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April 7, 2021

Fishery company repeats questionable transfer of dead salmon, despite environmentalists' warnings

According to Sernapesca's confirmation to EL DÍNAMO, more than 1,300 tons of decomposing fish are on their way to the Biobío Region, just as they intended to do in 2017 with the Seikongen cargo that was finally moved to an industrial waste plant.



By Hernan Claro



Almost three tons of fish have died due to the algae bloom in Los Lagos and Aysén.

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The accelerated proliferation of harmful algae in the regions of Los Lagos and Aysén, called [algal bloom](#), has the salmon industry in our country in check, where the death of almost 3 thousand tons of fish has been reported in recent weeks, which will be transported to Talcahuano, mostly, for processing.

Salmones Camanchaca, one of the largest salmon farms in Chile, reported to the Financial Market Commission (CMF) on April 5 the death of 1.3 million salmon, equivalent to 2,250 tons of biomass, that is, 11% of the fish kept by the subsidiary.

At the national level, according to information provided by the [National Fisheries Service \(Sernapesca\)](#) to *EL DÍNAMO*, until April 5, the estimated mortality rate due to the current phenomenon called Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) was **2,900 tons of fish, mainly from the regions of Los Lagos and Aysén**.

Because most of the dead fish are from fjords used by Camanchaca, Sernapesca authorized the company to transport these salmon from Hornopirén (Los Lagos Region) to the Landes fish processing plant in Talcahuano (Biobío Region), despite the existence of other companies dedicated to the same tasks in the region of origin.

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According to the service, the movement is being carried out on a deep-sea fishing vessel called Duqueco, patent CB-5274. The vessel is transporting 1,200 tons of dead salmon and is expected to arrive in Talcahuano in the next few days. In addition, another 103 tons are being transported from the Los Lagos Region to the Landes plant in containers transported by trucks.



The idea, according to Sernapesca, is to move the 1,303 tons of dead salmon from Camanchaca to the reduction plant in Talcahuano to **“use this raw material in fishmeal and oils .”**

The environmental foundation Terram explained to *EL DÍNAMO* that the transfer of the specimens killed by the algae bloom is necessary because “it can affect the local ecosystem” if mortality continues in the area. However, they warned that **transporting the decomposing cargo for almost 600 kilometers** entails a risk to health.

According to the executive director of Terram and biologist from the Catholic University, Flavia Liberona, “the high mortality rate of fish must be removed, but by doing so, it spreads to other places.”



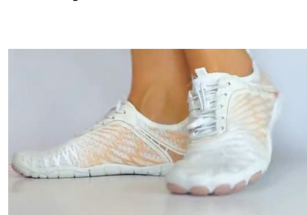
“The **cargo leaves biological contamination along its entire journey** . In addition, we are facing an emergency here, where probably not all the biosecurity measures necessary for this type of case are being considered,” added the environmentalist.

The unfortunate experience of Seikongen

It was in October 2017 when the Seikongen vessel, owned by the company CPT Empresas Marítimas SA, ran aground near Chonchi Island in Chiloé. It was carrying 214 tons of live fish from Salmenes Camanchaca. The company is now seeking to transport the salmon affected by the current algae bloom to Talcahuano.

Following the ship's grounding, the specimens were trapped in a Seikongen hold for almost a year until 2018, when, following a plea from the communities of Talcahuano where the dead fish were to be transported, the Environmental Committee, made up of the Ministry of the Environment, the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Service and naval authorities, determined that the **tons should be taken to the Ecoprial industrial waste plant** , located in the Curaco area of Osorno, and not to the Biobío Region.

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In this regard, the former mayor of the Los Lagos Region, Harry Jürgensen, explained to the media at that time that Ecoprial, unlike the Landes plant, was inspected by the Environmental Superintendency and it was determined that it complied “with all the corresponding regulations, otherwise, it would not be an option for us.”

The danger, according to Flavia Liberona from Terram, is that **the decomposition of the fish “generates toxic gases”**, which can cause “a risk to the health of workers involved in the process” if they are stored for a long time, as occurred between 2017 and 2018 at Seikongen.

Desde Sernapesca, en tanto, afirmaron que autorizaron el actual traslado de la carga desde Hornopirén hasta Talcahuano porque cuando se dan eventos de mortalidad tan masivos como el actual, “es clave el retiro oportuno de los peces”, lo que no ocurrió en el caso del [Seikongen](#), donde la carga se descompuso por completo y la concentración de gases tóxicos era peligrosa para el medio ambiente y salud de las personas.


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The authority stressed that the transfer of the 1,303 tons of dead salmon to Talcahuano is carried out “within the framework of the provisions of the Environmental Regulations for Aquaculture, with the **company being responsible for complying with the** corresponding sectoral regulations.”

EL DÍNAMO contacted the company Salmones Camanchaca to obtain a response regarding the reasons for the transfer to Talcahuano.

The company said it is acting “in accordance with the protocols defined by the authorities for this type of contingency, which consider measures much more effective than those that existed in 2016, when a massive bloom of harmful algae was recorded.”


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They also stressed that the experience of the last irregular algae bloom allowed them to “currently use much larger capacity vessels to remove dead fish and deliver them to suppliers for proper disposal in reduction plants, which convert them into a useful product. Vessels from the industrial fishing fleet have been converted, which has yielded good results.”

In relation to why they want to process the dead salmon in Talcahuano and not in plants close to the place

where the specimens died, Salmenes Camanchaca explained that the Landes plant is “**a specialist in processing industrial fishing .**”

“Today, it has specialized in this salmon mortality, and it has a large storage and production capacity, capable of processing some 800 tons daily, under high standards of efficiency and safety (...) the loading from the centers occurs in deep-sea fishing boats, which have refrigeration systems capable of keeping it in good condition, without risks to the environment, and which transport it to the reduction plant in Talcahuano,” they stressed.

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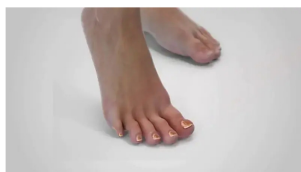
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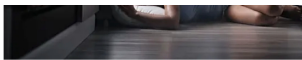




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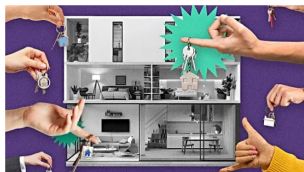
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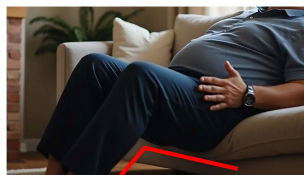
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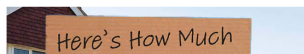
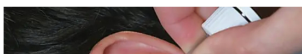
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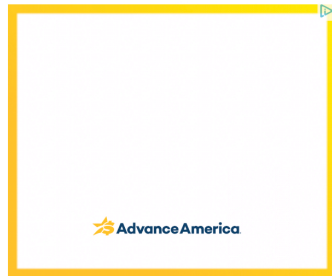
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