

# The EU-Mercosur trade agreement: A trade-off at the expense of animal welfare

## The EU's commitment to animal welfare

As part of its Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU will improve its existing animal welfare laws (on slaughter and the transport of animals, for instance). The EU will also propose a [food label on animal welfare](#).

The European Union (EU) and the Mercosur countries (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay) concluded a [trade agreement](#) back in 2019 to exchange more products and services. The process of ratification is due to start soon.



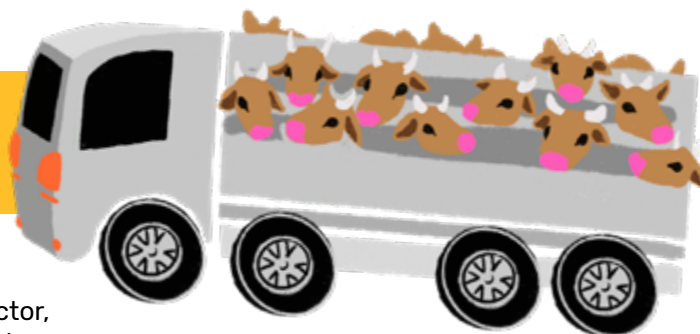
The trade agreement will increase Mercosur exports of live animals and animal products (beef, poultry, pork, horse meat, etc.) to the EU as well as EU exports of dairy products to the Mercosur market.

At the moment, the trade deal does not require Mercosur exports to respect all animal welfare rules applied in the EU<sup>1</sup>. The EU will focus on auditing and certifying Mercosur slaughterhouses to ensure EU standards are [respected](#). However, the way animals are raised and transported in the Mercosur region does not fall under this EU audit and certification procedure.

*"More than 90% of EU consumers want to see imported products respect animal welfare standards equivalent to those applied in the EU"*

according to  
[Eurobarometer](#)

## A race to the bottom for animal welfare standards



Today, [animal welfare standards](#) are generally lower in the Mercosur region than in the EU. In the Brazilian poultry sector, for instance, on-farm welfare standards are not regulated by [legislation](#).

Consequently, the trade deal might increase the incoming number of products with lower animal welfare standards to the EU, with the risk that European producers begin to oppose any stronger regulations in favour of protecting animals fearing unequal [competition](#). There has not been a new law on animal welfare in the EU [since 2012](#).

The EU-Mercosur trade agreement will facilitate the export of live cows and poultry from the Mercosur region to the EU market, posing serious concerns over their transport [conditions](#).

1. [https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/files/eurogroupforanimals/2021-12/2020\\_eurogroup\\_for\\_animals\\_mercosur\\_en.pdf](https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/files/eurogroupforanimals/2021-12/2020_eurogroup_for_animals_mercosur_en.pdf) (page 12 & 21). Only one exception seems to apply to egg products, where the EU would have conditioned their liberalisation to the respect of EU standards.



## Increasing numbers of factory farms for animals in the Mercosur region

The EU-Mercosur trade deal will stimulate beef exports and encourage the intensification of the sector leading to the development of more factory [farms](#). On those farms, cows are confined to feedlots where they are being fed with highly concentrated grains. Their diet causes high levels of digestive diseases, and the exposure to fine dust affects the animals' respiratory [tracts](#).

The EU-Mercosur agreement also will boost poultry exports: **180,000 tonnes of Mercosur chicken meat** will be allowed to enter the EU market free from taxes. That is almost double the amount of Mercosur chicken sold in the EU in [2018](#) and is equivalent to the entire German or French chicken meat [production](#). In Brazil, chicken farms are often crowded, with more chickens per square meter than in the [EU](#)<sup>2</sup>. On pig farms, female pigs are kept in gestation crates, separated from their piglets, [a practice restricted in the EU](#).

The intensification of animal agriculture, in addition to being detrimental to animal welfare, is also linked to the surge in antimicrobial resistance, the spread of [zoonoses](#) (animal diseases that can be transmitted to humans) and the climate crisis.

## Less forest for wild animals in the Mercosur region

The EU-Mercosur trade deal will increase [deforestation](#) in the Mercosur region. Animals are widely impacted by this loss of precious ecosystems, as deforestation endangers their habitat.



MEP Manuela Ripa



*"Better animal welfare within the context of EU-Mercosur is paramount in order to reduce animal suffering, the loss of biodiversity and the risk of future pandemics. Tackling animal welfare makes our society more resilient."*

If we are serious about the climate crisis, antimicrobial resistance, minimising animal suffering and the sustainability of our food systems, we cannot go ahead with the EU-Mercosur trade agreement. We must ban the export of live animals, create more and better controls at the EU's borders and ensure a higher number of independent audits in Mercosur countries. Without it, meat certification and the protection of consumers will be seriously compromised.

Going ahead with the EU-Mercosur trade agreement will threaten EU standards of animal welfare and put the EU's high environmental and social goals and values at risk. We must act now to prevent this dangerous trade-off! Join us to defend our commitments to climate, sustainable development and human rights.

### Find out more about how the EU-Mercosur trade agreement impacts

[Deforestation](#) | [Biodiversity](#) | [Human Rights](#) | [Climate and land use](#) | [Food safety](#) | [Pesticides and GMOs](#) | [Public Procurement](#)

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2. 2007 Council Directive allows for 42kg/m<sup>2</sup> but only with a derogation and under certain conditions. 42Kg/M<sup>2</sup> is the standard practice in Brazil