27 Years of Success: FITZA Closes New Edition with Massive Attendance Across Different Locations in the Region

The festival, which filled the summer with art and theater across various venues, gathered more than 12,000 attendees during its seven days of programming.

antofanoticias.cl. February 04, 2025.

A massive farewell marked the end of the 2025 Zicosur International Theater Festival (FITZA), following an intense week of uninterrupted performances featuring over 80 local, national, and international artists.

This grand event, organized by the Pedro de la Barra Group and presented by Escondida I BHP, offered a total of 46 performances of 18 plays in the municipalities of Antofagasta, Tocopilla, Taltal, Sierra Gorda, Mejillones, and Calama.

In the regional capital, the festival stood out for its presence in neighborhoods, community centers, and local councils, bringing top-tier performances directly to the communities. The public deeply appreciated this initiative, celebrating the opportunity to enjoy theater close to home and engage with renowned artists.

Additionally, the performances attracted more than 12,000 people across the 15 venues distributed throughout the region. This edition included three local productions, 12 national ones from cities such as Coquimbo, Concepción, Valparaíso, Santiago, and Calama, and three international productions from Bolivia, Mexico, and Argentina.

For Ángel Lattus, founder and general director of the festival, “FITZA 2025 was a true theatrical celebration that not only illuminated major stages but also reached the neighborhoods of every municipality. The active participation and enthusiasm of the community at each performance fill us with gratitude and inspire us to continue bringing more theater, more stories, and more life to every corner of our region. Together, we will continue building this cultural celebration that belongs to everyone.”

For Ory González, Communications Manager at Escondida I BHP, “if there is something that characterizes Escondida I BHP, it is long-term support. We have several initiatives that have spanned decades, and in this case, this festival is the oldest in our cultural portfolio. Sustained effort is very important, and of course, FITZA, through the Pedro de la Barra Group, has done an outstanding job on its own merits. We are happy to be part of it every year and, of course, already thinking about the next year so that this continues to grow.”

FINAL DAY

The evening began at the Pumaboxing Club in Antofagasta, where the play *Violentos* by Teatro La Peste from Santiago surprised the audience with a striking performance set in a boxing ring, which turned out to be the perfect stage.

Later, in Calama, *Bestia* by Centro de Arte Ojo del Desierto and Escuela de Teatro El Ojo sent chills through the audience with its reflection on the human condition and the struggle for survival in a world marked by violence.

Meanwhile, in Tocopilla, the audience embarked on an extraordinary and emotional journey through time with *Juguetes de la Pampa* by La Favorecedora Theater Company from Antofagasta.

At the same time, *Memorias Desenterradas* by Producción Espécimen left the people of Taltal astonished, transporting them back to the devastating 1991 flood in Antofagasta. Meanwhile, *Vacío* by Espacio Ané from Valparaíso deeply connected with the community by telling a story full of sensitivity.

Finally, as had been the theme throughout these wonderful days filled with art, the people of Antofagasta gathered at Parque Croacia to enjoy *Cadáver Exquisito* by La Exquisita company from Santiago.

The play overflowed with laughter and joy, captivating both young and old, and providing a masterful closing to a vibrant week of theater and shared emotions.

The organization expressed its gratitude to the large audience that attended and filled the various venues of this major cultural event of the summer, emphasizing that in 2026, there will be even more surprises and productions in the territories and municipalities of the Antofagasta Region.

Regional Female Leadership, Antofagasta Region

Women of Baquedano and Sierra Gorda Strengthen Leadership Skills Thanks to the "Mujeres en Red" Program by Spence I BHP

More than 200 people have participated in the initiative, which aims to provide tools that enable them to carry out projects benefiting their communities.

poderyliderazgo.cl. February 04, 2025.

The *Mujeres en Red* program is an initiative that was launched in 2020, during the pandemic, and this year concluded its fourth edition with more than 40 participants. Its goal is to contribute to the development of collaborative leaderships that positively impact the individual and community well-being of women from the communities of Baquedano and Sierra Gorda.

The program, promoted by Spence I BHP, also aims to train future leaders who will foster sustainable development in the region. Zulman Díaz, treasurer of the *Pampa Ilusión* Senior Citizens' Club of Sierra Gorda and an active social leader who regularly participates in the program, highlights its importance in strengthening the social fabric.

"Over these four years that I have participated, each experience has been amazing. Many times, women are unable to take part in these activities, but it is very important for us to develop as individuals and as leaders. Every conversation and the lessons we have taken from the workshops have benefited us," emphasized Díaz.

