



# Upgrading China-Southern Cone Agro-Industrial Relations

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS\***

**DECEMBER 2019**

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Grupo de Países Productores del Sur and Inter-American Dialogue



## INTRODUCTION

Already a key consumer of Southern Cone\*\* agricultural goods, the Asian region is positioned to be an even more critical partner for the region's agro-industrial suppliers in the coming years. Asia will continue to drive global population growth for the next few decades, and the Asian middle class is expected to reach 5 billion people by 2030 (Ferrando, 2013), with much of that growth led by China. Continued middle class growth in Asia will ensure high rates of demand for numerous agri-food products from the Southern Cone, including grains for human and animal consumption, meats, and certain higher-end products such as dairy, wine and fruit.

At the same time, the trade war between the US and China has resulted in a unique period of opportunity for the Latin American region, and especially for its major agricultural producers. As a result of uncertainties and challenges brought about by continued tensions between the US and China and tariffs placed on \$735 billion in US and Chinese goods, China is looking to diversify its partnerships in strategic sectors, including energy and food. The Southern Cone is positioned to become an even more valuable region for China in this context, especially as concerns supply of key agricultural goods.

The countries of the Southern Cone would be well-advised to take advantage of this period of opportunity. Much could be gained at this moment from a coordinated, multi-dimensional strategy aimed at upgrading the trade-based and other aspects of the China-Southern Cone agro-industrial dynamic. New leverage afforded to the Southern Cone in its dealings with China can help to ensure greater access to Chinese markets for a range of Southern Cone products and services, or to achieve higher rates of higher-value-added production at home—an objective with clear economic and benefits for the region and less global environmental impact, presumably. Collaboration among Southern Cone governments and industry would be of particular value at this juncture, whether in terms of information sharing, to ensure the highest levels of food safety for region's key exports (an issue of concern for Chinese consumers), to leverage the region's still limited diplomatic and other resources in China, or in negotiation with China issues of market access.

## WHAT IS DRIVING CHINA-SOUTHERN CONE AGRICULTURAL RELATIONS?

China's position as a food importer is tied to a series of food security policies, the most recent of which were issued since global food crisis of 2008—an event that reinforced the link between food price shocks and instability for China's leadership. In 2014, China's Number One Document (一号文件), a central policy

paper that generally focuses on rural reform and agricultural modernization, set new goals for agricultural self-sufficiency. These included “absolute security (interpreted as near 100 percent self-sufficiency) in the production of rice and wheat, which are considered critical “food grains” (口粮); 95 percent self-sufficiency in

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\*This document was prepared based on initial findings from an Inter-American Dialogue, CAF — Development Bank of Latin America, and Grupo de Países Productores del Sur (GPS) forum in Buenos Aires, Argentina on June 25, 2019. The event considered the various factors likely to shape China-Latin America agro-industrial relations in the years to come, including key policy and demographic developments in China and shifts in the international trade architecture. Over the course of the day, participants discussed current and potential region-wide and international efforts to upgrade agricultural ties to China.

\*\* For the purposes of this paper, the Southern Cone includes Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

the production of staple foods (e.g., rice, wheat, and corn, or 谷物); and 80 percent self-sufficiency in all grains (粮食), including soy. The “all grains” target has been downgraded since the 1990s (from 95 percent to 80 percent), likely reflecting both rising domestic demand and production limitations (Myers and Guo, 2015).

In support of these self-sufficiency targets, China has announced grain-specific “red lines”. Of the 1.8 billion mu (or 120 million hectares) of land that China has reserved for agricultural production, the country will dedicate 1.65 billion mu specifically to produce grain (rice, wheat, corn, and soy). Of that amount, 1.4 billion mu are reserved exclusively for rice, wheat, and corn (谷物) production. Under its guidelines, China will also place more emphasis on food quality and greater priority on meat, vegetable, and fruit production, all of which require less land than grains and create more jobs (Myers & Guo, 2015). A series of tariffs and subsidies supports China’s self-sufficiency targets, including the decision to rely on imports of soy and some other commodities – e.g., some fruits, milk, and luxury food products that are not efficiently produced at home (Piñeiro and Myers, 2016). Through all of these measures, China seeks to avoid excessive dependence on foreign supplies and keep prices stable for its growing urban population (Jin, et al., 2018).

