

Paraguayan Farmers Launch New Round of Protests



Asuncion, January 20 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Hundreds of Paraguayan small-scale farmers began a new round of protests Monday, after they announced that talks with the government in Asuncion had collapsed.

In late 2014 thousands of farmers joined nationwide demonstrations to demand debt relief. Protesters said debts resulting from bad harvests, climate change, water overflows linked to hydroelectric dam operations in rural areas as well as market closures should be absolved.

In the latest round of protests, over 800 farmers have backed demands for the government of President Horacio Cartes to provide allowances to victims of crop losses.

While many Paraguayan farmers have already received small payments of around US\$300, the protesters say more farmers should be handed allowances to help them back on their feet.

The protesters have also demanded the government raise taxes on large scale exporters, and reduce taxes for small-scale farmers. Another of their demands is the easing of access to low cost loans for small farmers, and a pledge from Cartes' administration to improve transport infrastructure.

Since the previous round of protests, farmers have been in negotiations with the agricultural ministry, but they now say talks have stalled. In response, they have warned they will launch a campaign of nationwide

road blocks until the government meets their demands.

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