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Recent news on food distribution and land seizure issues

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

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Report Highlights:

Post report recent news related to the stoppage of food distribution to the Government food network, Mercal, and land expropriations.

General Information:

ATC stopped the distribution to MERCAL

ATC, a food transport company owned by Ricardo Fernandez Berrueco, stopped 90 percent of the planned delivery trips from the city of Acarigua, Portuguesa State, to the Mercal food chain since December 1. The stoppage is due to the current domestic banking problem; money for carriers' delivery expenses is administered through Bank Confederado which was recently ordered closed

by the Government and funds from this bank cannot be moved.

Union leaders said that over 150 trucks remain loaded with corn flour and rice in the warehouses of Pronutricos y Proarepa, companies from the Fernandez group, and each truck is loaded with approximately 30 tons of flour or rice which could be lost. In the same sense, in silos there are tons of grains that will be damaged if not distributed or processed in a timely manner. The suspension of deliveries could reduce availability at the Mercal stores because these are large programmed orders that cannot be replaced quickly by other companies.

Fight against "latifundio" or large estates is protected in the Constitution

The Minister of Agriculture, Elias Jaua, stressed that when President Chavez says that there will not be any large estates in Venezuela his statements are based on the law, since article 307 of the Bolivarian Constitution of Venezuela notes that "the big landowners system ("sistema latifundista") is contrary to social interests and the State needs to take legal and political measures to eradicate this archaic system." Article 2 of the Land and Agricultural Development Law reinforces the concept. Minister Jaua added that nowhere in the world is there an irrigation system built to benefit only 22 families; so in the case of the properties located next to the Tiznado irrigation system which were recently seized, it is necessary to apply a pattern of lots, or small holdings.

New expropriations: Fear of assault on more than one million hectares

According to Vicente Brito, former president of Fedecamaras, through the National Land Institute, the community councils and other organizations in the Government, there are plans to occupy more than one thousand rural properties in the coming months. He adds, in a press release, that with these Government actions the total land area affected will be over a million and a half hectares. "This includes farms, cattle ranches, haciendas, chicken or pig farms, etc., thereby accelerating the process of taking the Venezuelan countryside in order to impose the model of the XXI century socialism."

Sources: Leading Daily Newspapers