China’s objectives are of course limited by a range of supply-side challenges. China has 20 percent of the world’s population, but only 7 percent of its arable land (less than 0.1 ha). Water supply is also limited to approximately 1,861 cubic meters per capita, repenting about 25 percent of the world average (Rosales, 2019). Deserts cover more than a quarter of the country’s territory and are growing. Besides growing land, climate and water constraints, China also faces increasing challenges related to animal and plant diseases and pests (Palermo, 2019). The outbreak of the African Swine Fever in the country has been particularly catastrophic, with as many as 100 million pigs culled until October 2019, according to private sector estimates. China may lose between 20 percent and 70 percent of its pig herd (potentially up to 350 million pigs) because of the disease (Rabobank, 2019).

China has made considerable efforts to preserve arable land while also improving land quality, advancing water conservation and irrigation, and upgrading agricultural efficiency (Rosales, 2019). As a result, China is expected to achieve fairly high rates of self-sufficiency in major grains (Myers and Guo, 2015), especially as calls in China for higher levels of self-sufficiency in soy production have intensified during the US-China trade war.

## China continues to rely extensively on foreign markets for many of its agri-food needs.

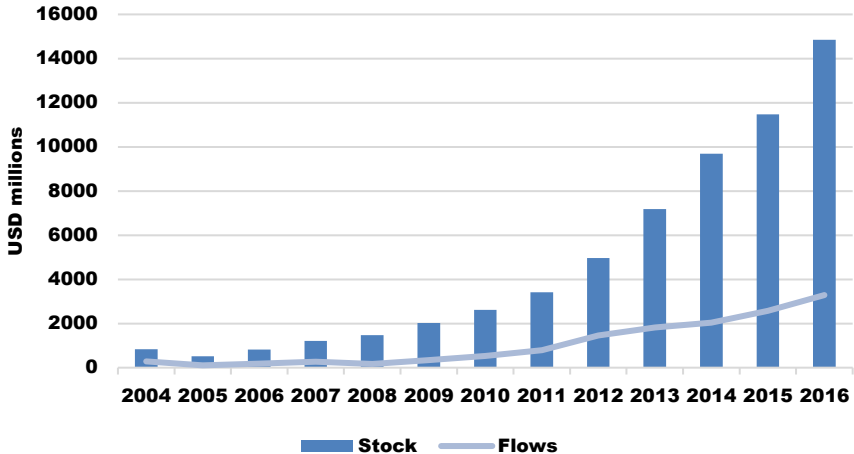
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Even so, China continues to rely extensively on foreign markets for many of its agri-food needs. China’s own data suggests that the country will import 89 million tons of soybeans this year, for example. And China’s soaring demand for beef, which is expected to continue rising through 2025 based on China’s population and income growth and new consumption preferences (McKinsey Global Institute, 2019), has resulted in greater market opening for meat from the Southern Cone and other regions. Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay combined accounted for almost 70 percent of China’s beef imports in 2018 and are expected to remain key suppliers in 2019 (USDA). In addition, although the African Swine Fever outbreak in China may potentially reduce demand for imported soybeans, used as feed for the herd, it may also considerably increase purchases of pork and other types of meat from foreign suppliers, including the Southern Cone’s major meat producers.

Furthermore, although China has been placed numerous tariffs on US agriculture, it has reduced tariffs for several other countries. The average tariff rate applied by China on US goods in September 2019 was 21.8 percent, while for the rest of the world it was 6.7 percent. As a result, it is 15 percent cheaper on average for China to buy goods from the Southern Cone and other regions than to import from the US (Bown, 2019).

In addition to support for overseas trade, China leadership has also been supportive of foreign investment in agro industries, through special financing mechanisms and other incentives (see Image 1). COFCO, China’s major grains trader, has been especially active in M&A in Latin America—an effort, according to former chairman Yu Xubo, to access to a wider range of markets, industries, and technologies (Myers and Guo, 2015; Jin, et al, 2018). The agribusiness sector accounted for 15 percent of the total Chinese investment in Brazil in 2017 (Banco Central do Brasil, 2018).

