

11. Domestic and foreign trade

The tables in this section provide an overview of domestic trade organization in Sicily, via a description of the structural and economic statistics of the distribution sector, published by the Ministry for Economic Development, backed up by ISTAT data relating to Sicily's trade with foreign countries (imports and exports), classified according to the ATECO 2007 classification, which, since January 2009, has defined the new groupings of goods for commercial trade. Therefore the historical series for data regarding foreign trade in the present yearbook differ from those in previous editions since they have been revised in the light of the new nomenclature.

The figures regarding domestic trade in Sicily for the year 2012, showed, in absolute terms, 17,859 whole-sale commercial enterprises, 71,022 retail-outlets with fixed premises, and 898 large-scale enterprises divided up into 719 supermarkets, 148 department stores and 31 hyper-markets. Compared with the year 2011, the overall number of businesses in the wholesale trade fell by 38, due to a marked decrease in the number of businesses dealing in "Other products for final consumption 2" (-136) and "Machinery and equipment" (-65). On the other hand, there was an increase in the number of commercial enterprises specializing in "Food products, beverages and tobacco" (+48 units), "Intermediate non-agricultural products, wreckage etc." (+73 in 2012) and "Other products" (+33). However, the structure of this sector did not undergo any great changes when compared to the previous year, with businesses dealing in food and beverages accounting for 31.5% of the overall total. Enterprises dealing in "other products for final consumption" accounted for about 30.3%; "intermediate non-agricultural products and wreckage" 19.3%; those selling "machinery and equipment" about 12%; enterprises dealing in "agricultural raw materials" 4.2%, and, lastly, those dealing with "other products" accounted for 2.7%.

On the other hand, over the course of 2012 there was a reduction (-1,118) in the number of fixed-point-of-sale retail-stores, representing a relative -1.5% fall, with little substantial structural change at the territorial level when compared to the previous year. Most of the business enterprises in Sicily are of a small size, with specialized shops, food-stores and tobacconists figuring prominently.

Large-scale retail businesses, which at the end of 2011 numbered 930, had decreased by 3.4% by the end of 2012 to a total of 898 (sub-divided into 719 supermarkets, 148 department stores and 31 hyper-markets). As regards the number of workers in supermarkets, by the end of 2012 these totaled 9,454 (with a ratio of 13.1 workers per store), 2,130 in department stores (14.4 per store) and 3,173 in hypermarkets (102.4 per store).

Lastly, the latest available figures for retail sales show that, between 2011 and 2012, there was an overall decrease to the tune of 97,000 Euros, the result of a fall in medium-to-small scale distribution (-0.6%, representing -173,000 Euros), which also hit the non-alimentary sector, with sales falling by 6%. On the other hand there was a 4.9% rise in the food sector, there being an analogous trend in the same period in the sector of large-scale distribution, where food sales increased by 3.3% and non-alimentary goods sales decreased by 1.9%. At the national level the only sector holding its own in 2012 was that of large-scale food distribution, showing a modest 0.5% increase in sales.

Foreign trade figures for Sicily appear in Tab.11.5 and 11.6, and show figures for import and export trade respectively, expressed in thousands of Euros and classified according to type of product.

Again in 2011, Sicily confirmed its role as net importer. In fact, the foreign trade balance ended up with a deficit of 7,947 million Euros, against a negative balance the previous year of 17,294 million Euros. Compared with the year 2011 there was a rise in imports to the tune of 2,128 million Euros (+11.3%) and an exceptional rise of 11,476 million Euros in exports (+728%).

The major factor in the negative balance of Sicily's foreign trade exchange is explained by the various aggregates: "mining products from quarries and mines", "IT and communication activity products", "products from professional, scientific and technical activity", which are not absorbed by the positive balance in the other sectors.

At the Regional level all Provinces contributed to a varying extent to this negative balance.

Glossary

Business enterprise: a combination of various resources (equipment, work, work techniques, products) that result in the production of specific goods or services.

CIF (Cost Insurance Freight): clause in contracts of maritime transport used in national and international statistics of foreign trade. It indicates that the value of the goods includes costs of transport and insurance from the place of production to the national frontier of the acquirer.

Country of destination: last known state, at moment of exportation, towards which goods have been sent.

Country of origin: country in which the goods were obtained in their entirety.

Department store: retail outlet operating in the non-alimentary field, with a sales surface greater than 400 sq m and at least 5 different sales departments containing goods belonging to different sectors.

Exports: transfer of goods and services from resident operators to non-resident operators (rest of the world). They include all goods that (either free of charge or not) leave the economic territory of the region and are destined for the rest of the world.

FOB (Free on Board): traditional clause in maritime transport contracts indicating that in the quotation prices for the goods, both the forwarding costs and potential risks are at the expense of the seller, until goods are loaded on to the ship.

Goods: all movables that can be traded. For statistical purposes electricity is also considered a movable.

Hard-discount: retail sales outlet with fixed premises of medium-to-large size, which has a policy of economizing on premises, service and running-costs, and offers self-service of a limited range of mass-consumer products, generally not brand-names, at lower cost than the market average.

Hyper-market: retail outlet with floor-area of over 2.500 sq m, divided into sections, alimentary and non-alimentary, with the respective characteristics of a supermarket and department store.

Imports: purchases abroad (rest of the world) of goods and services, brought into Regional territory. They include all goods that (either free of charge or not) enter the economic territory of the region from the rest of the world.

Large-scale business: enterprise possessing sales outlets operating as supermarkets, hyper-markets, hard-discount, department-stores, other large-scale specialized enterprises.

Production unit: place in which the production of goods takes place, or where the provision of services destined for the market-place (or not) is organised. It is topographically situated in a single place and employs persons on behalf of a single company.

Supermarket: Retail sales outlet operating in the food-sector (autonomously or as part of a department store) organised mainly on a self-service basis and with payment on the way out; its sales area is larger than 400 sq m, and it offers a

wide variety of mass consumer products, mostly pre-packaged, as well as occasional non-alimentary articles for domestic use.

Worker: a person employed by a company, or self-employed, working in an economic unit with or without the agreed contractual compensation

Further reading

Publications

Domestic trade – Monthly statistical bulletin– 2005 - ISTAT

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Retail-sale indices in 2001. Roma 2002 - ISTAT

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www.minindustria.it/

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“Index of retail trade” in press releases, Roma 2011 – ISTAT

<http://www.coeweb.istat.it/>

On-line data-base regarding Italian foreign trade statistics

www.confetra.com/

Foreign trade and transport – 2007

<http://www.istat.it/>

Italian Statistical Yearbook 2013 – Chapter 16: “Domestic Trade”.

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