Over the four years of *Mujeres en Red*, more than 200 people have participated to strengthen their self-esteem and gain tools that allow them to implement projects benefiting their communities. Lizbeth Contreras, Director of Corporate Affairs at Pampa Norte I BHP, explained that *"our main goal is to work on leadership and female empowerment."*

Recognition

The more than 40 women who participated this year, along with neighbors from Sierra Gorda and Baquedano, were recognized in a graduation ceremony organized by Spence I BHP. Adriana Rivera, Mayor of Sierra Gorda, highlighted the initiative as an opportunity for the community. The event took place over two days in Hornitos, where the women in the program were able to share experiences with Spence representatives and the mayor.

*"The *Mujeres en Red* program is an excellent activity for our women, as it provides them with comprehensive tools to face daily challenges. It gives them hope to set new goals with confidence, courage, and strength, both personally and collectively, to drive the progress and development of the community,"* emphasized the mayor.

Spence I BHP plans to develop a fifth edition of the initiative with the women of the Baquedano and Sierra Gorda communities, maintaining its institutional commitment to its host communities through the acquisition of new skills, reinforcing its support for social and economic development.

Imacec Surprices with the largest increase under the current goverment, but Chile still completes 3 yeas of growing below the global economy

The December figure recorded a 6.6% increase, the highest since January 2022. With this, 2024 would have grown by 2.5%, one-tenth above what the Minister of Finance anticipated last month, but seven-tenths below the expected growth for the global economy. Analysts highlight the month's performance; however, they warn that it was influenced by specific factors.

Pulso. February 04, 2025.
Por DANIELA DEL SOLAR, RODRIGO CÁRDENAS

The Monthly Economic Activity Index (Imacec) for December exceeded market expectations. According to the Central Bank, the Imacec for the last month of 2024 grew by 6.6% compared to the same month of the previous year, marking its highest growth since January 2022 (7.6%), meaning before the current administration of President Gabriel Boric began.

In this scenario, the GDP for 2024 would close at 2.5%, its best level since 2021 (11.3%), surpassing economists' projections, which estimated 2.2%, and the government's forecast of 2.4%. This is based on the average of the Imacec figures. The official GDP figure will be released by the Central Bank on March 18.

This 2.5% is only one-tenth below the projection of the Public Finance Report (IFP) from September, prepared by the Ministry of Finance, and above the revision made by Minister Mario Marcel last December, when he projected 2.4%.

Moreover, considering a group of 17 Latin American countries, Chile would rank in the lower half of the table, in 11th place, based on projections from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the other countries.

Additionally, the country once again grew less than the global economy, which is expected to rise by 3.2% in 2024. This marks the third consecutive year that Chile has lost ground compared to the global economic average. The same has happened in 8 of the last 10 years, with the exceptions of 2018— the first year of Sebastián Piñera's second term— and 2021, due to the stimulus measures implemented during the pandemic crisis.

DETAILS OF THE IMACEC

The seasonally adjusted Imacec series increased by 0.9% compared to November and grew by 4.3% over 12 months. Furthermore, all components of the index performed well.

Analysts' reports positively highlight this growth, although they note that December's performance was influenced by specific factors, such as the two additional working days in that month.

César Guzmán, Head of Macroeconomics at Grupo Security, stated that the Imacec grew "far above our projection and the 4.5% consensus. The January Expectations Survey (EME), published at the beginning of the month, had anticipated a 2.7% increase." However, he pointed out that "although the figure was positive, it was heavily influenced by the two additional working days." He added that "our view remains that, beyond monthly volatility, the economy has settled into a 2% trend growth rate, which should continue in the coming quarters unless there is a significant shift in external stimulus."

In the same vein, Guzmán confirmed that Grupo Security maintains its projection of 1.8% GDP growth for the entire year.

Meanwhile, José Manuel Peña, Senior Portfolio Manager at Fintual, stated that "these figures consolidate a better-than-expected year-end, reversing the downward trend from mid-year and even surpassing market expectations, which had already risen following last Friday's encouraging sectoral data."

Scotiabank analysts noted that the calendar effect explained nearly half of the year-on-year growth. "Although the Imacec's pace surprised to the upside (0.9% m/m), December's growth can largely be attributed to the strong calendar effect, which accounts for nearly 3 percentage points of the year-on-year increase." They added that "with this, 2024 would have ended with 2.5% growth, exceeding the 2.3% projected by the Central Bank in December's IPoM."

