

The EU-Mercosur trade agreement: Fuelling conflict and human rights violations

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.

A deal that puts agribusiness against indigenous communities



The export-oriented agricultural system in the Mercosur countries is often accompanied by extremely violent [conflicts](#). In 2019, the Amazon region alone saw **33 deaths due to conflicts over land and environments**. Brazil ranks third in the world in terms of the murder of land and environmental defenders, with **24 deaths in 2019**.

The EU-Mercosur trade deal is bound to increase [deforestation](#) and land [grabs](#), by increasing exports of soy, beef and bioethanol. Indigenous people, who live in the forests, will risk their lives to retain their land, homes and livelihoods against the interests of big agribusiness. Yet, the deal does not include enforceable standards on indigenous peoples' rights.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has reversed the legal processes that protected indigenous communities' right to land, especially the right to demarcation, which helped to recognise and protect indigenous land holdings. This has led to a situation where indigenous land permissions can be reviewed and [revoked](#) at any time.

The rights of indigenous people are also being violated in Paraguay where cattle farmers are expanding into indigenous lands, posing an immediate threat to their [livelihoods](#).



Lastly, the EU-Mercosur trade deal will increase pesticide use in the Mercosur [region](#). This will have a direct impact on the health of the indigenous people living in those areas, such as the Mapuche communities in [Argentina](#).

Despite this horrific situation, the EU-Mercosur trade deal exclusively refers to a watered-down version of the UN protections for indigenous [people](#).

"This agreement insufficiently protects the rights of indigenous people, farmers, and consumers, whose health and lives are at risk. It is unacceptable that trade interests prevail over human rights. As long as no sufficient provisions on human rights, and no sanctions in case of non-compliance are foreseen, we will continue to oppose the EU-Mercosur trade agreement."

MEP Yannick Jadot



A trade deal that will not benefit workers

Labour rights are not always guaranteed in the Mercosur region. In Brazil, since 1995, **55,000 Brazilian workers** have been rescued by government inspectors from "[situations similar to modern slavery](#)", the majority of them found in the cattle [industry](#).

There are [reports](#) of forced labour and poor working conditions in the beef sector in the country, with workers on farms supplying world's biggest meat firms allegedly paid poverty wages and housed in shacks with no toilets or running water. **The EU-Mercosur deal will boost beef exports, yet does not have enforceable or sanctionable rules to ensure those are produced through high labour standards.**

Trade union leaders are facing similar hardships in the region. In Brazil, in 2020, trade union leaders faced arbitrary arrests and received multiple death [threats](#). Brazil has yet to ratify the international labour convention on freedom of association (ILO 87). Regular violations of trade union rights are also reported in Argentina and [Paraguay](#).

EU Trade policy should not give a free ride to human rights violations

Increasing agricultural imports from Mercosur countries without enforceable or sanctionable provisions to guarantee that indigenous, human and workers' rights are respected in their production is unacceptable.

Going ahead with the EU-Mercosur trade agreement will put Human Rights and 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](#) | [Animal Welfare](#) | [Biodiversity](#) | [Climate and land use](#) | [Food safety](#) | [Pesticides and GMOs](#) | [Public Procurement](#)

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