

Colombian Government Resumes Dialogue with Protesting Farmers



Bogota, May 10 (RHC) -- The dialogue between the Colombian government and unemployed farmers resumed on Friday with the issue of refinancing loans and with the presence of observers from the United Nations.

After mediation sessions by Vice President Angelino Garzón, the parties returned to the negotiating table hoping to reach agreements on a number of requests from farmers, who took to the streets last week across the country to protest the government's unfulfilled commitments.

The Ministry of Agriculture and agrarian spokespersons hope to reach a consensus on the proposal to extend the period for debt settlement by farmers with debts of up to 20 million pesos (just over \$10,000), without interest, to up to 10 years.

In a message on Twitter, agrarian leader César Pachon, representative of the Agricultural Dignity movement, said they asked the ministry to implement a working methodology, for ministers and relevant stakeholders to be summoned, but they refused to accept it.

Besides the credit issue, farmers are demanding lower costs of inputs, the renegotiation of the 13 free trade agreements implemented in the country, among other demands.

While negotiations continue, the 12-day agricultural strike is going forward with new demonstrations led by several social organizations in cities like Popayan, Barranquilla, Cali, Bucaramanga and Florence.

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