Similarly, Coopeuch analysts stated that "December's Imacec result once again exceeded market expectations, with a significant calendar effect that contributed about 2.3 percentage points to the annual result." They further detailed that "after adjusting for seasonality, the 0.9% monthly growth was in line with historical distributions."

Rodrigo Mujica, Director of Public Policy at Sofofa, commented that “the 6.6% year-on-year growth in December’s Imacec is encouraging, but it is crucial to remain cautious about this progress and not lose sight of the goal of achieving annual growth above 4%. This is because Chile’s medium-term growth prospects have not changed and remain around a weak 2%, underscoring the urgent need to implement structural policies that strengthen investment, boost job creation, and stimulate more dynamic economic activity.”

WHAT TO EXPECT FOR THE MONETARY POLICY RATE (TPM)?

Following these Imacec figures, economists have updated their estimates for the Central Bank Council’s March meeting and their projections for the first quarter of this year.

Fintual analysts stated that “these data confirm the almost nonexistent likelihood of further cuts in the monetary policy rate at the upcoming March meeting, even introducing a bias toward potential hikes. This could mark the end of the 2023-2024 rate-cutting cycle, leaving rates at levels higher than the pre-pandemic period.”

On the other hand, Valentina Apablaza, an economist at the Economic Context Observatory of the Universidad Diego Portales (OCEC-UDP), affirmed that “our projection still indicates that the Central Bank will keep the monetary policy rate at 5% in March and, consequently, throughout the first quarter of 2025.”

Apablaza explained that the Central Bank would maintain the TPM because “it is necessary to reduce uncertainty regarding upcoming inflationary pressures before continuing the TPM’s path toward its neutral level.” She added that “there is a possibility that economic activity could generate additional inflationary pressures in the current context, further limiting the chances of rate cuts.”

In that regard, she specified that “before the December figures were released, it was expected that economic activity would mitigate much of the inflationary pressures, given that the output gap was projected to remain negative for much of the year. That is why December’s Imacec data creates tension—if it reflects an acceleration in economic activity, the inflation outlook becomes increasingly complex and may require rate hikes to contain inflation in 2025.”

Tomás Flores, an economist at Libertad y Desarrollo (LyD), has a different view and argues that the monetary policy rate should be lowered to 4.75% at the March meeting. Additionally, he estimates that GDP will grow by 2.6% in the first quarter of 2025.

Codelco, Quiborax, and Eramet Negotiate Consortium to Extract Lithium in Salar de Ascotán

▪ The companies have submitted a CEOL request to initiate an exploration campaign within the existing mining concession area in the salt flat.

Diario Financiero, February 4, 2025
BY PATRICIA MARCHETTI

Movements in the lithium sector. The state-owned Codelco is evaluating the formation of a consortium with Chilean company Quiborax—the world's third-largest boron producer—and French firm Eramet to develop a potential lithium project in Salar de Ascotán, one of the sites prioritized by the government in the National Lithium Strategy.

Sources confirmed to Diario Financiero that on Friday, January 31, the three companies submitted a request for a Special Lithium Operation Contract (CEOL) with the primary goal of launching an exploration campaign within the existing mining concessions in the salt flat, which belong to Quiborax and Codelco.

Insiders familiar with the process explained that Codelco's agreement to form the consortium is conditional on Eramet acquiring full ownership of the mining concessions that Quiborax holds in Salar de Ascotán.

In July last year, Quiborax, owned by the Fosk family, expressed its interest (RFI, in English) to the Ministry of Mining regarding the Surire and Ascotán salt flats, both located in the Arica and Parinacota Region.

For the latter, which spans 23,000 hectares, the company owns approximately 80% of the mining rights.

From the Chilean capital-based company, they stated that "this initiative is the result of extensive work carried out over the past year and a half to seek strategic partners to achieve this milestone within the framework of the National Lithium Strategy."

Quiborax added that "if the exploration proves successful, there is a reasonable and well-founded possibility that, in the near future, a productive lithium extraction project could be developed in Salar de Ascotán."

They also emphasized that the company has been working for the past two years on research and development of methodologies for processing lithium contained in mining tailings.
Throughout the drafting of the potential agreement, Quiborax was legally advised by Salvador Valdés and his team from Carey Abogados, as well as by the company's legal manager, Daniel Ocqueteau, recently recognized by Legal 500.

