

Colombian Farmer Protests Enter Fifth Day



Bogotá, May 2 (RHC), – Colombian farmers entered the fifth day of a national strike on Friday, in a bid to pressure the government to resume negotiations.

The protests were launched on Monday against what they said was the government's failure to make good on promised subsidies for small-scale agriculture. Three people were injured in protest-related violence, officials said.

The dispute, which has simmered since last year, is centered on intense opposition by farmers to Colombia's free trade agreements with the United States and the EU, which they regard as a threat to their livelihoods.

Tens of thousands of small farmers, or campesinos, are taking part in open-ended protests in more than 20 counties throughout the country.

Today, protests are concentrating in the Boyacá county, leader of the Agricultural Dignity movement, which is leading the protests, said. Protesters are demanding the re-negotiation of the Free Trade Agreements as well as the government's financing of agricultural inputs and credits.

Angry farmers last year blocked key highways and clashed with authorities in protests that resulted in several deaths over a two month period.

The government of President Juan Manuel Santos, who is running for re-election May 25th, has warned protesters will not be allowed to block main routes again.

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