



## Government takes on seamen

Invoking a civil mobilization order for the second time in as many weeks, the government on Tuesday called on striking seamen to return to work after unionists decided to extend a six-day walkout that has cut off the country's islands and left tons of perishable goods in ports.

Merchant Marine Minister Costas Mousouroulis announced the emergency measure after talks with unionists collapsed and seamen called the third 48-hour strike in a row, voting by a narrow margin to extend their action until Friday morning.

Mousouroulis said the government had secured a commitment from shipowners to launch talks on a collective labor contract and on the release of back pay. He said however that demands for the withdrawal of a draft bill aimed at overhauling the coastal shipping sector could not be satisfied. "Unfortunately sclerotic and petty political views prevailed," he said.

Officials were to start distributing civil mobilization documents to strikers last night. Meanwhile unionists were gathering at the port of Piraeus to protest the measure

which came less than two weeks after the government forced Athens metro staff back to work following an eight-day walkout. The country's two main labor unions called a 24-hour Attica-wide strike for Wednesday in solidarity with striking seamen.

The decision to resort to civil mobilization again, issued from the office of Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, reportedly had the backing of the coalition partners, PASOK and Democratic Left. But it drew harsh opposition criticism. Panayiotis Lafazanis of leftist SYRIZA accused the government of "turning parliamentary democracy into a particular kind of parliamentary junta favoring capital over the workers," while the Communist Party (KKE) spoke of "unbridled authoritarianism."

Government sources said unions affiliated with KKE were set on provoking a clash irrespective of the outcome of negotiations.

Meanwhile a vehement dispute has broken out between the seamen and farmers on Crete, with producers on Monday forcing their way onto a moored ferry and coercing the crew into sailing to Piraeus.



## Fitch praises Greek effort to contain deficit and state debt

Greece has achieved its fiscal targets for 2012, registering a small primary deficit despite the recession, Fitch rating agency noted on Tuesday, attributing the government's success to the major curtailment of expenditure and the reduction of state debt through the PSI restructuring and the bond buyback.

The agency added that the reduction of the deficit and the improvement in the current account balance show that the Greek economy has entered a phase of stabilization.

Nevertheless, the implementation of reforms including privatizations and

the restructuring of the banking sector constitute essential conditions for the country to enter a course of sustainable growth, Fitch says, estimating the economic contraction this year to come to 4 percent, against a government estimate of 4.5 percent.

The rating agency underscores that the country with the highest deficit in the eurozone has made the greatest fiscal adjustment ever recorded, although it still has some way to go before seeing its debt decrease. The sustainability of the Greek debt remains particularly fragile, despite the haircut and the buyback, Fitch says.

## NEWS FROM CYPRUS



## Bringing a gourmet trend to Cyprus

THOSE little creatures carrying their homes along with them, snails contribute to our lives in many more ways than you could ever think of. They are used in pharmaceutical products, cosmetics and even in cancer research. But perhaps most importantly, snails are a significant food source with a high nutritional value.

Two sisters from Corinth, Greece have succeeded in establishing an export-led business from scratch, which is now also conquering Cyprus much faster than snail's pace.

The idea for an innovative organic snail farm was conceived when Penny and Maria Vlachou realised the demand for snails was very high and yet only 10 per cent of it was being covered. Snails are often seen as a delicacy, a type of gourmet food, and yet it is in climates like that of Greece and Cyprus where they thrive.

It was therefore the perfect set-up to start an entrepreneurial project that quickly gained pace and is now exporting all over Europe and is considering steady expansion to third countries such as China and Canada.

"Since antiquity snails have occupied an important place in human nutrition and belong to the Mediterranean culinary tradition," said Maria. She explained that snails are a rich source of calcium, iron, phosphorus, Omega-3 fatty acids and proteins. And research has shown that due to the favourable climate in Greece, the snails grown there are richer in Omega-3 fatty acids.

The organic farm in Corinth began in 2007, starting with only three hectares. The success enjoyed, however, has resulted in it expanding its practices throughout Greece, collaborating with 168 families and managing a total of 1,650 hectares. The snails are grown exclusively on the farms, under strict agricultural and veterinary guidelines, and are certified as organic.

"The meat of snails is tender and has a neutral taste," Maria said, "which means it can be cooked in endless variations". Snails can form part of traditional mezedes, such as snail stew; plain with olive oil, tomato and herbs; with risotto; or as part of gourmet dishes, such as with truffle oil and porcini cream; souvlaki, or even tempura. It can be served with other fish and meat dishes, or on its own, cooked or simply pre-boiled. Snails are even suitable for lent.

Fereikos-Helix, the name of the company, derives from the ancient Greek word 'fere-oikos', which literally translated means "I carry my own house", a word that characterises the snail.

"The lengthy process required for cleaning and preparing the snails inspired us to create a series of products that are pre-boiled with or without shells so that this delicious healthy dish can be enjoyed by all without the hassle," said Maria. Thus since April 2011, FereikosGefsis offers high quality snail products, cleaned and pre-cooked, while the sisters said that from May 2013 the company will launch convenient ready-to-cook-meals (in cooperation with the famous chef Ettore Bottrini).

"People nowadays want quality food, they are searching for authentic and organic products, that are though easy to prepare," explained Maria.

Seventy per cent of the company's production is exported abroad, with Lordos Hospitality Group partnering Fereikos for the distribution of the products in Cyprus. The products are sold in various-sized bottles and cans, and original recipes can be tasted at Limoncello Deli-Bar at the Ayios Antonios Municipal Market in Nicosia.

Andreas Lordos, owner of Limoncello told the Sunday Mail that soon the products will also be available at large supermarkets, as well as restaurants and hotels throughout Cyprus.