

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 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 this yearbook are different from those in previous editions since they have been revised in the light of the new nomenclature.

The figures regarding domestic trade in Sicily in absolute terms, for the year 2009, recorded 18,019 whole-sale commercial enterprises, 72,989 retail-outlets with fixed address, and 879 large-scale enterprises divided up into 723 supermarkets, 130 department stores and 26 hyper-markets. Compared with the year 2008, the number of businesses in the wholesale trade (Tab.11.1) fell by 2,000, due to a decline in the number of businesses selling "food products, beverages and tobacco" (-91), "other products for final consumption" (-62), "agricultural raw materials" (-19) and the considerable fall (-376) registered in the sector "other products". On the other hand, there were increases in whole-sale enterprises dealing in "machinery and equipment" (+462) and "intermediate non-agricultural products" (+75).

The structure of this sector did not undergo any great changes compared to the previous year, with businesses dealing in food and beverages accounting for 32.1% of the overall total. Enterprises dealing in "other products for final consumption" accounted for 32%; enterprises dealing in "intermediate non-agricultural products and wreckage" 17.7%; those selling "machinery and equipment" (12.7%); enterprises dealing in "agricultural raw materials" 4.1%, and, lastly, those dealing with "other products" accounted for 1.4%.

Over the course of 2009 (Tab.11.2) there was also a marked reduction (-922) in the number of retail-stores in Sicily, representing a relative 1.2% fall, 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, food-stores and tobacconists figuring prominently.

Large-scale retail businesses (Tab.11.3), which numbered 818 at the end of 2008, had increased by 7.5% by the end of 2009 and numbered 879 (subdivided into 723 supermarkets, 130 department stores and 26 hyper-markets). Table 11.3 shows the number of workers in supermarkets, who by the end of 2009 totalled 9,430 (with a ratio of 13 workers per store), 2,113 in department stores (16.2 per store) and 2,937 in hypermarkets (112.9 per store).

Most commercial enterprises in the production sector saw an inversion of the trend of slow growth pervading the previous five-year period. Figures for retail sales are shown in Table 11.4, where it can be seen that between 2008 and 2009, there was an overall decline to the tune of 139 million Euros, explained by a 225 million Euro drop in sales at the small and medium-size distribution level, and a 86 million Euro increase in large-scale distribution (+56 million in the food sector and +30 million in the non-alimentary sector).

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 2009, Sicily confirmed its role as net importer. In fact, the foreign trade balance ended up with a deficit of 5,455 million Euros, against a negative balance the previous year of 8,188 million Euros. Compared with the year 2008 there was a fall in imports to the tune of 6,973 million Euros (-38.3%) accompanied by a -42.3% fall in exports (4,240 million Euros).

The major factor in the negative balance of Sicily's trade exchange with foreign countries is explained by the various aggregates: "mining products from quarries and mines", "IT and communication activity products", "products from professional, scientific and technical activity" and "products from artistic and sporting activity and entertainment and leisure", 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

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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