

11 – DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TRADE

The tables in this section provide a Regional overview of domestic trade organisation, on the basis of available data for the distribution sector in Sicily, as well as data relating to Sicily's trade with foreign countries (imports and exports), classified according to the section of economic activity (CPATECO classification).

The figures regarding domestic trade in Sicily in absolute terms, for the year 2008, recorded 18,021 whole-sale commercial enterprises, 73,911 retail-outlets with fixed address, and 818 large-scale enterprises divided up into 618 supermarkets, 115 department stores and 22 hyper-markets.

Compared with the year 2007, the number of businesses in the wholesale trade (Tab.11.1) fell by 41, representing a 0.2% decrease, due to a decline in the number of businesses selling "food products, beverages and tobacco" (-80), "other products for final consumption" (-26) and "agricultural raw materials" (-11). On the other hand, there were increases in whole-sale enterprises dealing in "machinery and equipment" (+6), "intermediate non-agricultural products" (+39) and "other products" (+31). The structure of this sector did not undergo any great changes compared to the previous year. Businesses trading in food and beverages accounted for 33% of the total. Enterprises dealing in "other products for final consumption" 32.4%; enterprises dealing in "intermediate non-agricultural products and wreckage" 17%; those dealing in "intermediate non-agricultural products and wreckage" (17.3%); those selling "machinery and equipment" (10.1%); enterprises dealing in "agricultural raw materials" 4.2%, and, lastly, those dealing with "other products" accounted for 3.4%.

In similar fashion (Tab.11.2) there was a marked reduction (-364) in the number of retail-stores in Sicily, representing a relative loss of 0.5%, with little substantial structural change in Sicily as a whole when compared to the previous year. Most of the business enterprises in Sicily are of a small size, with specialised shops, especially food-stores and tobacconists, figuring prominently.

Large-scale retail businesses (Tab.11.3), numbering 758 at the end of 2007, increased by 7.9% and numbered 818 (sub-divided into 681 supermarkets, 115 department stores and 22 hyper-markets). Table 11.3 shows the number of workers in supermarkets, who by the end of 2008 totalled 8,978 (with a ratio of 13.2 workers per store), 2,029 in department stores (17.6 per store) and 2,401 in hypermarkets (109.1 per store).

In most of the production sector the majority of commercial enterprises were subject to an inversion of the trend of slow growth pervading the previous five-year period. Lastly, the figures for retail sales are shown in Table 11.4, where it can be seen that between 2007 and 2008, there was an overall decline to the tune of 130 million Euros, explained by a 224 million Euro drop in sales at the small and medium-size distribution level, and a 94 million Euro increase in large-scale distribution (+91 million in the food sector and +3 million in the non-alimentary sector).

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

Again in 2008, Sicily confirmed its role as net importer. In fact, the foreign trade balance ended up with a deficit of 8,283 million Euros, against a negative balance the previous year of 7,329 million Euros. Compared with the year 2007 there was an increase in imports to the tune of 1,145 million Euros (+6.7%) and a 1.02% increase in exports (+191 million Euros).

The major factor in the negative balance of Sicily's trade exchange with foreign countries is explained by the various aggregates: "fish and fishery products", "IT activity", "other public services" and "energetic minerals and non- , gas, water", which is not absorbed by the positive balance in the other sectors.

At the Regional level the major contributors to this negative balance were the Provinces of Caltanissetta, Messina and Siracusa, heart of the oil-industry, with respective balances of -855 million Euros, -1,212 million Euros and -2,706 million Euros.

Glossary

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 wholly obtained.

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.

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

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 economising on premises, service and running-costs, and offers self-service of a limited range of mass-consumer products, generally not brand-names, at lower costs 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 specialised 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 leaving; 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

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