

Eating Shrimp

Why we care

Shrimp is the most popular seafood in the United States. But about 90 percent of shrimp sold in the U.S. comes from Asian or Latin American farms where antibiotics and pesticides (many of which are illegal here) are heavily used, resulting in antibiotic-resistant bacteria and chemical residues on the shrimp. To make room for these farms, coastal mangroves—the salt-tolerant trees and shrubs with stilt-like roots that form dense thickets along tidal shores—are destroyed. More than 50 percent of the world’s mangroves that filtered water, prevented flooding, and provided food and shelter to indigenous people, have been lost. After an average of seven years, the ponds become so polluted with shrimp waste and chemicals that shrimp producers move on to build new ponds.

Shrimp feed is made of fishmeal produced from wild-caught fish. In some cases, producing just one pound of farmed shrimp can require 2.8 pounds of wild fish. Unfortunately, ocean trawling for wild shrimp isn’t much better. The massive nets used in trawling pick up “bycatch”—often in ratios as high as 20:1. Many of these unintentionally caught creatures are dead or dying when they are thrown back into the water.

Simple, positive steps

- Favor small pink shrimp from Oregon rated as “Best Choice” by [Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch](#).
- Ask for wild-caught shrimp from the Gulf of Mexico, rated “Good Alternative.”
- Whole Foods certifies sustainably farmed white shrimp from Thailand.
- Visit [Food and Water Watch](#) for more information on industrialized shrimp production.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.