Image 1: Chinese OFDI in agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry, 2004-2016

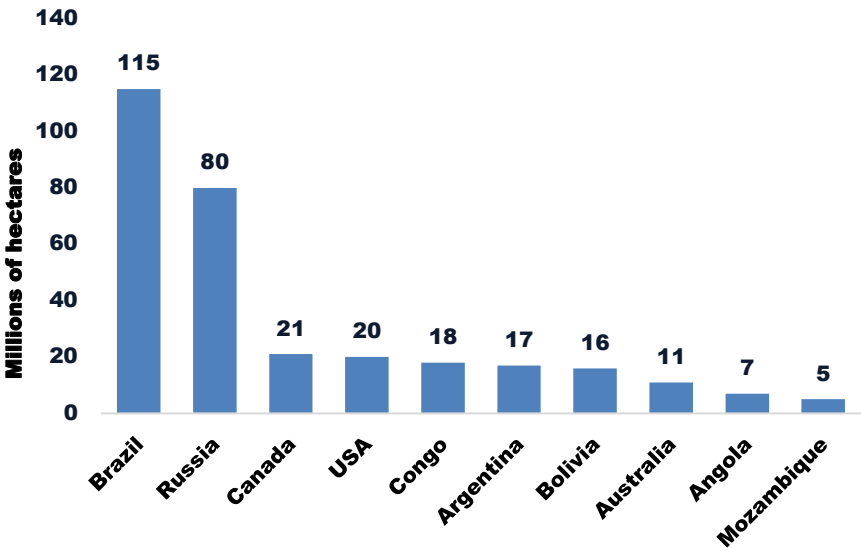


Source: China Statistical Yearbooks, 2004-2017; Jin, et al., 2018.

The result of extensive trade complementarity, the region’s relative position in Chinese agri-food imports has grown at high rates over the past two decades—from 19 percent in 2000 to 27 percent in 2015. Indeed, as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations had demonstrated through its Global Agro-Ecological Zone studies, a considerable portion of land resources with potential for additional crop production are concentrated in South America (see Image 2). The region’s relative importance to China is also expanding amidst US-China trade tensions. This is especially the case for major soy producers, such as Brazil and Argentina. In the first few months of China’s 2018/19 market year, following the application of tariffs on US soy, Brazil’s share of Chinese soybean imports rose to 77 percent, while the US share fell to a historically low 4 percent.

This dynamic has resulted in a trade surplus for the Southern Cone and in considerable revenue for major producers. But trade remains strongly concentrated in certain countries. Brazil and Argentina account for the vast majority of the region’s agri-food exports to China, with Brazil exporting about 75 percent of the total. Trade is also concentrated on a handful of agri-food products, with soybeans making up about 77 percent of total exports. As of 2016—well before the US-China trade war and resulting trade diversion—Mercosur countries (particularly Brazil and Argentina) represented about 17 percent of Chinese food imports (see Image 3). Like Brazil and Argentina, Uruguay is a major exporter of soy to China, and increasingly of beef. China accounted for 53 percent of the country’s exports of frozen bovine meat in 2017.

Image 2. World's largest additional arable land reserves, 2015



Source: Nassar and Palermo, 2015. Based on FAOSTAT, GAEZ, SAGE/GATP and Embrapa. In case of Brazil, Embrapa considered climate restrictions and excluded legally protected areas.

Chile stands out from its neighbors in the Southern Cone as major exporter of fruits and wine to the Chinese market, and as having had relative success in navigating China's complex phytosanitary protocols. Exports of wine increased considerably following the signing of the China-Chile Free Trade agreement in 2005, and beginning in 2015, as a provision of the FTA, wines from Chile have enjoyed zero tariff rates (Bobik, 2014). But Chile remains heavily reliant on the Chinese market as a destination for its copper exports. They accounted for 78 percent of total exports to China in 2017.

