
A Brazilian Voice Against US and EU Protectionism

Contributed by Isaura Daniel
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The governor of the southernmost Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, Germano Rigotto, asked the Arab diplomats present at the 6th Ambassador Meeting in state capital Porto Alegre to join Brazil in the fight against foreign trade barriers.

"Our countries should fight together against protectionism barriers, which impoverish the world and distort the international market," said Rigotto.

To an audience of businessmen, the Gaúcho (of the state of Rio Grande do Sul) governor stated that international trade should have clearer and fairer rules.

The developing countries were victorious in this respect at the beginning of August, at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The North Americans, Europeans and Japanese committed themselves to start eliminating agriculture subsidies, funds they provide their farmers and that reduce the price of a series of products on the foreign market.

One of the Arab countries, Egypt, is a member, together with Brazil and other agricultural nations, of the G-20, a group fighting against rich nation subsidies in the scope of the WTO.

The organization recently granted Brazil a victory with regard to the subsidies that the United States gives its cotton farmers. In the same line, the WTO condemned the European sugar subsidies, answering to a plea by Brazil, Australia and Thailand.

Like Brazil, Egypt should be benefited if the subsidies are really eliminated, as the country is strong in cotton farming. Other Arab countries, among them Yemen and Sudan are also producers of the fibre.

Gaúcho Crop

Rio Grande do Sul, although it is not an exporter of cotton and sugar, products that receive the largest volume of subsidies, has a crop of 22 million tons of grain.

The state recently started exporting wheat, a product that Poland, a new European Union member, also produces. The Polish product started receiving subsidies this year.

Rio Grande do Sul has recently suffered losses with the temporary embargo that China imposed to Brazilian soy. Soy is the main state agricultural product, which had a 9 million ton harvest last year.

This year, the volume has dropped to 5.3 million tonnes due to the drought faced at the beginning of the year.

Integration

The Gaúcho governor also gave the Arab ambassadors a message of integration and peace.

"I see in the world of diplomacy, trade exchange, and business environment a set of indispensable factors for

approximation and generation of peace, prosperity and justice," he said.

Rigotto recalled that the Arab countries are located on two continents - Africa and Asia - and that the state has immigrants from both regions.

He mentioned the peaceful relations of various ethnic groups in the state, including the Arabs, as an example of integration.

"In Rio Grande, the peoples of these two continents meet and are actively present, living in harmony among themselves and among other ethnic groups, generating the multi-cultural aspect of the people of Rio Grande," he said to the ambassadors.

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