

## **FDA rejects much imported seafood containing 'filth'**

"Don't wait until you get sick to start ask questions about where your shrimp is coming from," cautions David Veal, president of the American Shrimp Processors Association, which is based in Biloxi.

This comes after a new U.S. Department of Agriculture analysis shows the Food and Drug Administration rejects thousands of imported seafood shipments each year because the fish is unfit to eat.

Between 2005 and 2013, nearly 18,000 shipments were refused entry into the United States for containing unsafe levels of "filth," veterinary-drug residues and salmonella, the ASPA said.

"Filth" is used to describe anything that shouldn't be in food, such as rat feces, parasites, illegal antibiotics and glass shards. Salmonella can make consumers sick, leading to hospitalization and even death.

"The safety of imported seafood clearly continues to be of significant concern, based on the number of shipments refused by FDA," the USDA said in a summary of its findings.

The FDA is responsible for inspecting food imported from foreign countries, but the ASPA said in a press release the agency has the staffing to inspect less than 1 percent of the 1.2 billion pounds of shrimp imported each year.

The ASPA, formed in 1964 to promote the domestic wild-caught shrimp-processing industry, represents companies that process about 75 percent of the shrimp from the Gulf and South Atlantic.

The group is encouraging shrimp buyers to choose wild-caught domestic shrimp, which the organization says have fewer bacterial and chemical contaminants and support millions of American jobs.

We live in a world where we embrace free trade, Veal said, and blindly accept that it's the best.

"And it's not," he said. "Look at the bag," and make a conscious choice.

Shrimp is the most popular seafood in the United States, and 90 percent is imported. According to the report, Indonesia and Thailand account for about one-fifth of shrimp

refusals. The two countries also are among the largest exporters of shrimp to the United States.

Veal said, "We hope shrimp exporters will take a more proactive role in assuring that suppliers adhere to laws designed to protect the people who buy their products."

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