

2500 Tractors Jam Brazil's Capital in Protest

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A massive protest of Brazilian farmers and a first batch of 2.500 tractors (tratoração) converged on the capital Brasília to protest about debts and a strong currency which hinders commodities exports.

The long lines of tractors occupied the Ministerial Esplanade and the Three Branches Plaza, a huge two kilometers long open space which connects the seats of ministries and the Executive, Congress and Supreme Court.

The more than five thousand mostly grain farmers and their tractors, cut traffic and set up camp tents in advance of the arrival of another 15.000 farmers that are on their way to the Brazilian capital.

The farmers belong to the National Agriculture Confederation, CNA, that is demanding an immediate support program of US\$ 600 million to face the consequences of adverse climatic conditions and the strong real, which has increased production costs in US dollars.

The 20.000 protestors include delegations from 14 of Brazil's 27 states.

According to official Brazilian Agriculture ministry information the 2005 crop will be reach 113,5 million tons, 4,94% less than in 2004.

Farmers claim that the harvest drop will be 14 million tons because of extreme situations such as drought and floods, and are seeking compensations.

CNA is also protesting about the appreciation of the Brazilian currency real against the US dollar, almost 21% in the last twelve months which has meant a drop in revenue from exports and an increase in domestic costs measured in US dollars.

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