On the financial and economic front, the Fosk family firm was advised by Altis, through its partners Alejandro Puentes and Ignacio Riva, under the continuous direction of Allan Fosk, the company's general manager.

On the legal side, French company Eramet was advised by Philippi Prietocarrizosa Ferrero DU & Uría (PPU), while Codelco received support from its internal team of lawyers specializing in lithium-related matters.

Government Task Force Meets to Assess Potential Impact of U.S. Tariff Hike

▪ The meeting, led by Foreign Minister van Klaveren, concluded with an agreement to meet periodically for ongoing monitoring.

Diario Financiero, February 4, 2025
BY A. SANTILLÁN AND S. RUNÍN

As announced last Tuesday to Diario Financiero, Foreign Minister Alberto van Klaveren chaired the first session of a government task force on Monday to analyze Chile's main trade flows with the United States and assess the potential impact of possible tariff measures on copper.

This comes after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to impose tariffs on imports of steel, aluminum, and red metal—Chile's primary export product.

Trump also expressed his intention to impose 25% tariffs on goods from Mexico and Canada and 10% on imports from China.

The first session included the participation of Mining Minister Aurora Williams, Undersecretary of International Economic Relations Claudia Sanhueza, Undersecretary of Mining Suina Chahuán, and acting Executive Vice President of Cochilco, Claudia Rodríguez.
Also joining remotely were Chile's ambassador to the United States, Juan Gabriel Valdés, and Codelco's Chairman of the Board, Máximo Pacheco.

During the meeting, discussions centered on the various projected scenarios for international copper trade and how these could impact Chile.

Additionally, the task force agreed to convene periodically for continued monitoring and information exchange.

The Importance of Copper

Finance Minister Mario Marcel also addressed the country's position amid the tariff threat.
He explained that Chile's trade balance with the U.S. is in deficit, unlike several countries targeted by the proposed tariff measures. He also pointed out that Chile's main exports are "upstream in the value chains," referring to minerals and copper, which serve as essential inputs for various U.S. industries.

“The United States is a net copper importer, consuming far more than it produces. The copper it imports is crucial for the automotive and construction industries, among others. Therefore, any protectionist measure in this area is likely to have a greater impact on U.S. industries than on us as an exporting country,” Marcel stated.

He also noted that amid tensions between the U.S. and Panama over China’s role in infrastructure investments, Chile remains highly diversified in terms of foreign investment.
“In Chile, the number one country of origin for foreign investment is Canada, the second is the United States, and China ranks sixth.”

Despite these mitigating factors, Marcel acknowledged that the situation remains highly fluid.
“There are many unpredictable elements, and we will need to stay highly vigilant to identify potential risks to our economy,” he concluded.

December Imacec Surprises with Sharp Increase, Pushing the Economy to Grow Beyond Expectations in 2024: 2.5%

▪ Two additional working days and temporary dynamism in mining and fruit production resulted in a 6.6% increase in the last month of the year. There is increasingly less room for the Central Bank to continue its rate-cutting trajectory.

Diario Financiero, February 4, 2025
BY C. VERGARA AND S. RUNÍN

The financial market and the government received an unexpected surprise on Monday. The Monthly Economic Activity Index (Imacec) expanded by an unexpected 6.6% in December 2024 compared to the same month in 2023, according to the Central Bank, marking its highest record since January 2022. A Bloomberg survey had projected a 4.5% year-on-year growth.

The result was driven by notable dynamism in fruit production and mining.

The seasonally adjusted series increased by 0.9% from the previous month and grew 4.3% year-on-year, while the non-mining Imacec posted an annual increase of 5.4% and improved by 0.4% on a monthly seasonally adjusted basis.

“Although we anticipated a solid economic performance in year-on-year terms, influenced by a favorable calendar effect, the surprise came from the fact that most key sectors showed strong monthly expansion,” said BTG Pactual economic analyst Sebastián Piña.

Alongside copper and lithium extraction, cherry exports stood out as a key factor.

Scotiabank Chile also highlighted the contribution of the tourism sector. “Based on Sernatur figures, we estimate that a third of the spending by Argentine tourists in Chile (around US$500 per visit) goes to the commerce sector, which likely had a significant impact on the sector's year-on-year growth in recent months,” they stated in a report.

