



Ref.COMM(24)02914

29/10/2024

Joint Press Release

European Agro-Food Workers Unions and Farming Sector Strongly Reject the Conclusion of the Mercosur Trade Agreement

The European Commission's intention to finalize the Mercosur agreement at the G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro on November 18-19 is an extremely worrying development for the European agricultural community.

Copa Cogeca, CEJA, EFFAT and GEOPA representing farmers and their cooperatives, workers' unions and employers in the European agricultural sector, are strongly opposed to the ratification of this agreement.

The overall outcome of the EU-Mercosur FTA negotiations would expose the EU agri-food sector to unfair competition with negative consequences for farmers' livelihoods, wages, working conditions and employment. What's more, the current draft doesn't contribute to raising social and environmental standards in Mercosur countries and increases the risk of breaking up regional value chains in those countries.

Farm workers and farmers cannot accept that the agri-food sector is treated as a bargaining chip to promote the export of other goods, without taking into account the serious economic, social and environmental impacts that such decisions have on the primary sector.

While the EU is committed to achieving ambitious environmental goals, the Mercosur agreement, even with the additional protocol, will not include strong, binding and enforceable safeguards to ensure that the environment is protected, and that human and labor rights are respected. This lack of coherence jeopardizes the overall objective of the Union to foster a transition towards more sustainable food systems.

The Mercosur region already has a pre-eminent position among EU market suppliers in many commodities and further opening of the EU market to Mercosur

agricultural imports, especially of sensitive products, such as: beef, poultry, and sugar, would expose the EU agri-food sector to additional unfair competition.

At the same time, it will be difficult to increase exports of EU products to Mercosur countries due to the economic downturn in some of these countries. Experience shows that in the absence of strong consumer demand, trade is unlikely to act as an independent driver of growth.

Copa Cogeca, CEJA, EFFAT and GEOPA believe that the strategic importance of agriculture and food should always be recognized in trade negotiations, as the economic, social and environmental sustainability of these sectors is fragile and easily disrupted. In addition, the requirement to respect the highest environmental and social standards, including the eight fundamental ILO conventions, should be an essential and binding element of any trade agreement. These conditions were not respected in the Mercosur negotiations.

The European agricultural sector needs a new vision that takes into account the principle of economic, social and environmental sustainability, trade reciprocity and just transition, as outlined in the report on the Strategic Dialogue on Agriculture. Signing the Mercosur agreement would be in strong contradiction with these principles.

Copa Cogeca, CEJA, EFFAT and GEOPA call on the EU institutions and national governments to listen to farmers and farm workers in Europe and halt the negotiations of the EU-Mercosur trade agreement.

Farmers and farm workers ensure food is everyday available on our tables. They deserve recognition and respect, not social dumping and unfair competition.

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