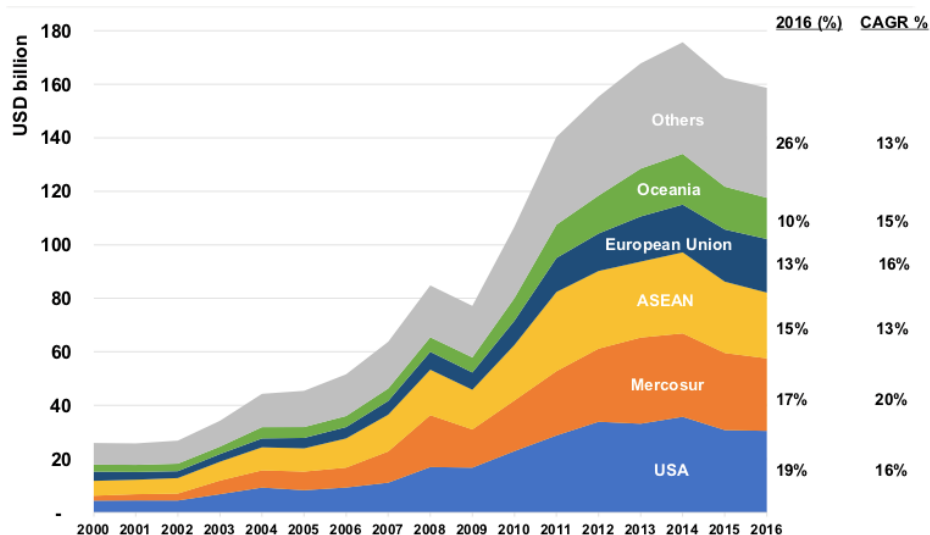
Progress has also been made by other countries in the Southern Cone toward diversifying exports to China. China granted access to Argentine pears, apples, sorghum, and sunflowers in 2014 and 2015, for example. But exports remain heavily concentrated in a just a handful of products, with soybeans accounting for most of that mix. While Brazil exported to China almost USD 36 billion in agribusiness products in 2018, just three products accounted for 95 percent of the total: soybeans made up 77 percent and cellulose and paper an additional 11 percent. Meat accounted for the 7 percent of exports that year.

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This dynamic makes the region's producers especially susceptible to price and demand shocks. So, while business is certainly booming, much remains to be done to address trade and other asymmetries. And, despite extensive exports of soy and other grains to the Chinese market, there is concern that China's burgeoning genetically modified (GM) foods industry and other agricultural interest groups in China will successfully advocate for new import restrictions. As Zhang Tao and Zhou Shudong noted over a decade ago in their study of GM policy in China, "it is very difficult to assess whether a measure is reasonable or just a form of hidden protectionism" (2003, p. 6).

Image 3. Agri-food imports from providing regions to China, 2000-2016



Source: Jank, 2019. Based on UN Comtrade and USDA. CAGR is Compound Annual Growth Rate.

## TOWARD A REGIONAL STRATEGY?

The strong complementarities between the countries of Latin America and China in terms of food security justify efforts to achieve stronger and more balanced trade connectivity (Jank, 2019). This is especially the case as complementarities become increasingly pronounced—the result of a process of trade diversion prompted by the US-China trade war. This is an especially opportune moment for the region’s public and private sectors to work to strengthen, but also potentially upgrade and diversify, agro-industrial relations with China. Progress in the following areas would do much to achieve these objectives.

### 1. FURTHER INTEGRATION OF REGIONAL AND CROSS-REGIONAL SUPPLY CHAINS

If Southern Cone supply chains remain integrated at just the national level—as is currently the trend—countries in the region will continue to compete against each other and lose bargaining power vis-à-vis China. The strengthening of value chains with Asia should start with greater intra-regional convergence that will lead to the development of sophisticated products that meet high international standards (Rosales, 2017). Of particular interest at this juncture are opportunities for greater linkage and scaling in meat global value chains (Jank, 2019).

### 2. ARTICULATION OF A FORWARD-LOOKING ASIA POLICY

As the Southern Cone becomes an even more critical supplier to China, this is an especially opportune moment for the region’s producers to work together to improve market access—a long-standing goal for many in the region—but also to begin a process of reframing the Southern Cone-China trade relationship. To date, dialogue between Southern Cone nations and China on questions of agricultural trade has focused rather narrowly on negotiating specific sanitary and phytosanitary protocols and reducing specific non-tariff barriers, like the lengthy GM crop approvals and other barriers to market entry but has resulted in only minimal deviation from historical trade patterns. Long-standing trade asymmetries would be better addressed through efforts to re-contextualize the relationship.

