

JOINT STATEMENT

SERIOUS CONCERNS OVER THE EU-MERCOSUR TRADE AGREEMENT: URGENT ACTION NEEDED TO PROTECT THE EU AGRI-FOOD CHAIN

As discussions on the EU-Mercosur trade agreement resumed from October 7 to 9 in Brasília, our sectors once again reaffirm their strong opposition to the agreement, highlighting its potential repercussions on the EU agri-food supply.

Since 2019, the European Commission has introduced significant legislative texts under the European Green Deal, such as the Fit for 55 package, the Nature Restoration Law, the Industrial Emissions Directive and others in pipeline. These initiatives which impact the future of European agriculture, do not ensure reciprocity with our trade partners or coherence between internal and external policies. This creates an imbalance, giving competitors with weaker environmental regulations an unfair market advantage.

Even with an additional sustainability instrument, its details remaining vague, it is clear that Mercosur countries are not in a position to adopt similar standards imposed on European farmers. We cannot accept an agreement that penalises EU producers for complying with these standards, while allowing imports from countries that do not face the same requirements.

Moreover, this deal risks promoting trade in products associated with environmental degradation and biodiversity loss in Mercosur countries, particularly Brazil. These impacts could have devastating consequences for our environment and agriculture. Additionally, we must consider the implications for animal welfare, as the standards

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applied in Mercosur countries do not align with those in the EU, which could undermine our efforts to promote the ethical treatment of animals.

Furthermore, the agreement could reignite farmers' protests across Europe, especially concerning sensitive products that are vital for local agricultural sectors. Indeed, our sectors are already facing numerous uncertainties. The ongoing war in Ukraine has led to a surge in imports of Ukrainian products, coupled with a concerning high level in energy and fertiliser costs. Adding the EU-Mercosur agreement to this context would exacerbate these competitive disadvantages without providing any tangible guarantees of progress on sustainability.

Last but not least, the strategic dialogue has concluded that "The European Commission must better recognise the strategic relevance of agriculture and food products in trade negotiations, undertake a comprehensive review of its negotiation strategies and review its method of conducting impact assessments prior to trade negotiations". The mandate that is being used in these negotiations dates back to previous century (1999), while concessions on sensitive had been decided before the Covid crisis and Ukraine war and its potential accession to the EU.

The conclusion of such an agreement would therefore go against the spirit of the strategic dialogue about the trade negotiations and it would send a terrible message to the agrifood community at the beginning of the new von Der Leyen mandate.

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On behalf of the following associations:

AVEC – Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade in the EU countries

CEFS – European Association of Sugar Manufacturers

CEPM – European Confederation of Maize Production

CIBE – International Confederation of European Beet Growers

COPA-COGECA – The united voice of farmers and their cooperatives in the European Union

EUWEP – European Union of Wholesale with Eggs, Egg Products, Poultry and Game

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