
After Meeting Bush, Brazil's Lula Says He's Going Back Home Empty Handed

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Brazil and the United States invited El Salvador to become the "pilot" country for the production of ethanol thus helping to save on hydrocarbons, was confirmed in El Salvador by the country's president Elias Antonio Saca.

The invitation was the result of the second US/Brazil presidential summit in a month held Saturday in the presidential retreat of Camp David where presidents George W Bush and Lula da Silva held a two hours meeting in a "most friendly atmosphere".

United States is the world's largest producer of ethanol (mainly from corn) and Brazil follows as the main global exporter, and with possibly the most advanced technology dating back to the seventies when the first oil embargoes and shocks. Brazil's ethanol is made out of sugar cane.

"Today Saturday President Lula da Silva and President George Bush and following on the memorandum of understanding signed by the two countries in early March in São Paulo, have invited El Salvador to undertake the production of ethanol as a pilot case in Central America and we feel most satisfied since this is the confirmation of our energy policy," said President Saca.

"This is an ambitious alliance," added Saca who said that alternative fuels such as ethanol "will give us the opportunity in the future to have fuel at better prices and address the crisis that the world currently faces with oil prices".

Saca said that in the coming days other countries of the Caribbean will be incorporating to the bio-fuels program which will be announced by Brasília and Washington. According to the program in a near future gasoline in El Salvador will be blended with 10% ethanol. El Salvador is entitled to funds and technological support for the program.

"US and Brazil are sending a clear message to the world that bio-fuels are a positive alternative for the environment and will help El Salvador and Central America have a lesser dependency on oil. We're not going to miss this train, because it's the future of the country".

At the Camp David meeting another main issue of the presidential summit besides the "strategic dialogue" on alternative fuels was cooperation on world trade talks and greater access to global markets.

The Doha round of global talks for free trade, which were launched in 2001, have been stalled since last year with developing countries demanding more significant cuts in farm subsidies and greater access to markets in rich countries.

Brazil leads the so-called group of 20 which are pressing for freer trade of agriculture. US as the world's main trade power, together with the European Union lead the group of rich nations which protect and subsidize agriculture.

"It is in our interest to work together to make sure that we have a deal that treats Brazil fairly, the United States fairly, as well as other nations fairly," said President Bush during the joint press conference in a small building on the wooded mountain retreat.

"I strongly believe that the best way to alleviate world poverty is through trade."

President Lula da Silva praised the discussions saying "the meeting was the most productive" of all he has had with Washington, although he admitted returning to Brazil with not much more than what he arrived with.

"If someone asks me, 'What are you taking back to Brazil,' I would say nothing. I'm not taking anything back to Brazil," he said, but he was encouraged with President Bush's "commitment to getting it done" and to advance the larger Doha Round talks.

President Bush also said it will take more than the will of just the United States and Brazil to break the logjam but "what we won't do is accept a unilateral deal".

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