

Brazil Accuses the Rich of Invading International Waters to Fish

Contributed by Isadora Gespan
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Brazil plans to submit at the meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO), a proposal to regulate global fishing. The Brazilian proposal incorporates subsidies for the fishing sector, the regulation of international trade, and ocean fishing production and stocks.

According to the Brazilian Minister of the Special Secretariat of Aquiculture and Fishing, Altemir Gregolim, Brazil has sought a balance both in favor of the developed countries, which pay heavy subsidies to the fishing industry, and the developing countries, which have still not attained sufficient investments to ensure the growth and infrastructure of the sector.

In an interview with the Radio Nacional, Gregolim said that the Brazilian plan proposes that fishing subsidies be given special treatment, subject to restrictions in developed countries and being favored in developing countries, such as helping out in boat construction, paying for diesel fuel, and traditional fishing.

"It's a balanced proposal that enjoys the support of various countries, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, and the majority of developing countries, such as Chile, Argentina, Peru, and some African countries," he said.

According to Gregolim, the current regulations oriented around the control of global trade industrial and agricultural products are not adapted to the fishing sector.

"That is because fishing, besides being an object of trade, has a unique aspect, which is the fact that fish constitute a resource that belongs to everybody; that is, to the extent that a country subsidizes or increases its fishing effort, it is interfering in the increase of the fish population and restricting or diminishing other countries' chances to catch the same fish, which are a common resource," he observed.

As a result, the minister said, there is a big worry that the sector is being sustained by subsidies and that the subsidies don't end up distorting commercial fishing and the oceans' reserves.

"At present, on a global basis, around 65% of the fishing stocks have been exhausted. And the World Trade Organization (WTO) still lacks rules to bring order to this situation," he commented.

In Gregolim's view, the initiative adopted by the WTO in 2001 is strategic in the sense that the measure is aimed at defining rules for one of the main causes of fishing stock depletion: the "heavy subsidies" conceded by the developed countries.

This, in his opinion, enabled these countries to build "very strong" fishing fleets, which exhausted a large portion of the reserves of the developing countries. That is why the developed countries currently "fish in international waters, frequently invading other countries' exclusive economic zones."

Gregolim pointed out that Brazil desires "fair" trade that will maintain the oceans' fishing stock without distortions in the production.

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