Beyond the mechanics of supply and demand, the relationship should be understood as a South-South partnership on issues of global food security and environmental sustainability. Growth in value-added export from the Southern Cone to China is not only a more desirable outcome for producers in the region but is also supportive of China's own stated efforts to improve sustainability, to make its supply chains greener, and to advance productivity in the Latin American region. Southern Cone efforts to identify China's strategic priorities and their effect on agroindustry, and then to align them with regional interests, will lead to a more constructive overall relationship.

Coordination among those Southern Cone representatives currently on the "front lines" in China (e.g., agricultural commercial attaches) would also be of considerable value as the region's public and private sectors looks to gauge developments and identify areas for opportunity. Collaboration on investment monitoring (including in the area of agricultural inputs) would be of great value to the region, if politically challenging to achieve. More information on trends in Chinese deal-making across the region will provide the agro-industrial sector with a clearer sense of China's priorities in the region, and the extent to which China's approach to the region is in fact shifting at any juncture.

Attention must also be paid to other key Asian partners and their likely effect on demand for regional goods. India's growth will soon overtake China's, but India's national meat consumption will total less than 10 percent of China's at the same moment in that country's development.

Finally, the harmonization of sanitary and phytosanitary requirements and close technological cooperation between national agricultural innovation institutions (such as INTA in Argentina, Embrapa in Brazil, ODEPA in Chile, etc.) would help all to identify new opportunities for the relationship and new cross-regional linkages. In the area of agricultural innovation, there are numerous possibilities for collaboration among the countries of the Southern Cone, with valuable experience in production systems and processes, and for enhanced cooperation with China, which has shown growing capacity in the development and improvement of high-tech agricultural production. China has shown considerable interest in establishing technological partnerships in biotechnology with Brazil and other South American countries.

### **3. COORDINATION ON ISSUES OF MARKET ACCESS**

Countries in the Southern Cone have very different approaches to international insertion. While Chile is one of the most open economies in the world and has negotiated 26 trade agreements with 64 markets, including China, other countries in the region are less open to international trade. Mercosur has only a few trade agreements that are currently in force. This year, Mercosur concluded a 20-year-long negotiation with the European Union and celebrated a trade deal with the European countries from the EFTA bloc. Mercosur had planned to also conclude ongoing free trade negotiations with Canada, South Korea and Singapore, and initiate negotiations of free trade agreements with the United States, Mexico, Japan and Vietnam, but the outcome of the 2019 presidential elections in Argentina could derail that process.

In addition to Paraguay's continued diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, the process of economic decoupling brought about by the US-China trade war poses additional difficulties for a potential trade deal between Mercosur and China. If the trade war escalates, it will be very difficult to build long-term economic relations without taking sides, as both China and the United States are very important for the Southern Cone (Palermo, 2019).

However, a wide range of actions could significantly improve the Southern Cone's position in the Chinese market. In particular, there is much that can be done under the umbrella of the WTO, especially in areas of market access and trade facilitation. Trade facilitation and the elimination of non-tariff barriers for regional products will be essential for the creation of new export niches in the years to come. Any official market opening agenda must be coordinated with the private sector, not only to ensure enough supply, but also to achieve the range of protocols required to access the Chinese market, ensuring that processes, procedures and deadlines are understood by and feasible for local exporters.



A coordinated effort among Southern Cone nations to challenge Chinese barriers to trade could also be of benefit to the region. The barriers are numerous and multi-faceted. On the one hand, China's agri-food approval procedures are complex and lengthy—sanitary and phytosanitary protocols can take more than 5 years to approve. The authorization of plants takes about 2 years and the registration of products more than one year. In addition, import licenses are limited to Chinese companies. Tariff escalation also impacts the region's processed goods.

At present, though, Chinese tension with the US, its main food supplier, and subsequent, need to diversify sources of commodities and other products provides a unique opportunity for the region to address some of its concerns about market access, so long as the security conditions and safety requirements of concern to Chinese buyers are met (Idígoras, 2019). Indeed, according to accounts from private sector representatives in the Southern Cone, surging demand for Southern Cone agro-industrial production has reportedly been accompanied by an easing of Chinese regulatory hurdles for regional products, as China seeks to forge new agro-industrial ties in the face of protracted US-China economic decoupling.

