



News Release

Thai Union leads in opting for zero recruitment fees policy - a major step towards eliminating potential abuses of labor and human rights welcomed by migrant rights group.

28 April 2016, Bangkok, Thailand, Thai Union Group Public Company Limited (TU), the world's largest shelf-stable tuna processor and owner of a portfolio of leading global seafood brands, announced today that it will eliminate recruitment fees for all workers in its factories and processing plants, effective immediately for all future recruitment of workers both from within Thailand and also from overseas.

Thai Union's workforce in Thailand is composed of workers primarily from Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia, recruited locally or directly through formal channels engaging licensed recruitment agents in Cambodia and Myanmar.

The move follows Thai Union's continued development of an ethical migrant worker recruitment policy and has been welcomed by the Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN), whose mapping of all Thai Union's factories and processing plants during 2016 highlighted challenges in recruitment as requiring an urgent response.

In recent months Thai Union has focused on reducing the potential for abuse and extortion by agents and brokers in recruitment of migrant workers. By committing significant resources and time to dealing directly and building stronger relationships with recruitment agents in Cambodia and Myanmar, Thai Union has been able to map out recruitment processes more effectively, with MWRN providing oversight and supervision, thereby reducing costs and complexities.

Commenting on the initiative, **Dr. Darian McBain, Global Director of Sustainable Development said:** "Thai Union's ethical migrant recruitment policy has already been applied to the use of agents for all migrant worker registration processes in Thailand, such that our workers cover no additional costs should Thai Union chose to utilize agents for these processes. This policy will now, effective immediately, be extended to all foreign recruitment in 2016."

"One of the key platforms in developing a truly sustainable future is the need for all employees to have access to safe and freely-chosen employment. Debt bondage resulting from recruitment has no place in our workplaces," said Dr. McBain.

"This initiative is the result of a shared commitment to improving working conditions for all our staff. We have led the way in adopting stringent policies and rules within the Thai seafood industry to show everyone that these changes are possible, but it is essential to have partners such as MWRN who can help us see the workplace through the eyes of our employees."

"We will continue to take initiatives to eliminate potential for abuses of labor and human rights in our workforce as and when we find them."



MWRN international affairs advisor Andy Hall said that Thai Union was moving openly, cooperatively and quickly to address MWRN's remaining concerns regarding working conditions of its workers. MWRN has recently completed factory mapping exercises across Thai Union Manufacturing (TUM), Thai Union Group PLC factory (TUF), Thai Union Seafood (TUS) and Songkhla Canning Company (SCC), with complete transparency and open access during site visits alongside full cooperation in sharing all internal documents, audit materials and information relating to key areas of workers conditions.

"Not only have MWRN's team of migrant worker leaders had an opportunity to observe positive practices which benefit Thai Union's workers, but we also found strong cooperation and a willingness to fix compliance and welfare concerns we raised," said Mr. Hall.

"MWRN raised our concerns regarding transparency and cost involved in overseas recruitment processes, and we are delighted Thai Union has agreed with us to follow the international movement towards responsible business practices by adopting a zero recruitment fees policy. We continue to engage Thai Union's management closely concerning other issues highlighted in our mapping, including the need to develop stronger workplace social dialogue and ensure a living wage."

Thai Union has been working with MWRN's leadership since 2013 to address migrant worker concerns about conditions Thailand's major export factories. Since January 2016, Thai Union and MWRN formally launched a cooperation project to validate progress in addressing remaining concerns in migrant workers conditions in these factories.

Additionally, Thai Union works in close collaboration with Issara Institute, an independent NGO based in Asia tackling issues of human trafficking and forced labor in global supply chains through data, technology, partnership, and innovation. Together, Issara and Thai Union are working to use technology such as hotlines and migrant-focused smartphone apps to increase visibility of labour risks across their supply chain, and capture feedback from thousands of workers to understand how their working conditions could be improved.

Dr Lisa Rende Taylor, Issara Institute's Founder and Executive Director, commented on this policy and stated: "Thai Union, in partnership with Issara, is already pioneering the use of a proactive labor monitoring system across their supply chain, and through this they are empowering worker voice to understand exactly how migrant recruitment and management systems could be improved. Their commitment to zero recruitment fees is exciting, since recruitment fees are a key risk factor of risk of debt bondage, and are something that is extensively tracked through Issara's inclusive labor monitoring system. We are optimistic that the lives of tens of thousands of migrant workers could be positively impacted in the coming months, and hope that other industry players make a similar commitment to migrant rights in such concrete terms."

###

About Thai Union Group PCL (TU):

Thai Union Group PCL is the world's seafood leader bringing high quality, healthy, tasty and innovative seafood and value added products to customers across the world for almost 40 years.



Today, Thai Union is regarded as the world's largest producer of shelf-stable tuna products with annual sales exceeding THB125 billion and a global workforce of over 46,000 people who are dedicated to pioneering sustainable, innovative seafood products.

The company's global brand portfolio includes market-leading international brands such as Chicken of the Sea, John West, Petit Navire, Parmentier, Mareblu, King Oscar, Century, and Rügen Fisch and Thai-leading brands Seialect, Fisho and Bellotta.

Our vision is to become the world's most trusted seafood leader and as a company committed to innovation and globally responsible behavior, Thai Union is proud to be a member of the United Nations Global Compact, and a founding member of the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF).

Its work in sustainability has been recognized by its inclusion in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices (DJSI) Emerging Markets in 2014. In 2015 Thai Union was listed in the index for the second year in a row with a 67 percent increase in its overall score driven by improved performances across its environmental, economic and social criteria.

For further information and any media inquiries:

For further information, please visit: www.thaiunion.com
or <http://www.thaiunion-sustainability.com/>

For any media inquiries:

Ms. Wisaka Chantakit
Deputy Department Manager (CSR Communications)
T: 66 (0) 2298 0024 # 4422
M: 66 (0) 81 845 7316
E: Wisaka.Chantakit@thaiunion.com