

## Brazil's Lula Proposes 17% Raise in Minimum Wage

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Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva decided to raise the monthly minimum wage from its current level of US\$ 133.69 (300 reais) to US\$ 155.97 (350 reais), as of April.

The official announcement of the decision was made by the ministers of Labor, Luiz Marinho, Planning, Paulo Bernardo, and the presidential advisory staff, Dilma Rousseff.

To take effect, the new value of the minimum wage must be approved by the National Congress.

The minimum wage is usually readjusted on May 1, the date that Labor Day is commemorated in Brazil. The decision to move the raise to April was the result of negotiations with the workers' central unions, which were demanding that it be implemented on January 1 of each year.

During the announcement of the new minimum wage, Minister Marinho affirmed that, in February, the government will begin negotiations with the workers' central unions over a policy to beef up the minimum wage over the long term.

"President Lula has always said: We will not commit any irresponsible act that jeopardizes the country's financial and economic health," Marinho commented in a press conference with reporters.

He emphasized that the US\$ 21.28 (50 reais) increase in the value of the minimum wage is "in perfect harmony" with the country's reality.

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