In those cases where markets are already open, coordination among the region's trade promotion agencies and private sectors will also be essential. In most cases, countries only have one or two commercial offices in all of China. Setting up a mechanism for exchange among these entities will generate valuable of new opportunities by leveraging existing infrastructure and expertise. A platform for continuous communication among the region's government officials in China would also help to advance countries' work toward market access, most of which is being carried out in isolation and without enough resources. Deeper cooperation among trade promotion agencies would also facilitate the monitoring of policies that could affect regional exports.

Regional coordination on the development of e-commerce platforms would also be of considerable value, whether in terms of creating new intra- or extra-regional linkages. As a result of growing demand for regional goods, companies in the Southern Cone can also begin to think in terms of national and/or regional export platforms, including those that will be promoting of new capabilities, such as permanent monitoring and on-site representation on issues of interest to the private sector.

#### **4. COORDINATION ON FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS**

In addition to food security considerations, food safety has become an issue of top policy priority for China, driven in large part by the demands of middle-class consumers and a range of high-profile food safety scandals. In 2015, for example, the China's Ministry of Agriculture announced a plan to reduce subsidies and control pollution in rural areas, with the aim of reducing the use of fertilizers and pesticides by 2020, while stimulating the diversification of locally generated products towards fruits, vegetables and dairy products and the development of new varieties that are more resistant to drought or have higher nutritional value (Rosales, 2019).

For the Southern Cone, coordination across agri-food production systems will be critical in order to meet—or even surpass—increasingly stringent Chinese food safety standards. Collaboration among the region's national agri-food health and quality agencies could help to guarantee the safety of exported products. Collaboration on this issue would also help to build confidence among Chinese consumers, and views of the Southern Cone as a reliable source of agri-food products. Progress in this area will also ensure opportunities for the eventual export of a wider range of goods to the Chinese market.

## **5. LEVERAGE EXISTING REGIONAL PLATFORMS FOR ENHANCED COLLABORATION**

Regional efforts to engage China more effectively will require functional platforms for collaboration, whether through existing networks, such as the Pacific Alliance, Mercosur, and/or the China-CELAC Forum, or through new mechanisms developed under the framework of the Belt and Road or other cross-Pacific initiatives.

Of the existing platforms, the China-CELAC Forum and its Cooperation Plan 2015-2019 offers a possibly helpful mechanism for improving collaboration among agro-industrial representatives from Latin America and China. This includes the possible development of a Regional Center for Trade and Investment Facilitation in Beijing that would:

- Identify barriers and regulations affecting trade and investment in China;
- Facilitate dialogue;
- Coordinate activities of exporters, embassies and promotion agencies;
- Prepare and distribute material on regulations on trade and investment issues;
- Promote business opportunities in Latin America, for example, with prefeasibility studies for investments;
- Conduct and share research on markets in different sectors and regions of China; and
- Establish a unified forum for dialogue with the Chinese authorities on general and specific issues in relation to investments and trade in both regions.

The China-CELAC five-year plan also establishes quantitative targets for trade increases but could be upgraded to also address diversification of flows, including through a possible cooperation fund for export diversification and incorporation of new technologies for sustainable development. This or similar platforms would help to address a range of pressing regional and global issues, including on food security, transportation costs, the formation of “green” value chains, and issues of industrial capacity in the Southern Cone, among other areas. Chinese authorities appear open to dialogue on a number of these issues.

China would also look favorably on the prospect of a platform or partnership that allows for the clear articulation of local investment priorities, related transport and communications infrastructure development needs, and prospects for enhanced technical cooperation. China’s regional private equity funds for Latin America and other investors are looking for opportunities to engage more extensively in the agro-industrial sector and would benefit from well-developed and coordinated guidance on the matter.