Experts also pointed out how the results suggested a recovery in consumption. However, the figure was largely explained by the two additional working days in this period, warned Inversiones Security's Macroeconomics Manager, César Guzmán. In fact, Scotia estimated that this factor accounted for nearly three percentage points of the indicator's year-on-year growth. Offering a more cautious perspective, Econsult macroeconomic analyst Carolina Krefft noted that looking at the last quarter, the economy grew at a rate of 1.7%, with the mining sector increasing by 2%, without much surprise.

Given this preliminary result, last year would have ended with an Imacec expansion—a proxy for the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)—of 2.5%. This exceeded the expectations of the Central Bank (2.3%), the Ministry of Finance (2.4%), and the market itself.

“This represents a positive outcome, especially considering that growth projections were consistently revised downward throughout the year,” Piña mentioned, referring to the latter part of 2024.

The January 2024 Economic Expectations Survey (EEE) had forecasted GDP growth of around 1.7% for the year, but the May survey projected 2.6%, before enthusiasm faded later.
Despite everything, Chile remains below the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) growth estimates for the world (3.2%) and emerging economies (4.2%), Krefft noted.

A Strong Boost

Santander stated that part of December's strong monthly figures would persist in January, as cherry exports continued to show significant progress during that month, although this would be a temporary effect.

“Overall, this provides a good start for economic activity this year, especially considering the headwinds from trade tensions and external uncertainty due to recent tariff announcements by the United States,” they said in a report.

Krefft indicated that they expect GDP growth of around 2.2% this year, with continued mining-driven momentum due to several upcoming projects, as well as a recovering non-mining economy.

Credicorp Capital's forecast for GDP growth this year is 2.4%—above the consensus—but with a downside bias due to increasing external risks.

“If a trade war materializes and extends throughout the year, initial estimates suggest weaker GDP growth in the United States, reduced global trade, higher short-term inflation, and higher long-term global interest rates,” they stated.

BTG Pactual projected economic activity growth in the 2%-2.5% range in 2025, while Bci Estudios aligned with a 2.1% forecast, driven by a rebound in investment and private consumption.

Guzmán stated that beyond monthly volatility, the economy has aligned with its 2% trend growth, which should continue in the coming quarters unless there is a significant shift in external momentum. He maintained his projection of 1.8% GDP growth for the year.

Rate Cuts on Pause

For Fintual's senior portfolio manager José Manuel Peña, the data consolidates the near-zero probability of further cuts to the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) in the upcoming March meeting, “even creating a bias towards potential increases, which could mark the end of the 2023-2024 rate-cutting cycle, leaving rates above pre-pandemic levels.”

Krefft argued that “these positive growth results—combined with upward price pressures—reduce incentives to cut rates in the short term.”

She also added that “the international situation—trending towards protectionist measures in several major economies—increases uncertainty and global interest rate expectations, so we expect the pause initiated by the Central Bank in January to last for at least the next two meetings. We foresee one or two rate cuts by December of this year.”

Similarly, BTG Pactual said that the December data reinforces the Central Bank's cautious stance, while Itaú noted that the Imacec reduces the likelihood of further rate cuts.
Both financial institutions expect the key rate to remain at 5% throughout 2025.

Meanwhile, Bci Estudios senior economist Juan Ángel San Martín noted that only in the second half of the year would the authorities consider a new round of monetary easing.

— —

5%
CHILE'S INTEREST RATE LEVEL.

6.6%
DECEMBER 2024 IMACEC.

— —

Boric Takes Aim at Matthei After Imacec: "The Right-Wing Candidate Recently Claimed Chile Was Not Growing"

The surprising December Imacec did not go unnoticed by President Gabriel Boric. Speaking from Uruguay, where he is on a state visit, the president stated via his X account (formerly Twitter):

“The December Imacec was 6.6%. With this, Chile will have grown by 2.5% this year, despite many claiming that our goal was impossible. Moreover, unemployment and informality have declined.”

“The same right-wing candidate recently claimed from abroad that Chile was not growing. It seems they want the country to do poorly,” he continued, alluding to statements made in Panama by presidential candidate Evelyn Matthei of RN and UDI.

“Is there more to do? Of course! But we are moving in the right direction, incorporating more free time with the 40-hour workweek, improving wages and pensions, modernizing security institutions, eliminating health copayments, developing new infrastructure, revitalizing public education, increasing inclusion, fostering sustainable new industries, and addressing historical debts in our country, among many other initiatives,” the President added.

