

Eurofusion

By Paul Gibson



What makes a Spanish dinner special? Wine from La Rioja, or a good Valdepeñas. How about a good Xerez as an appetizer? Do I hear “Marisco” or Gulas del Norte? Gazpacho, now there’s a great refreshing entree. Paella from Valencia, squid or octopus from Galitia, and let’s not forget a good Madrid Stew (cocido). So how is the hotel, restaurant business fairing with all of the controversy over autonomies these days?

Recently, there have been some major events that have put intra-autonomy trade in danger. Cordoniu champagne kicked off the game with major losses in revenue. Xerez is still struggling for popularity among many Spanish autonomies, and well, La Rioja... la Rioja is an exception to the rule.

Fishermen in Getaria and San Sebastian have suffered the loss of all types of fish such as prawns and sardines, largely due to illegal fishing practices on the part of the French that have literally killed off schools of endangered species.

All of this together with higher costs of transport due to increasing oil prices is making the job of restaurants and hotels a lot more difficult these days. So how do these businesses cope with pressures at home? Many of them look elsewhere to buy their merchandise, delicacies and the like. Beer is no

longer San Miguel and Cruz Campo, but Arium and other generic beer from Eastern Block countries.

While hotels and restaurants alike fend for themselves, the rest of us are witnesses to a tendency in Spanish autonomic business. When businesses encounter the negative effects of business at home, they look to Europe for representation, not to Madrid.

The growth of autonomic policies relating to Europe has increased substantially in recent years. The explosion seems to have come to a head with the recent loss of irreplaceable natural resources in Galitia. The price of olive oil is skyrocketing at its highest rates in years due to a lack of water for irrigation and well, no one is doing anything about it.

While businesses struggle, in search of the ability to compete with other nations, we look to Europe to solve our problems here at home. But now we have another unforeseen problem - with the recent frictions between EON and Gas Natural, we have once again put our foot in our mouth. The question remains, is Spain going to take care of their domestic trade issues here at home, or will we continue to look to Europe to regulate business activity, trade cuotas, etc.

The costs of cohesion have some clear winners, but certainly not Spain. If European subsidies for Spanish farmers with destroyed crops is considered a major victory, look out - they are slowly being erased. While the rest of Europe enjoys prosperity, higher wages and more competitiveness, Spain has fallen drastically in every aspect. We pay more, work longer hours, earn less money, and when a business comes from the outside to lend a hand, we show them the door. A complete mystery to me.