

Spanish and Portuguese canners show good prospects

Representatives of the National Association of Manufacturers of Canned Fish (ANAFACO) and the Association of Manufacturers of Canned Fish of Portugal (ANICP) met in Vigo to analyze the current state of the fishery and aquaculture product processing industry as well as its future prospects.

According to Juan Manuel Vieites, ANFACO general secretary, the cannery sector regains confidence in the future. And its forecasts suggest it will normalize in the coming years, particularly in Spain in 2016, after a few years when exports increased and profitability improved.

Among the topics discussed at the meeting, attendees talked about the mistakes that have been detrimental to the sector. Trade agreements of the European Union (EU) with third countries were cited, and the error made by the EU Trade Commissioner, Karel de Gucht, with agreements such as that of Papua New Guinea, among others. The consolidation of EU regulations was also mentioned.

However, the representative of the Spanish canners was hopeful as to the latest news that has appeared, such as the EU decision to halt the agreement with Thailand. He also appreciated the agreement signed with the United States.

Vieites mentioned the report released by the US on the exploitation of human beings in which Thailand is leading, which he said confirmed the allegations that the industry had been repeatedly making.

Another of the topics discussed was the situation of the Common Fisheries Policy, of the Common Market Organisation (CMO), the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF), harmonization of the existing legislation and improving consumer information.

About the FEMP funds, amounting to EUR 5,749 million, of which Spain will take about 20 per cent and 7 per cent will be for Portugal, representatives of the fisheries sector in both countries agreed that it is a very important aid to the fisheries and aquaculture manufacture and marketing industry. It must be noted that the manufacture sector in the Iberian Peninsula represents 75 per cent of the production total value and 41 per cent of employment in the EU.

Moreover, canners highly value the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Markets, something the industry has long claimed because they believe it will contribute to dignify the EU market.

In Vigo ANFACO and ANICP representatives expressed their intention to go on processing in the EU, mainly in the countries of the Iberian Peninsula, and value firms located in it. Therefore, they asked unions for wage moderation in order to compete in internationalized markets, create jobs and maintain the structures in the EU. And they request support from administrations as to internalization and innovation in order to regain growth.

Overall, both sectors request EU legislation to homogenize. Vieites referred to a country, without mentioning it, which intends to pass specific legislation, contrary to the scientific opinion of the Health and Food European Agency, which could lead to comparative grievances and difficulties in a single market intended to be designed.

For his part, ANICP Secretary General Dr Castro e Melo acknowledged that 2013 was the best year for the sector, where exports accounted for 65 per cent of total production.

After stressing that it is important for community authorities to take into account the fact that in the Iberian Peninsula there are 705 canneries for the sector to be supported, he ensured Portuguese canners know how to compete, and want to do so, but with the same rules as third countries.

In the same way as his ANFACO counterpart, ANICP Secretary expressed satisfaction about the cancellation of agreements with Thailand by the EU.

On being consulted by FIS on whether the Spanish government has the intention to raise the value added tax (VAT) for fishery products, Vieites said the VAT hike is not on the government's agenda. In this respect, he reported that all business organizations in the fisheries sector have sent notes claiming this tax must not increase.

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