—————————————————————

Sectors Highlight Recovery but Warn of Persistent Disparities

▪ While some economic sectors celebrated the recovery, others ended last year with negative results.

There were mixed reactions among business associations following the December Imacec, which suggested a 2.5% GDP expansion.

While George Lever, Head of Research at the Santiago Chamber of Commerce (CCS), stated that 2024 was a year of recovery for the sector, Rodrigo Mujica, Director of Public Policy at Sofofa, highlighted a performance influenced by an improved external environment, which had positive effects on the forestry sector’s production, along with a recovery in domestic demand, benefiting the food and chemical industries.

In contrast, Fernando García, President of the Association of Metallurgical and Metalworking Industries (Asimet), pointed out that his sector experienced a 2% drop in production levels in 2024. “This result makes us cautious about the potential consequences,” he noted.

Similarly, Alfredo Echavarría, President of the Chilean Chamber of Construction (CChC), stated that it was a bad year for several reasons: total investment fell by 1.1% compared to 2023, employment declined, and the approved area for new construction projects reached its lowest level since 1992.

The National Agricultural Society (SNA) experienced a 2024 marked by “economic volatility” and projected that sector growth closed at around 0% for the year.

In this context, Paula Estévez, General Manager of the Chilean-North American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham), acknowledged the Imacec result but emphasized the need to ensure that “this growth consists of high exports and low investment.”

For this year, AmCham expects the local economy to remain stable but foresees a series of internal and external factors emerging as sources of uncertainty.

CCS stated that “expectations remain moderate” and that all signs indicate that the peak of growth has already been reached, with rates falling below 3% in the coming months.

Sofofa anticipates an industrial expansion of around 2.5%, contingent on external conditions not progressively worsening. SNA projects approximately 3% growth for its sector, while CChC estimates a 5.4% increase compared to 2024. On the other hand, Asimet expects a 5% decline in production.

Tariff Increases

Regarding the potential effect of new U.S. tariffs on imported goods, AmCham stated that “these are developing news, and we must still see how they evolve and are perceived by the markets.”

CCS argued that significant risks are not expected for its sector, as the main concerns lie within the export sector. However, they clarified that given Chile’s low share of U.S. imports and the high degree of trade complementarity, “no major impacts are expected.”

Asimet called for Chile to “immediately develop a strategy to counterbalance the damage that will result from an increased inflow of imported products at very low prices, which will harm domestic producers.”

OOCL to Discontinue Lirquén Stop on Transoceanic Route: Is Competitiveness at Risk?

▪ The Chinese shipping company excludes the Chilean port from its Asia route. Experts suggest the company, a subsidiary of the main shareholder of Chancay Port, has restructured its routes to enhance the use of the Peruvian port.

MERCURIO DE SANTIAGO. February 4, 2025
BY CATALINA MUÑOZ-KAPPES

The shipping company OOCL, a subsidiary of Chinese firm Cosco Shipping Lines, announced that its route from Asia to South America will no longer stop at the port of Lirquén, near Penco in Chile's Biobío Region, starting in March. Specifically, this concerns the WSA3 service, which stops at ports including Chancay in Peru, San Antonio in Chile, and Shanghai and Qingdao in China.

Instead, the company indicated that it will introduce a new feeder service, "Chancay Express," which will operate from the Chancay megaport in Peru to supply the ports of Lirquén and San Antonio in Chile before returning to Peru. This service will be operated by two feeder vessels.
In a communication to clients, the company stated that the new route will "significantly" optimize Asia-Latin America transit times from Chancay Terminal. Cosco Shipping Lines is the majority shareholder of the Peruvian port, owning 60% of its stake.

The ships operating the new route between Peru and Chile will have a smaller cargo capacity compared to the vessels used on the South America-Asia route. For instance, OOCL reported that one of the ships assigned to the new route will be the m/n Lakonia, with a capacity of 2,586 TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units). In contrast, another vessel on the route, CSLC Asia, can carry up to 8,500 TEU.

Impact

Despite OOCL's route changes, experts assert that Lirquén's exclusion will not significantly impact Chile's foreign trade. Carlos Vera Inostroza, an academic at the University of Chile, points out that there are 18 shipping lines transporting cargo via sea, meaning that a single company modifying its routes does not substantially affect Chilean exports.

Guillermo Holzmann, a political analyst and professor at the University of Valparaíso, states that the route change does not pose an "imminent threat" to Chile's shipments.