**Any sub-regional agribusiness strategy will be limited by the considerable diversity in agro-industrial policy and production in the Southern Cone.**

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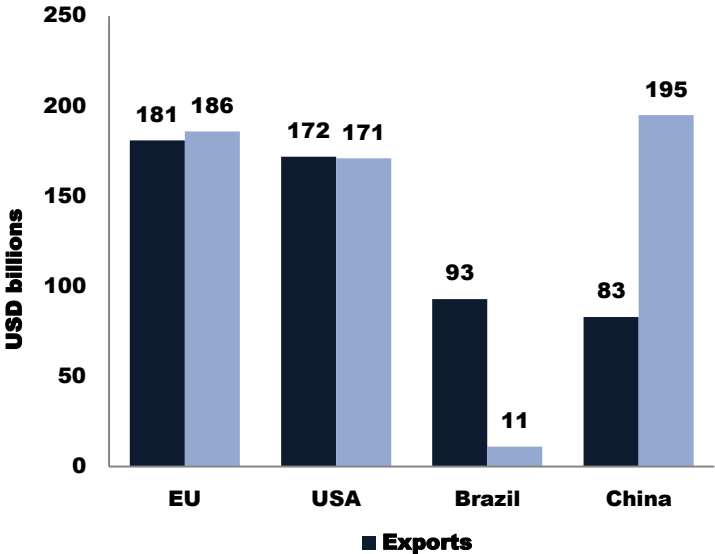
Mercosur and Pacific Alliance present other opportunities for intra- and cross-regional coordination, including through the development of regional value chains, based on the productive and export capacity of the former and the commercial benefits of the latter. This process should be supported by the region’s technical and financial institutions (e.g., ECLAC, IDB, CAF) with the objective of improving and diversifying flows of agro-industrial goods and services to Asia and other markets.

# THE VIABILITY OF A REGIONAL STRATEGY

While there is considerable economic rationale for a coordinated approach to China, any sub regional agribusiness strategy will be limited by the considerable diversity in agro-industrial policy and production in the Southern Cone, and by ongoing shifts in the region’s political landscape.

The diversity in South American agro-industrial production, both in products and in production systems, is evident even among the region’s leading economies. Brazil is by far the largest exporter of food and other agro-industrial products in the sub-region and the third largest exporter in the world (see Image 4). The country exported around USD 79 billion in food in 2017. Argentina and Chile, though critical global suppliers of food, exported respectively USD 35 billion and USD 17 billion (USDA, 2017), by comparison. Given the region’s varied ecologies, there are also important differences in terms of production, although oilseeds, corn, and animal products account for a very significant percentage of overall output. While the economies of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay are highly dependent on the export of soybeans and their derivatives (in the first two cases, the Chinese market is of particular relevance), Uruguay’s external sales are led by chemical pulp of wood and beef (soy is also important), while Chile’s agri-food exports mainly consist of grapes, wine, and fish. Except for Bolivia (where mineral exports prevail), food and other agricultural products represent a substantial part of the exports of the countries of the region.

Image 4. World’s largest exporters and importers of agricultural products, 2018



Source: Palermo, 2019. Based on the World Trade Statistical Review, WTO 2019. Data excludes intra-EU trade.

The scale of agricultural production also varies considerably among countries in the Southern Cone. Large commercial farms, including those that are family-owned, prevail in much of the region, as do technology-intensive corporations that are well integrated into global agri-food markets. Despite some difference in scale, the average size of farms in the Southern Cone is larger than in the rest of Latin America (Elverdin, Piñeiro and Robles, 2018). However, smallholding is also extremely relevant in some subregions of the Southern Cone, including in the Bolivian highlands. However, even in the latter case there are some opportunities for greater engagement with China.

These key differences in regional production and productivity in the Southern Cone, along with distinct approaches to domestic agricultural and industrial policy, limit prospects for a fully-integrated, sub-regional approach to agricultural trade or investment. Yet, as the world's largest net food exporting region, Southern Cone nations are increasingly well positioned to jointly consider and potentially shape key developments in their relations with China and other partner nations.

However the Southern Cone's agenda materializes, it should aim to achieve greater commercial, economic and technological benefits for the region, involving a range of public and private sector actors. At the same time, Southern Cone countries must strive to balance relations between the US and China and to overcome mounting political uncertainty within the region itself. This moment presents some possibilities for commercial expansion but will continue to be a challenging one for Latin American nations, as all continue to rely heavily on both the US and China for their economic well-being and as the region's politics threaten to strain intra-regional ties.

