

A Year of Contrasts for Port Traffic Levels

The total traffic volume at Nantes – Saint Nazaire Port stands at 25.3 million tonnes for 2015. The year is marked by the strong growth in grain and cereals traffic (+ 29.3 %) and in animal feedstuffs traffic (+ 15.6 %). These developments contrast with the decrease in energy-related traffic (- 8 %).

The port-based agri-foodstuffs sector saw a real progression. Grain and cereals reached a record level: 1.9 million tonnes (MT) transited the Roche Maurice, Montoir de Bretagne and Saint Nazaire silos. This strong growth in exports is explained by the ever greater demand from the countries of North Africa, notably Algeria (0.6 MT), and by the confirmation of interest from Asia for French grain and cereals. China has now become the second-ranked destination country (0.4 MT) and new destinations are emerging, notably Thailand, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

In spite of the difficulties encountered by French farming professionals, imports of dry bulk products used to manufacture animal feedstuffs (2.1 MT) progress by 19.1 %. This increase is mainly driven by the substantial contribution of Brazilian soya cakes (1.5 MT) transported by Panamax-type vessels. With the facilities to receive such high-capacity vessels, the port installations on the Loire Estuary also possess large storage capacities. In the course of 2015, imports were therefore concentrated at Montoir de Bretagne, to the detriment of ports with lower capacity.

Dry bulk cargo for the construction and general industrial sectors shows a 13.4 % decrease owing to the sluggish state of the building and civil engineering market. Marine sand traffic is down 10.6 %, to stand at 1.1 MT, while cement traffic fell back by 17.4 %. Bulk recycled product exports bound mainly for Turkey shown a slight downturn at 0.4 MT.

Ro-ro traffic records a 40 % fall, mainly resulting from the September 2014 discontinuation of the service between Gijón and Montoir de Bretagne. In January 2015, the introduction of a third weekly call on the Vigo–Montoir route nevertheless brought about a rise in the traffic level for that service (+ 31.5 %), which has recently gained maritime motorway status. The established nature of consignments of Dacia vehicles and aeronautical cargo consignments outbound from the Mediterranean Basin contributes to the good state of health of the Milk Run Med service, which was launched in 2012 for industrial company Airbus.

In a difficult economic environment, container traffic amounts to 182 000 TEUs*, which represents a small increase compared to 2014 (+ 2.4 %). The feeder service offer operated by MSC and incorporating the transshipment hubs of Valencia (Spain) and Sines (Portugal) is one of the driving forces behind that growth. The development of container traffic is also explained by the increase in the volume of exports to West Africa, a product of the approach initiated in 2014 by CMA CGM whereby shippers in Greater Western France benefit from more extensive connections to African ports.

The eight-week-long planned shutdown of Total's Donges refinery with a view to optimizing the production units noticeably affected crude oil imports (- 11.1 %), which amount to 7.6 MT. Hydrocarbon throughput is slightly higher (+ 2.1 %), with imports making up in part for the decreased production at the refinery.

Coal traffic also fell significantly (- 33.6 %) as a result of the work to upgrade the EDF thermal power station at Cordemais, work which began in the autumn of 2014 and is set to last two years.

The volume of liquefied natural gas traffic amounts to 1.1 MT, representing a 14.1 % decrease compared to the 2014 figure, which was itself an historic low. It should be remembered that the Elengy liquefied natural gas terminal at Montoir de Bretagne has an annual capacity of 6 MT. International demand for natural gas remains largely in the hands of Asian countries. Furthermore, the European market is becoming more and more competitive. Elengy has undertaken investments designed to improve the performance of the Montoir de Bretagne installations, notably for transshipment operations.