"What is happening today is that companies associated with Cosco Shipping Lines are restructuring to turn Chancay into a logistics hub where all cargo is consolidated, reducing costs before shipping directly to China or Asia. In this sense, Chancay has a greater chance of strengthening its strategic position as a key logistics component in the supply chain for both Asia and South America," he explains.

A similar view is shared by Iván Marambio, president of the Chilean Fruit Exporters Association (Asoex). "It is very common for shipping lines to establish new routes or modify existing ones. In Chancay's case, Cosco owns 60% of the port. They are reorganizing as they enter the port market," he says.

Introducing a route with smaller vessels is even a "positive development," he adds. "We do not see this as a threat to the country's exports or imports. Regarding fruit exports specifically, Lirquén Port handles very little fruit volume," he points out.

Warning Sign

However, Holzmann believes this should serve as a wake-up call to prioritize the modernization and expansion of Chilean ports.

"Chile is behind in port investment. Therefore, all these changes—such as replacing larger vessels with smaller ones, as is happening now—are meant to transport large amounts of cargo from Chilean ports solely to Chancay, where containers can be consolidated before being shipped directly to China," he says.

"The strategy to transform Chancay into an integral logistics hub, which we will see materialize over the next five years, should raise concerns about the associated costs for our agribusiness and mining sectors," he adds.

However, for Hugo Baesler, an academic at the University of Chile, Chancay Port may face limitations in withstanding an earthquake or tsunami—natural disasters that have affected Peru and could potentially render the megaport inoperative for up to a year. Additionally, given that most of its investment comes from Chinese capital, it could also be impacted by geopolitical tensions.

———————————————————

60%

of Chancay Port is owned by Cosco Shipping Lines, the parent company of OOCL.

Lirquén Port, located in Chile’s Biobío Region, will be excluded from OOCL’s transoceanic route starting in March.

Enami Reports Profits After Three Years Following Operational Improvements and Quebrada Blanca Sale

▪ The state-owned company attributed the results to improved operating margins, aided by lower losses from the temporary closure of the Paipote Smelter. After selling its stake in the Teck-controlled project, the mining company reduced its net financial debt by nearly $500 million.

PULSO. February 4, 2025.
By Víctor Guillou

In 2024, the National Mining Company (Enami) managed to reverse three consecutive years of losses. On Monday, the mining company reported to the Financial Market Commission (CMF) that it had achieved profits of $131 million.

The last time the state-owned company recorded profits on its bottom line was in 2021 when it posted an annual net income of $34 million.

The results from January to December 2024 contrast with the losses of $201 million in 2023 and $78 million in 2022.

The improvement in results is attributed both to operational performance and investment outcomes. Operational results shifted to a profit of $51 million in 2024, compared to losses of $132 million in 2023. A key factor was the reduction in losses stemming from the temporary shutdown of the Hernán Videla Lira Smelter (HVL), also known as the Paipote Smelter.

Specifically, the closure of the facility reduced copper cathode production by 34.9%, to 59,000 metric tons of refined copper. While this also led to an 8% drop in sales revenue to $1.271 billion, it simultaneously lowered the cost of sales by 21%. As a result, the operational margin improved from a loss of $71 million in 2023 to a profit of $120 million in 2024.

"This improved result of $183 million is primarily due to better margins at Enami's plants, as well as lower losses at the smelter following its temporary shutdown," the state-owned company stated in its financial analysis.

Meanwhile, the $520 million sale of Enami’s 10% stake in the massive Quebrada Blanca copper deposit, controlled by Canadian mining company Teck, contributed significantly to the increased earnings for the period.

"The 2024 profit is mainly explained by the gain from selling shares in Compañía Minera Quebrada Blanca S.A., amounting to $181 million," Enami stated in its financial reports.

In a press release, the company emphasized that the operational improvements "demonstrate the company's stabilization," attributing the positive variation to "the strategy adopted to reverse operational losses through efficiency-driven management and cost control."

"The results achieved in 2024 are the outcome of decisions aimed at making Enami a healthier, more sustainable, and efficient company, with a reasonable level of debt for the business. This allows us to project a positive operational performance for 2025 while continuing to strongly fulfill our mission of supporting small-scale mining in Chile," said the company’s Executive Vice President, Iván Mlynarz.

The improved financial results were also reflected in a significant reduction in net financial debt, which dropped from $635 million in December 2023 to $137 million at the end of 2024—a decrease of $498 million in bank debt for the mining company.

