

## Omarsa aims for 5m pounds of organic shrimp in 2015



One of the ponds at Omarsa's Chongon organic farm in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Photo: Alicia Villegas/Undercurrent News

November 2, 2015, 5:07 pm

Alicia Villegas

GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador -- Ecuadorian shrimp producer and processor Omarsa aims to export 5 million pounds (2,268 metric tons) of organic shrimp in 2015, after surpassing last year's production.

"We have exceeded 4.2m pounds of production, and our goal now is to meet 5m pounds by the end of 2015," Eduardo Darquea, general manager at Omarsa's Chongon organic farm in Guayaquil, told *Undercurrent News* during a visit at their farm.

Omarsa is seeing hot demand for organic products in Europe, which is growing this year in countries such as Germany and the UK, according to Omarsa's figures on organic sales through June (see image below).

In France, a [recent report](#) by Marketing Seafood showed that Ecuador now dominates the market for organic shrimp.

"Demand continues to grow, more and more people believe in our organic product and our brand is settled now," Darquea said.



Biologist and general manager at Omarsa's Chongon farm Eduardo Darquea in 2013. Photo: Jeanine Steward/Undercurrent News

"In 2013 we saw an interesting demand, in 2014 orders were very good and now in 2015 they are extremely good," he said.

Larger shrimp sizes are also more in demand, he said. This is more profitable, as it allows more pounds of production per hectare.

"In 2014, most clients wanted a shrimp of 16 grams, but the trend now is a size ranging from 16gr to 24gr," Darquea said.

Omarsa's bet on organic shrimp, though, has not been straightforward since it first went organic, back in 2007.

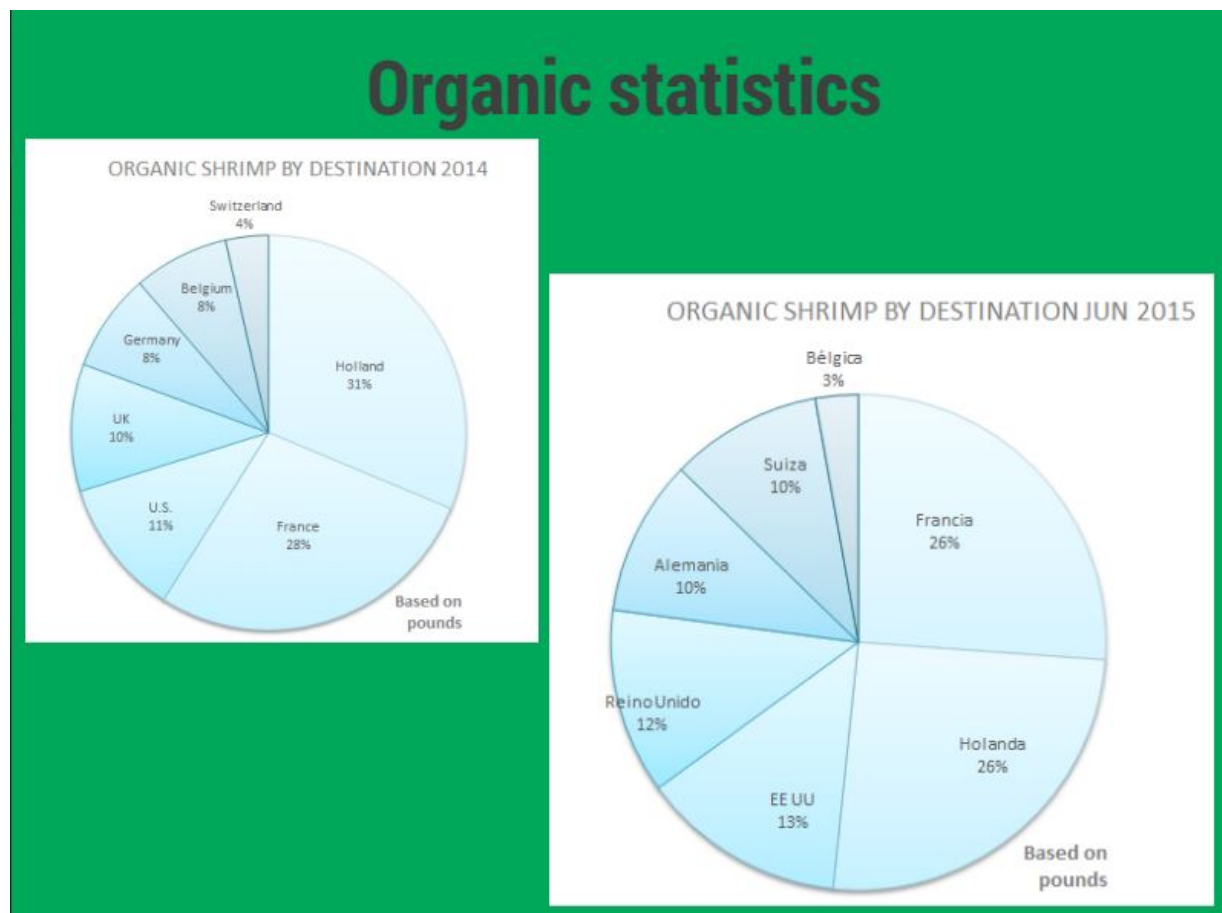
"From 2007 to 2011 sales were quite difficult, there was very low demand and we had to sell large volumes of organic as a normal shrimp, something that doesn't happen today," Darquea said.

"Obviously it's been challenging to sell organic shrimp. It's more expensive than normal shrimp, since it takes more money to produce organic," he said.

Things changed after Omarsa became the first shrimp producer worldwide to [gain Aquaculture Stewardship Council \(ASC\) certification](#) in October last year, with its three farms -- Cachugran, Chongon and Puna -- certified to the standard.

"Since we got ASC certified, we have seen demand booming from Scandinavian countries, which have higher purchasing power," said Sandro Coglitore, general manager of Omarsa.

Coglitore is also pinning his hopes on US demand, which is claiming 13% of exports this year, up two percentile points from last year (see chart).



France and the Netherlands are still the two biggest markets for organic shrimp from Omarsa, but their share has fallen this year as a result of demand in the US (shown as EE UU in the 2015 chart), Germany, the UK, Switzerland and Belgium. Source: Omarsa

"In the US demand of organic shrimp is going to grow. We already noticed more demand since the US refused shrimp from some Asian countries contaminated with banned antibiotics," Coglitore said.

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## Report

In June 2015, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [refused the entry of some shrimp shipments](#) from India, Malaysia and Vietnam, as Nitrofurans and other veterinary drug residues were allegedly found in the shrimp. (Speaking at GOAL 2015, Blue



Marie-Christine  
Monfort  
Seafood Marketing  
Consultant

Archipelago CEO Abu Bakar Ibrahim [said the origin](#) of the residues in the shipments from Malaysia had been identified and hopefully corrected.)

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US demand is also expected to increase on the back of the [upcoming standards](#) for farmed organic fish by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Coglitore said.

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Omarsa has 909 hectares organically certified by international bodies such as Naturland, which represents the largest amount of hectares for organic shrimp production in South America under a single company.

Organic production guarantees that only natural products are used in the farming and processing of shrimp, Omarsa said.

"The main principles of organic regulations include the conservation of native flora and fauna, non-use of chemical fertilizers or genetically modified (GMO) products," it said.

All production sites are managed under a zero antibiotic policy, it added.

Omarsa has also implemented a reforestation program of 98.23ha, which has been fulfilled beyond reforestation requirements of the local government, the company said.





One of the reforested areas by Omarsa. Photo: Alicia Villegas/Undercurrent News

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