

# Fisheries exports fall 34pct, affected by shipment suspension to EU

The value of Brazil's seafood exports fell 34 per cent year-on-year in the first quarter of this year to USD 28.3 million, after three consecutive years of growth.

The volume exported also experienced a sharp decline, attributed largely to the self-imposed suspension for exports of fishery products to the European Union, a situation that is creating tension between entrepreneurs in the sector and the federal government.

Industry representatives explain that the decision of the Brazilian Government to suspend the issuance of sanitary certificates for fishery products destined for the European economic bloc, in force since January 3, is not only preventing sales to Europe, but affects all the market.

The measure was announced on December 26 by Luís Rangel, Secretary of Agricultural Defense of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA), with the aim of avoiding the possible unilateral suspension by the EU.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Foreign Trade (Secex / Mdic), among the main exporting states, the greatest drops in export volumes were registered in Pernambuco (-94.7 per cent), Espírito Santo (-89.4 per cent), Rondônia (-88.5 per cent), Bahia (-79.4 per cent), Rio Grande do Norte (-74.7 per cent), Rio Grande do Sul (-61.5 per cent) and Santa Catarina (-38.9 per cent).

While this decline should not be attributed exclusively to the closure of the European market, employers consider the current situation is alarming.

Paulo Gonçalves, director of the Union of Cold and Fishing Industries of Ceará (Sindfrio / CE), argues that the suspension of exports could hinder lobster fishing, which begins in June, after the closure period, and affect the trust on the country.

The measure adopted by the federal government is also causing other collateral damage, say representatives of the sector.

According to president of the National Fishing and Aquaculture Association (CONEPE), Alexandre Espogeiro, other importing countries of Brazilian fish are already willing to negotiate the price of their purchases, reports Tribuna da Norte.

"We are very worried, the market knows that we are unable to supply Europe and that is why we have a greater supply available, which is damaging sales on a national and international level," he said.

Some companies already feel a 30 per cent drop in the value offered for their products, he added.

One of the aspects that the sector questions is that the prohibition affects all its segments, even those that are not directly linked to food. This is the case, for example, of the tilapia skin business, a product that is exported in its entirety to Europe for the chemical and pharmaceutical industry.

For his part, president of the Union of the Seafood Industry, Sweets and Food Preserves of Rio Grande do Sul (SINDIPESCA) Torquato Pontes Netto states that the negotiations with the Ministry of Agriculture do not evolve as they should, and this is the affecting measure to the fishing sector.

"We are being harmed by the financial suffering and the emotional wear and tear, meetings take place, but we are already in the fourth month of the embargo and we do not have a solution presented," he said.

"The Brazilian authority is cornered, it suspended the issue of certification as a way of not receiving a ban from the European Union, but unfortunately did not take any effective measures to resolve the situation, and what we are seeing now is the European bloc on the verge of request the embargo, if that happens, it will be a disaster," warned the businessman.

It should be noted that, for the first time since 2009, Brazil has not been represented at the important international fair held in Brussels, the Seafood Expo Global. Last year, the Brazilian stand in that event had 31 exhibiting companies and three associations.

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