In fact, in its statement, the company affirmed that "to optimize the financial burden associated with the company’s debt, all proceeds from the sale of its stake in Quebrada Blanca are being used to pay down financial obligations." It added that "this has not only opened new debt markets but also allowed Enami, for the first time, to undergo a credit rating process by two agencies (ICR and Feller Rate), which assessed the state-owned company’s solvency with a stable AAA and a stable AA rating, respectively."

In its financial reports, the company also highlighted other measures of "implicit state support for Enami’s operations," such as the approval of a $25 million capital contribution in the 2025 Budget, an additional $10 million increase in Direct Promotion funds, and "authorization from the Ministry of Finance to restructure long-term financial debt."

Mining Exploration Spending in Chile Contracts by 4.6% in 2024, in Line with Global Decline

▪ The budget recorded by Cochilco showed that the sector required $794 million across 87 companies with active projects. Most firms originate from Canada and Australia, primarily seeking copper, gold, and lithium. Chile remained the top country in the region for exploration spending and ranked fourth globally.

PULSO. February 4, 2025.
By Víctor Guillou

A total of 87 mining companies conducted exploration activities in Chile during 2024, according to a report by the Chilean Copper Commission (Cochilco). While the report identified a decrease in the number of active companies—down from 101 in 2023—the level of spending by firms engaged in this type of operation in the country followed the global trend.

This finding is detailed in the 2024 Exploration Companies Survey, prepared by Cochilco's Directorate of Studies and Public Policies, authored by Mining Market Analyst José Pedro Ruiz-Tagle and Acting Director of Studies and Public Policies Víctor Garay.

In 2024, the exploration budget in Chile reached $794 million, representing 6.36% of the global total. This positioned Chile as the fourth-largest destination for exploration spending worldwide, trailing Canada (19.8%), Australia (15.9%), and the United States (12.3%).

However, Chile's exploration spending decreased by 4.6% compared to 2023, when the recorded expenditure by surveyed companies totaled $832.7 million.

Despite this reduction, the lower investment in mineral exploration in 2024 was not exclusive to Chile. Globally, Cochilco recorded a 2.6% decline in the total exploration budget, reaching $12.483 billion.

"This decline can be partially attributed to intense competition among countries to attract investments in this sector. Over both years, 110 countries reported exploration investments, underscoring the challenge of securing these resources," the report states.

Although Chile's decline was greater than the global average, the country remained the primary destination for mineral exploration in Latin America, accounting for 24.7% of the region's total budget. Mexico and Argentina followed, with shares of 15.3% and 17.9%, respectively.

Globally, copper is the most sought-after mineral in exploration activities, receiving 19.9% of the total exploration budget. However, in Chile, copper dominates far more significantly in exploration spending.

According to the report, in 2024, 80.3% of the total budget allocated to exploration in Chile was directed toward copper projects, followed by gold at 13.9% and other minerals at 5.8%.

Meanwhile, the total number of exploration prospects decreased to 223, down from 226 in 2023. Of these, 145 were classified as active exploration initiatives or short-term projects. In 2024, 111 active exploration prospects were owned by companies that declared exploration budgets, an increase from 97 in 2023.

Among the recorded exploration projects, copper remained the primary target, accounting for 55.2% of all projects. Gold followed as the second most sought-after resource in Chile, representing 25.6%.

Lithium saw a slight increase in its share of total exploration projects, rising from 10.6% in 2023 to 11.7% in 2024. This year, 26 lithium projects were recorded, of which 22 remained active and four were halted.

Of the 26 lithium projects, 21 declared exploration budgets for 2024.

In terms of budget origin, 35.8% of exploration funds came from UK-based companies, followed by Canadian firms, which accounted for 24.1%. Chilean companies maintained their third-place ranking from 2023, with a 16.7% share.

However, when considering the number of companies, the report identified that 53% of the 87 companies involved in Chilean exploration originate from Canada, 21% from Australia, and only 14% from Chile.

Regarding company size, 76 of the firms are classified as junior exploration companies, six are mid-sized, two are state-owned (both domestic and foreign), and three fall into other categories.

The primary sources of capital and financing for these companies are stock exchanges specializing in mining and exploration, such as the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) and the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX). Among the 87 companies surveyed, 73 finance their operations through stock market listings, with 56 specifically relying on ASX or TSX.

Out of all the companies conducting exploration in Chile, 55 reported active exploration activities in 2024, representing 63.2% of the total.