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By Caroline Stocks | Farmers Weekly Interactive

Beef farmers across Europe could lose as much as €25bn (£21.5bn) if plans to reduce trade barriers between the European Union and South America go ahead, farm lobbyists have warned.

EU farmers' organisation COPA-COGECA said the EU's beef sector faced "total collapse" if a trade deal to give the Mercosur group of South American countries preferential access to EU markets was agreed.

In a study on the impact of the trade deal, COPA said the Mercosur countries of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay would export more than 1m tonnes of high-quality beef cuts, worth about €16bn (£13.7bn). Further costs of €9bn (£7.7bn) would be incurred due to the indirect effects on the price of beef in Europe.

The EU poultrymeat sector would also be hit, with losses of €6bn (£5.2bn) as a result of the agreement, COPA added.

Highlighting further concerns, the study says there are misgivings about traceability, movement and disease controls and food safety standards among the Mercosur members.

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