



December 18th 2015

Open Letter Requesting Investigation into Exploitative Migrant Worker Conditions in Thai Poultry Export Factories

To:

Minister of Labour

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Minister of Social Development and Human Security

President, Thai Broiler Processing Exporters Association

Recently, a joint research report was published by Finnwatch and Swedwatch, two Nordic corporate watchdog organisations, focusing on serious challenges faced by migrant workers in the poultry industry exporting from Thailand to Europe.¹ The report was yet another detailed investigation highlighting exploitative conditions faced by many migrant workers in Thailand's labour intensive industries.

Rights violations reported by 98 Myanmar and Cambodian migrant workers from 4 poultry export companies interviewed by the Migrant Worker Rights Network (MWRN) for this research included confiscation of worker's personal documents, unlawful deductions from workers' salaries, excessive recruitment fees and a widespread failure to adhere to Thailand's Labour Protection Act 1998. Some of these violations are International Labour Organization (ILO) indicators of forced labour and human trafficking.

Finnwatch, MWRN, the State Enterprise Workers Relations Confederation (SERC) and Swedwatch welcome the immediate response of the Ministry of Labour in beginning important dialogue with major Thai poultry export companies and the Thai Broiler Processing Exports Association regarding the findings of this joint report.² We appreciate the public statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs clarifying important steps the Thai government is already taking to tackle issues of exploitation and promote the rights of migrant workers in Thailand.³ We also welcome commitments from investigated companies to respect migrant worker rights.⁴

Finnwatch, MWRN, SERC and Swedwatch however would like to highlight three important issues for your further consideration in relation to this reports, as follows:

– An adequate response to these research findings outlining specific instances of rights ex-

¹ See http://www.swedwatch.org/sites/default/files/tmp/76_thaikyckling_151123_ab.pdf

² See http://minister.mol.go.th/ewt_news.php?nid=967&filename=index

³ [See <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/media-center/14/62675-Progress-on-Combating-Human-Trafficking-in-Thailand.html>]

⁴ [See <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/777685/fresh-labour-abuse-claims-spark-probes> and <http://www.cpfworldwide.com/en/media-center/news/view/603>]

ploitation in major Thai poultry export establishments still requires a thorough investigation into the allegations by all concerned agencies within the Thai Government. The findings of such an investigation, conducted in a timely manner, should be published. Appropriate legal enforcement should be undertaken and uncovered rights violations fully remedied.

– Irresponsible recruitment practices clearly contribute greatly to the exploitative situation migrant workers interviewed for this Finnwatch/Swedwatch joint research project outlined. This once again highlights how the Thai Government needs to urgently develop and implement specific long-term in-bound migration policies and regulations, based on international labour and human rights standards, in response to this concerning situation that continues to place migrant workers at high risk of human trafficking, forced labour and debt bondage.

– Social dialogue between the government, industry actors, worker representatives and civil society is key to overcoming challenges faced by migrant workers both in the poultry industry and in other labour intensive migrant employing sectors of the Thai economy. We encourage the Thai Government and the Thai Broiler Processing Exporters Association in particular to develop industry improvement programmes based on social dialogue and backed up by effective and transparent enforcement of all related laws.

Today Finnwatch have launched an English translation of its previously published Finnish language research report, *'Employment available in exchange for debt'*⁵, focusing in more detail on worker conditions reported in the four poultry export companies studied for this research project and containing detailed recommendations to the companies concerned, Thai industry associations, companies that purchase broiler from Thailand, auditing schemes and Finnish decision makers. A detailed set of recommendations to address migrant worker exploitation in the Thai poultry export industry can also be found in Swedwatch's published English language report *'Trapped in the Kitchen of the World'*.⁶

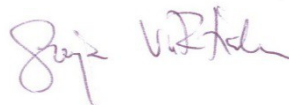
Finnwatch's previous reports on poor migrant worker conditions in Thailand's export industries including tuna-processing, fruit-processing, glass and rubber gloves also contain further detailed recommendations on addressing these challenging conditions.⁷

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

European Organisations

1. Sonja Vartiala
Executive Director
Finnwatch



2. Henrik Fröjmark
Acting Director
Swedwatch



⁵ See <http://www.finnwatch.org/images/pdf/chickenproductionThailand.pdf>

⁶ See http://www.swedwatch.org/sites/default/files/tmp/76_thaikyckling_151123_ab.pdf

⁷ See <http://www.finnwatch.org/en>

Organisations in Thailand

1. Sein Htay
President
Migrant Worker Rights Network

Sein Htay

2. Sawit Keawan
General Secretary
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