

EU-Mercosur Trade Deal: CEETTAR Urges Rethink to Protect European Agriculture and Rural Economies

Brussels, 9 December 2024 – CEETTAR, the European Confederation of Agricultural, Rural, and Forestry Contractors, is calling for urgent revisions to the EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement, highlighting the profound risks it poses to Europe's agricultural sector. The Confederation warns that the deal, as currently framed, undermines the high standards of European agriculture, threatening its sustainability, competitiveness, and the livelihoods of those who rely on it, including agricultural contractors (themselves including rural & forestry machinery contracting businesses, for example).

Klaus Pentzlin, President of CEETTAR, said:

"European agriculture operates under some of the highest standards in the world, ensuring food safety, environmental protection, and fair labour practices. Allowing imports from Mercosur countries that do not meet these same standards is not just unfair—it risks destabilising the entire agricultural value chain."

The agreement's concessions in sensitive sectors such as beef, poultry, sugar, and ethanol open the door to products produced under less stringent environmental, labour, and safety regulations. This creates an uneven playing field for European farmers, with repercussions for agricultural contractors who depend on a strong and competitive agricultural sector to sustain their businesses.

Contractors - A Vital Role in European Agriculture

Agricultural contractors play a pivotal role in enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of European agriculture. By providing specialised services like precision planting, sustainable land management, and the integration of advanced technologies, contractors help farmers improve productivity, optimise resources, and reduce their environmental footprint.

Paul Walsh, Policy Advisor at CEETTAR, explained:

"Agricultural contractors are key drivers of innovation in Europe's farming sectors. The unfair competition introduced by this trade deal risks not only the livelihoods of farmers but also the broader ecosystem of services and innovation that make European agriculture a global leader."

Unfair Standards and Unsustainable Practices

CEETTAR is particularly concerned that Latin American producers will not have to comply with the EU's rigorous standards. This discrepancy raises serious questions about the EU's commitment to fairness and sustainability.

"The EU cannot expect its farmers and contractors to operate under strict regulations while allowing imports produced under less sustainable and less ethical conditions," added Walsh. *"This lack of reciprocity undermines trust and devalues the progress European agriculture has made toward environmental stewardship and innovation."*

The EU-Mercosur Trade Agreement has the potential to strengthen international ties, but it cannot come at the cost of Europe's agricultural integrity and the livelihoods that depend on it. CEETTAR urges policymakers to prioritise fairness and sustainability, ensuring that trade policies support, rather than undermine, Europe's farming and rural communities.

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