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Agreement Reached on Export Certificate for Fishery Products

Report Categories:

Export Accomplishments - Other

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Report Highlights:

FAS/Brasilia worked with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) to reach an agreement with the Government of Brazil (GOB) for a new health certificate for U.S. fishery products. FAS/Brasilia used several tools, including the Cochran Fellowship Program, to reach this agreement. In 2014, Brazil imported US\$ 9.6 million of fish and seafood products. Although market share is still small, the United States is a rapidly growing supplier of fish and seafood products to the Brazilian market.

Executive Summary:

FAS/Brasilia worked with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) to reach an agreement with the Government of Brazil (GOB) for a new health certificate for U.S. fishery products that contains the bilingual format per Brazilian requirements. In December 2014, FAS/Brasilia and NOAA received confirmation that GOB accepted the final certificate for U.S. fish and fishery products that will be exported to Brazil (see attachment). As of April 2015, FAS/Brasilia has not reported any problems with the new health certificate. FAS/Brasilia used several tools, including the Cochran Fellowship Program, to reach this agreement. In 2014, Brazil imported US\$ 9.6 million of fish and seafood products. Although market share is still small, the United States is a rapidly growing supplier of fish and seafood products to the Brazilian market.

Background:

Brazil is the largest importer of seafood in South America. In 2014, Brazil imported approximately US\$ 1.4 billion dollars of edible fish and seafood products (Chapters 03 and 1604 of the Harmonized Tariff System). Major suppliers of fish and seafood products to Brazil are Chile (12 percent market share), followed by China (9 percent), Vietnam (9 percent), and Norway (5 percent).

In 2014, Brazil imported a total 784,798 metric tons (MT) of fish and seafood products. Brazilian imports in 2014 from the United States were valued at US\$ 9.6 million (3,482 MT in volume). Although U.S. export volumes to Brazil are still small, the United States is a rapidly growing supplier of fish and seafood products to the Brazilian market.

Since January 2010, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food Supply (MAPA), which includes the Brazilian Surveillance Fisheries Department (DIPES), and the Ministry of Fishery (MPA), started to publish new aquatic health regulations concerning imports of fishery products. These new regulations are in accordance to World Animal Health Organization (OIE) and World Trade Organization (WTO) guidelines. The Brazilian regulations request that the export certificates be bilingual with English/Portuguese text and several technical statements.

Brazil does not have any agreement on a bilingual fishery health certificate with the United States for this category. As a result, exporters and importers needed to provide an official translated version of the health certificate and include attachments with statements required by GOB. The NOAA health certificate as it was written was not accepted by the Brazilian authorities until modifications were made based on the product that the U.S. company was exporting. That was the case for every shipment: the U.S. exporter had to contact NOAA and request that special attachment be added to the current NOAA certificate. NOAA's Fisheries Seafood Inspection Program (SIP) is the competent U.S. authority for aquatic health certification for wild-harvested seafood exports (live and products) intended for human consumption, as per a Memorandum of Understanding between NOAA and USDA's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

FAS/Brasilia Builds Support to Negotiate a New Health Certificate:

To improve the process, FAS/Brasilia built a long-term strategy by working closely with the agencies involved in order to facilitate the agreement. This strategy included several actions; one of them was to act as a moderator and a facilitator to the discussion and to come to an agreement between NOAA, DIPES and MPA regarding the bilingual health certificate for fisheries. This process took nearly 4 years to be finished.

A second part of FAS' strategy was to prepare a Cochran Fellowship Program to facilitate these negotiations. The Brazilian Cochran delegation included only government inspectors and regulators responsible for this subject. The program offered an outstanding chance for both sides to sit down in the United States and negotiate a health certificate, which allowed for the more expeditious exportation of U.S. fisheries products, giving U.S. exporters the opportunity to take better advantage of the rapidly growing Brazilian market.

The third part of FAS' strategy was to take advantage of the relationship with DIPES. As a result, FAS was able to get 89 U.S. fishery plants registration during 2013 and 2014. FAS Brasilia also registered 177 labels of fishery products with the Brazilian government authorities in 2014. This action combined with the new health certificate will increase U.S. fishery exports to Brazil.

FAS/Brasilia Leverages Cochran Fellowship Program in Negotiations:

FAS/Brasilia used the Cochran Fellowship Program in coordination with NOAA and the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) to conduct a Fisheries Inspection Study Tour for Brazilian officials. The program included visits to U.S. fish and fishery plants, most of them located in Seattle and Alaska and the group was accompanied by a NOAA inspector. The training was vital in the negotiations and it has helped to increase U.S. fishery exports to Brazil.

Participants' assessments after the program were very positive. They noted that the program substantially increased their overall knowledge of the U.S. fishery inspection system, the difference between voluntary and mandatory standards, and the science-based process used to adopt fish standards. Participants expressed that the training was important in enabling them to perform their duties, providing them with up-to date information on fish and fishery products standards and legislation. In addition to the NOAA meetings, the participation of the NOAA inspector to accompany the group during the training was crucial in providing an understanding on the way audits and inspections are made on the fish facilities/vessels. The information obtained during the training is being used to train other relevant staff at MAPA.

