

U.S. lawmakers request probe on impact of illegal seafood imports

Senior House of Representatives Democrats on Thursday asked the U.S. International Trade Commission to investigate the impact on the economy of “unfair competition” from illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) seafood imports from China and elsewhere.

Such imports account for up to 31% of the global catch of fish, at an estimated value of \$23 billion, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal and fellow committee member Earl Blumenauer said in a letter to the ITC.

The request for a probe comes a week after the United States and China reached agreement on a Phase 1 trade deal to defuse trade tensions and scale back tariffs that have been a drag on global economic growth.

“IUU fishing contributes to the overexploitation of fish stocks, threatens the livelihoods of coastal communities, jeopardizes food security, and harms marine ecosystems,” the lawmakers said in the letter. It also creates “unfair competition for U.S. fishermen as imports account for 90 percent of U.S. seafood consumption.”

Neal and Blumenauer said China, the largest seafood trade partner of the United States, was ranked as “worst among 152 coastal countries based on the prevalence of IUU fishing and the country’s response to it.”

The lawmakers urged the ITC to investigate the size, scope, supply chains, pricing pressures, and potential economic effects of the problem, as well as details about the prevalence of IUU products in the U.S. import market.

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