and sisters, especially those who bring our food to our tables.”

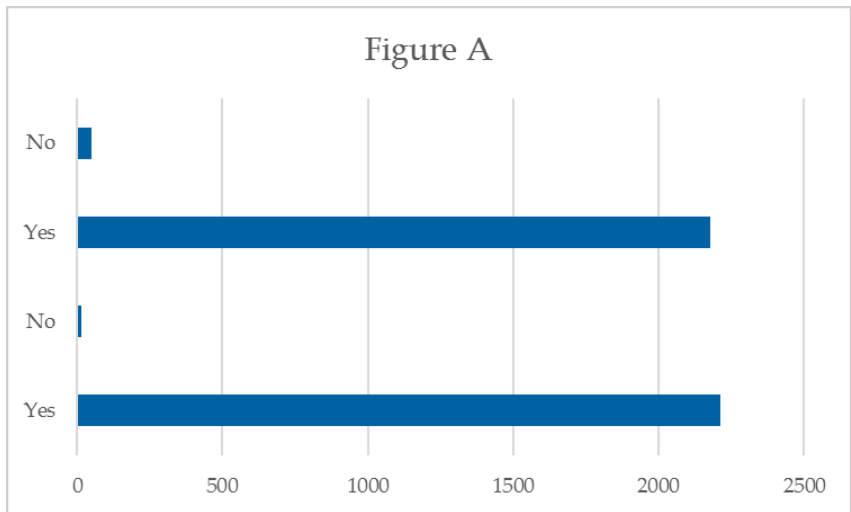
-Survey Participant

To support this ask, CCOAHT distributed a survey to its networks, and over 2,200 people responded. The results showed that over 99% of consumers want companies to take steps to engage in ethical and humane business practices, 98% want their seafood products to be labeled, and 97% said labels would influence their purchasing decisions.

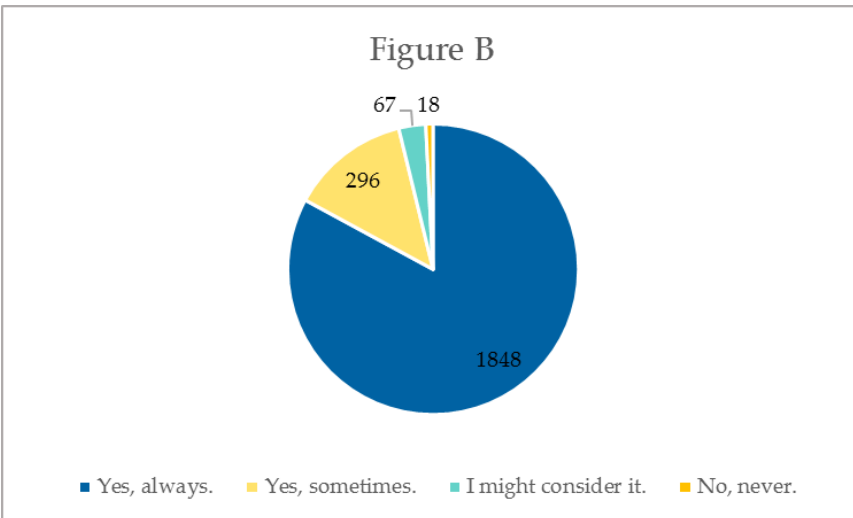
*CCOAHT is a nationwide coalition that represents religious orders and organizations, and is a key leader in the Catholic struggle against human trafficking in the United States.



When asked if they would like seafood companies to include a label on their packaged products designating that the company is taking steps to eradicate human trafficking and forced labor in its supply chain, 2,179 survey participants supported such a measure (only 50 disagreed). -Figure A



2,214 survey participants, when asked, said they would like seafood companies to have policies in place that prohibit companies from doing business with other companies engaged in human trafficking or unethical foreign labor recruitment practices. Only 15 survey participants dissented. -Figure A



“I welcome ALL information that would help me make wise decisions about my food purchases that are congruent with my ethics and justice beliefs.”
-Survey Participant

Finally, when asked if seeing this type of label on a seafood product would impact their decision to purchase it, 2,144 participants said it would affect their purchasing decisions, 67 people said it could possibly influence their decisions, and only 18 said it would not affect their purchases. -Figure B

Through labeling, consumers can make educated purchasing choices that help eradicate human trafficking. Together, we can advocate for better consumer labeling and create fishing supply chains that are slavery-free.