
Europe: Farmers Rebel

By: Arnaldo Musa / Special for CubaSi
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There are already farmers from ten countries who are angrily protesting against the agricultural policies of the European Union, some of which tend to please the United States for the benefit of Ukraine, whose products are reaching the markets of the so-called Old Continent without meeting the minimum of the necessary sanitary conditions.

EU producers have decided to take their anger to the streets and have closed roads in protest, staged tractor parades and demonstrated en masse in France, Germany, Poland, Romania, the Netherlands and Spain.

The protest movement of European farmers responds to all types of tendencies, from the most well-off conservatives to the most progressive small farmers.

Farmers have already demonstrated in cities such as Berlin, Paris, Barcelona, Rome and Madrid, blocking roads and making it difficult for vehicles to enter and exit through the main roads. In Spanish territory, particularly, mobilizations have been registered in at least ten autonomous communities.

Sector leaders assured that the time has come to forge a new consensus on food and agriculture among farmers, rural communities and all other actors in the EU agri-food chain, but that, together with the food industry, they face a wide range of challenges, ranging from climate change to inflation and volatile impacts on markets.

ACTIONS

An acquaintance from Andalusia says that many farmers in the region are giving away some of their crops to the population, while tension increases in most of Spain, although the most violent nuance occurs in France, where tractors blocked streets in Paris and its Drivers have come to blows with the gendarmes, who bore the brunt.

Protesters with their tractors even managed to enter the premises where Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron was located to demand their rights.

I confessed that I didn't really have a very good opinion on the farmers in France who a few years ago drowned some one hundred million chickens in three days to raise chicken prices.

Furthermore, I remember that the French and Belgians preferred to destroy their surplus products so as not to send them to needy countries in Africa. I still have radio photos from the no-longer-existing North American agency UPI with the skeletal children of Biafra, in Nigeria, for whom death inevitably awaited, and who could no longer even swallow the synthetic potato that arrived late from France.

CLAIMS

Regarding the current massive movement, the claims point to less bureaucracy in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), fair market competition with third countries and "mirror clauses" that apply to imports the same requirements that are demanded of the European agricultural sector, among others.

Although the European Commission announced that it will reverse the measure that seeks to reduce the use of unsustainable phytosanitary products for the care of plantations, leaders of several entities said that they are arriving too late.

The measures that the EU proposes to comply with the 2030 Agenda, which calls for the sustainability of food production systems, is one of the most heard complaints from the strikers, since they consider that they haven't been consulted with the sector, nor have their proposals been heard.

Farmers say they want to produce food in a more sustainable way, but they cannot produce if they have no alternatives. "We still have pests, weeds and we have to fertilize," they expressed.

The Agriculture Ministers of the members of the European Union asked to urgently address the discontent of agricultural producers, who are mobilizing with a vast list of demands ranging from the aforementioned imports from Ukraine to environmental regulation.

This Tuesday they met in Brussels to propose ideas to calm the anger. For the Belgian Minister of Agriculture, David Clarinval, "the anger of farmers is due to several factors and does not necessarily have the same reasons from one country to another", but equally "they must be taken into account."

For the Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Luis Planas, the situation can be seen as explosive given the proximity of the European elections scheduled for June:

"The extreme right seeks to use farmers and ranchers as a political instrument. I find it regrettable. "They need to be defended, to be heard (...) but not to be politically manipulated."

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
