

Chilean Fishermen Suspend Protests over Fishing Ban



Santiago de Chile, May 17 (RHC-Prensa Latina)-- Fishermen in at least six towns in the Chilean archipelago of Chiloe cancelled their fishing prohibition protests after an agreement was reached with the central government on the amount of compensation to be issued to those most affected by ban.

According to Economy Minister Luis Felipe Cespedes, named as "coordinating minister" for President Michelle Bachelet to deal with the problem, said that the fishermen's signatures reflect a new spirit in the talks "that seeks solutions and lets us work on a new phase, where we have to look for answers and at the same time work with an eye toward the future."

Regarding other affected communities, Cespedes said that they will continue the talks and that "there is an absolute willingness for dialogue."

The leaders of the towns of Quellon, Ancud, Quemchi, Maullin, Los Muermos and Calbuco have not signed the agreement but were expecting to resume talks to try and find a way out of the dispute.

For the past two weeks, the fishermen have been protesting over the prohibition placed on their activities due to the high concentrations of paralyzing toxins detected in local sea life otherwise known as red tide, which was detected several weeks ago in sea creatures.

Chiloe residents blame the salmon industry and the government for the contamination, alleging that the red tide began just after 4,000 tons of dead salmon were dumped 181 miles from the island.

The red tide—an algal bloom that turns the sea water red—is a common, naturally occurring phenomenon in southern Chile, though the extent of the current outbreak is unprecedented.

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