

# *Colombian President Maintains Slight Lead in Polls*

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Bogotá, May 1 (RHC-WOLRD BULLETIN) – President Juan Manuel Santos remains the clear favorite to win the Colombian presidential election despite his approval rating falling by 0.5 percent amid agricultural strikes that threaten to spread across the country.

In a poll released Wednesday by Invamer-Gallup, President Santos, of the Social Party of National Unity, leads with 32 percent followed by the candidate for the Center Democratic Party, Oscar Zuluaga, on 20.5 percent. The election is slated for May 25.

While the government searches for a response to the agricultural strikes, which began April 28th, to avoid a repeat of the violent demonstrations which spread across Colombia in 2013, it appears that only the Center Democratic, the party affiliated to former president Alvaro Uribe has been able to profit from this unrest.

According to political analysts at Colombia's La Silla Vacía, Santos' support is already weakest amongst rural voters. In the countryside, where the strikes are most significant the "voto en blanco" or spoiled votes said to be as high as 42.5 percent, according to La Silla Vacía.

The agricultural crisis, which is now gripping the country, has become a major issue on the campaign trail, with presidential hopefuls and even the members of the FARC guerrillas, Revolutionary Armed Forces of

Colombia, engaged in peace dialogues with the government in Havana, Cuba since 2012, speaking out on the subject.

Land ownership and agricultural reform have long been a cause of disputes in Colombia and are seen as the cause of the almost five decade long civil conflict. This was the first point tabled and discussed on the agenda for the peace dialogues between the FARC and the government's negotiating team.

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