

Spanish canneries request Brussels equality of condition

The [National Association of Manufacturers of Canned Fish and Shellfish](#) (Anfaco-Cecopesca) and [Eurothon](#), an European organization representing the tuna industry, are pressuring the European Commission (EC) for fisheries agreements with third countries to be based on equal terms to ensure fair competition in the EU market.

A comparison of the figures relating to labour cost show that the Spanish canning industry spends 15 times more in labour on average than Asian countries, based on that monthly labour costs in the sector are EUR 2,000 in Spain, eight times more than the Asian country that pays the higher salary, Thailand (EUR 250).

With respect to other Asian countries, Anfaco stresses that Spanish companies pay 13 times more than the Chinese (EUR 150), 20 times more than the Philippine (EUR 100), 22 times more than the Indonesian (EUR 90) and up to 33 times more the Vietnamese (EUR 60) seafood processors.

The European associations also point out marked inequalities with other third countries such as Mauritius and Seychelles, where labour and labour costs in the processing sector are 75 per cent lower than in Spain (about EUR 500, as in Brazil), while in Ecuador and Guatemala the difference increases to 80 per cent (EUR 400).

This situation threatens Spanish socioeconomic sustainability of the sector, Anfaco-Cecopesca complaints.

"This inequality is a very important competitive difference," association president, Juan Vieites highlights.

Spain is at the head of EU tuna catches, with 68 per cent and a volume of 239,000 tonnes, followed by Italy with 20 per cent and 69,000 tonnes, while France ranks third with 6 per cent and 20,000 tonnes. The production of canned seafood in Spain is approximately 330,000 tonnes, of which 70 per cent correspond to tuna.

The two organizations argue that the competitiveness of Spanish and the Community tuna industry has a direct relationship with the different EU policies. Therefore, they insist on the need for "balanced" trade agreements that take into account the conditions under which the EU fleet operates when it comes to granting tariff benefits to third countries, facilitating market entry of foreign products.

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