

Iraqis Eating Brazilian Cheese

Contributed by Cláudia Abreu
Wednesday, 13 April 2005

Polenguinho cheese, a well-known appetizer in Brazil, can now also be found on the shelves of grocer stores and supermarkets in Iraq. Polenghi has been exporting the product since last year.

From January 2004 to February this year, according to figures supplied by the Foreign Trade Secretariat (Secex), the company shipped around 168 tons of the cheese to the Arab country. The practical appeal of the cheese - which is sold in 20-gram packages - is one of the main factors.

Contact with Iraqi distributors was through France. Polenghi is part of French group Bongrain, a world leader in the fine cheese sector.

"The company has managers for each region of the world, and they are in charge of identifying business opportunities for the group. The people in the Middle East noticed that there was space for Polenguinho in Iraq," stated Leonardo Bonaparte, the export manager of Polenghi Brazil.

New Packages

Good acceptance of the product made the group invest in promotion of the cheese in the region. The company is working on new packages with information in Arabic.

Up to now, all the information was in English. "In the May shipping, Polenguinho should be wearing 'new clothes'," stated Maria Eugênia Rodrigues, a company export sector advisor.

Transport of Polenguinho is by ship, in cold storage containers. The product takes around 45 days to reach its destination, Baghdad. From there, according to Bonaparte, it is distributed to other Iraqi cities.

The company intention is to enter other Arab countries this year. "Iraq is a door of entry into the Middle East for our product," stated Bonaparte.

Bongrain

The Bongrain group exports dairy products to various Arab countries. Fine cheeses are responsible for 60% of company revenues. Last year, the group had revenues of 4.128 million euros - growth of 3.1% against the 2003 result.

Bongrain has been operating in Brazil since 1975. The country was the first, outside France, to receive a subsidiary. In the 1980's, the company started an expansion process, buying important Brazilian cheese brands, such as Polenghi, Skandia and Campo Lindo.

Bongrain
www.bongrain.com

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