

ELO Position Statement on the EU–MERCOSUR Trade Agreement

The European Landowners' Organization (ELO) represents a broad community of private landowners across Europe. Those are mainly farmers, foresters, and land managers delivering food, fibre, renewable materials, and ecosystem services. As such, ELO approaches the EU–MERCOSUR trade agreement with a balanced and pragmatic perspective that reflects the diversity of our membership and the economic realities in rural Europe. ELO regrets having this discussion at a time when the European Commission is also reviewing the multiannual financial framework and the Common Agricultural Policy. While those instruments could be used to absorb the impact of the Mercosur agreement, they further contribute to the growing number of constraints farmers have to tackle. This is especially the case for professional farmers who must tackle new proposals on capping while their competitiveness is under threat.

ELO recognises that the agreement has become a highly sensitive political issue, and we fully understand that agricultural producers' organisations may adopt a more critical stance, particularly in livestock and certain arable sectors facing direct competitive pressure. At the same time, ELO also acknowledges that Europe's rural economy is not exclusively defined by commodity production. Many landowners are engaged in forestry, renewable energy, tourism, nature management, hunting, and diversified rural entrepreneurship. From this broader economic angle, any agreement that supports growth, market stability and purchasing power may also generate indirect benefits for rural areas and land-based businesses.

ELO therefore maintains a position of public neutrality on the EU–MERCOSUR agreement.

This is a deliberate strategic choice, reflecting the fact that our organisation represents both land managers and, in practice, a segment of the European economy beyond primary production. It also acknowledges that a polarised public debate risks weakening domestic alliances that are essential to deliver workable policy outcomes for rural communities, including cooperation with family-owned businesses and other economic stakeholders at national and regional level.

However, neutrality does not mean indifference. In bilateral and internal discussions with EU institutions and Member States, ELO continues to raise a set of concrete concerns and conditions that must be addressed to ensure the agreement does not undermine European land-based sectors or the environmental credibility of EU policies.

ELO's key concerns and priorities include:

- **Fair competition and domestic competitiveness:** EU farmers and foresters must not be placed at a structural disadvantage due to differing production standards, cost structures, or enforcement realities. Any market opening must be matched with credible safeguards for sensitive sectors.
- **Reciprocity of standards and enforceable sustainability commitments:** Imports should comply with equivalent rules on traceability, sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, and

environmental and social standards. Commitments must be enforceable in practice, not only on paper.

- **Robust monitoring, transparency and safeguard mechanisms:** The agreement must provide for practical tools that allow early identification of disruptive import surges, rapid responses, and clear mechanisms to protect vulnerable sectors and regions.
- **Support for transition and competitiveness inside the EU:** If the agreement proceeds, it must be accompanied by realistic measures to strengthen European competitiveness, including simplification of administrative burdens, better innovation support, and a policy framework that rewards sustainable land management rather than penalising it.

ELO remains committed to constructive dialogue with the European institutions and all relevant stakeholders. Our objective is to ensure that trade policy contributes to prosperity and strategic resilience, while respecting Europe's farmers and land managers, safeguarding competitiveness, and maintaining the integrity of the EU's sustainability agenda.

In short: **ELO stays publicly neutral, but engaged and vigilant** - supporting an approach that protects European competitiveness, demands enforceable reciprocity, and keeps trade compatible with Europe's climate and biodiversity objectives.