

Brazil Imports Clove and No Cinnamon

Contributed by Isaura Daniel
Monday, 25 October 2004

Brazil started importing clove from the Comoros Islands this year. The Arab country, formed by three islands in the Indian Ocean in between Mozambique and Madagascar, sold 40 tons of the product to Brazil between January and September.

In spite of being small, this volume represents one quarter of total clove imports by Brazil in that period.

In the Foreign Trade Secretariat (Secex) database, there aren't any records of clove imports from the Comoro Islands in the last eight years.

The revenue obtained by the Arab country with the sales was of US\$ 83,000, which means 19% of Brazil's expenditure with international purchases of clove.

The value also represents 83% of the African country's exports to Brazil in the first nine months of the year.

Even though the country imported 174 tons of clove up until September, Brazil has a local plantation of the product.

The greatest producer region is the south of Bahia, a state in the northeast of Brazil, where about 11 cities maintain an area of approximately 7,000 hectares.

The volume of the crop, however, varies every year according to the clovetree cycle, which ends up stimulating imports at times of a smaller crop.

"Part of the flower buds also gets ruined during the harvest, which decreases the following year's production," says an agronomy engineer from the Bahia State Company for Agricultural Development (EBDA), Ana Cristina Souza Santos.

Last year, for example, when the crop reached 6,000 tons, a volume considered being good, the imports were at only 29 tons between January and September. During the same period this year, the volume has increased by six times.

"We still don't have a production estimate for this year, but the volume will certainly decrease," says Ana Cristina.

The production in the south of Bahia represents approximately 90% of the national clove crop.

According to the EBDA agronomy engineer, the local producers however, are unmotivated because of the drop in prices.

"10 years ago 1 kg of clove was worth between US\$ 5.20 and US\$ 7.00. Today the price varies between US\$ 2.20 and US\$ 2.50," says Ana.

She believes that this lack of motivation is stimulating imports, since there aren't many perspectives for an increase in area and production.

"Since the prices dropped sharply, producers have started to abandon the plantations," she explains.

The EBDA is working to encourage the clove production, however the sector's retaking is slow, as every clovetree takes between 5 and 7 years after it has been planted to start blossoming.

Flowers That Become Spices

The clove is in fact the flower from the clovetree, harvested while it is still closed, and then sun dried.

There are countries which use a greenhouse to dry the flower, or also harvest the plant with the use of chemicals.

In this case, chemical products are applied over the plant, and the flower buttons dry and fall off. In Bahia, however, the harvest is still manual.

Most cloves produced in the country are used in cooking as a spice. The product, however, may also be utilised in the manufacture of medicines, such as anaesthetics, aromatised cigarettes and perfumed oils.

Ana Cristina says the producers in the state of Bahia are interested in attracting cigarette companies to the region to consume the local production.

Country of Perfumes

In the Comoro Islands, which is amongst the main clove producers next to Indonesia and Madagascar, the product is used in the manufacture of perfumes. The country is, in fact, a great manufacturer of perfumed oils.

The Comoro Islands is the world's greatest ylang ylang essential oil producer, which is extracted from a flower. The perfumed oil was the second and only other product Brazil imported from the Arab country between January and September.

Agriculture and fishing represent 40% of the Comoro Islands' Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and employ 80% of the populations. Tourism is another important economic activity.

The country has a small population, of 770,000 people, and the GDP is of US\$ 260 million. The main trade partners are France, South Africa, Kenya and Pakistan.

Trade between Brazil and the Comoro Islands is still small. Until September, US\$ 764,400 was negotiated between the two countries.

Most of Brazil's exports to the islands - US\$ 667,000 - were of beef and chicken. The per capita income in the region is of only US\$ 337.

French Domain

The Comoro Islands are, in fact, the peak of a volcanic mountain chain submersed in the sea.

The greatest island is Ngazidja, where, Moroni, the capital of the country is located, with approximately 30,000 inhabitants.

The other two islands are Mwali and Nzwani. The three islands were under the domain of France from 1947 to 1975, when they achieved their independence.

After that, however, the region suffered a few conflicts. The Mwali and Nzwani islands tried separation to go back to the French domain.

Just over three years ago, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) acted as an intermediate in an agreement to keep the three islands united. The understanding brought more autonomy to each island.

The regime in the country is a presidential republic, but has been through 19 coup d'états in the last 25 years. Almost the entire population is Muslim. The languages spoken locally are Arabic, French and Shikomoro.

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