

On behalf of the Irish Limousin Cattle Society's 2000+ members, we wish to formally outline our serious concerns regarding the proposed EU–Mercosur trade agreement and the significant risks it poses to the Irish beef industry. We believe this agreement is fundamentally detrimental to our members, Irish beef farmers, rural communities, and the long-term sustainability of high-quality beef production in Ireland.

First and foremost, the agreement allows for increased imports of beef from Mercosur countries produced to standards that are not equivalent to those required by Irish farmers. We operate under some of the highest environmental, animal welfare, traceability, and food safety standards in the world. Mercosur producers are not subject to the same regulatory framework, particularly in relation to hormone use, veterinary controls, environmental protections, and deforestation. Allowing beef produced under lower standards to compete directly with Irish beef undermines the integrity of EU food policy and places Irish farmers at a severe competitive disadvantage. The findings outlined in the Farmers Journal “Brazil’s antibiotic trade exposed” was shocking at multiple levels. Our government cannot knowingly allow our citizens health to be negatively impacted by eating meat containing such banned substances.

If an Irish company was found to have similar banned substances in their products, they would be immediately withdrawn from shops and consumers. They would likely be in front of the Oireachtas explaining how such a scenario could occur and what preventive actions have been put in place to ensure a similar occurrence cannot reoccur.

Secondly, the Irish beef sector is already operating under extreme economic pressure. While 2025 saw an increase in beef farmer's incomes, a disrupter like Bluetongue could see prices return to previous low levels. Any additional downward pressure on beef prices arising from increased imports would disproportionately impact family farms, particularly those in marginal and rural areas where alternative land use is limited. The cumulative effect could lead to the erosion of rural communities that depend on livestock farming for employment and economic activity.

Furthermore, the agreement contradicts the stated objectives of EU and Irish agricultural on climate policies on multiple levels. Irish farmers are being asked to reduce emissions, enhance biodiversity, and meet ambitious sustainability targets, often at considerable cost. At the same time, the Mercosur deal supports the importation of beef from regions associated with higher carbon footprints (transporting beef from South America has a substantial carbon footprint) and environmental damage, including deforestation. This represents carbon leakage rather than genuine climate action and undermines public confidence in EU climate commitments.

There are also serious concerns regarding traceability, enforcement, and consumer confidence. The ability to effectively police standards and guarantees across vast supply chains in Mercosur countries remains questionable.

Any failure in this regard risks damaging consumer trust in Irish beef products, as the consumer will not know where the beef came from. It has taken many years to develop and mature the reputation of Irish beef both nationally and globally. This could be eroded overnight.

We appreciate your consideration of these concerns and ask that you engage with the decision-makers to oppose the EU-Mercosur deal in order to protect the long-term viability of Irish beef farming - to ensure a level playing field, protect farm incomes, prioritise the health of our citizens and uphold the high standards expected by Irish and European consumers.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Hester,  
President,  
Irish Limousin Cattle Society.