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The Inter-American Dialogue and Grupo de Países Productores del Sur are grateful to the following participants in our June 25-26, 2019 meetings in Buenos Aires for their expert contributions to the discussion, which largely informed this report.

- Juan Battaleme, academic secretary of the Argentine Council on International Affairs (CARI)
- César Belloso, a member of the Argentine Council on International Affairs' (CARI) China Working Group
- Eduardo Bianchi, professor and researcher at the Instituto Universitario Escuela Argentina de Negocios (IUEAN) and LATN-FLACSO
- Bruno Binetti, non-resident research fellow at the Inter-American Dialogue
- Lilian Cabrera, member of Grupo de Países Productores del Sur's (GPS) Paraguay Management Committee
- Ricardo Carciofi, chief researcher of economic development at the Center for the Implementation of Public Policies for Equity and Growth (CIPPEC)
- Washington Duran, president of the International Commerce Commission of the Uruguay Chamber of Industries
- Marcelo Elizondo, founder of Desarrollo de Negocios Internacionales and director of the business school of Universidad de Ciencias Empresariales y Sociales
- Pablo Elverdin, research advisor at Grupo de Países Productores del Sur (GPS)
- Ciro Etchesortu, business consultant and former CEO of Louis Dreyfus Group Argentina
- Duncan Freeman, research fellow at the EU-China Research Center of the College of Europe
- Frederick Gale, senior economist at the United States Department of Agriculture
- Gustavo Idígoras, chairman of Cámara de la Industria Aceitera (CIARA)
- Nelson Illescas, director of the Instituto para las Negociaciones Agrícolas Internacionales (INAI) Foundation
- Marcos Jank, chief executive officer of the Asia-Brazil Agroalliance and senior professor of Global Agribusiness in the Institute of Education and Research (Insper) in São Paulo
- Martín Lococo, executive director of the Argentine Chamber of Commerce for Asia and the Pacific
- Juan Enrique Moya, former trade and agricultural attache in the Chilean Foreign Office
- Margaret Myers, director of the Asia and Latin America Program at the Inter-American Dialogue
- Julio Nogués, member of the National Academy of Economy in Argentina and was formerly Trade Representative of Argentina to the United States
- Paloma Ochoa, communications coordinator for Grupo de Países Productores del Sur (GPS)
- Raúl Ochoa, counselor at the Argentine Council on Foreign Relations (CARI)
- Tatiana Palermo, chief agricultural negotiator for Brazil
- Felix Peña, director of the Institute for International Trade at ICBC Foundation
- Sofía Pierini, economist with the Instituto para las Negociaciones Agrícolas Internacionales (INAI) Foundation
- Martín Piñero, member of Grupo de Países Productores del Sur's (GPS) Argentina Support Team
- Daniel Polski, director of the Department of Bilateral Economic Negotiations of the Argentine Chancery
- Carola Ramón-Berjano, professor of economics and co-coordinator of the Argentine Council on International Affairs' (CARI) China Working Group
- Marcelo Regúnaga, member of Grupo de Países Productores del Sur's (GPS) Argentina Steering Committee
- Cecilia Rena, corporate manager for public affairs and press relations at Grupo Arcor
- Raúl Roccatagliata, head of international affairs for the Argentina Rural Society's (SRA) Institute for Economics and Negotiations
- Santiago Rojas, representative of CAF – Development Bank of Latin America in Argentina

- Osvaldo Rosales, former director of the International Commerce Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) in Chile
- Guillermo Rozenwurcel, professor of economics and principal researcher in Argentina's National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET).
- Eduardo Serantes, director of Productive Projects in the Argentina's National Ministry of Social Development and a member of Grupo de Paises Productores del Sur's (GPS) Argentina Steering Committee
- Agustín Tejeda, chief economist at the Argentina Grain Exchange
- Federico Trucco, chief executive officer of Bioceres
- Esteban Turic, director general of Biogénesis Bagó, Argentina
- Fernando Vilella, director of the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Buenos Aires (FAUBA)
- Holly Wang, professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University's College of Agriculture
- Shunli Yao, associate professor of economics at the University of International Business and Economics and director of the Institute for Applied International Trade