Implications of the potential EU ban on Brazilian meat and poultry

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Brazil's potential exclusion from the EU meat market would tighten EU beef and poultry supply, lift prices — especially for chicken breast meat and premium beef cuts, and force Brazil to redirect exports into already competitive global markets.

Summary

- Brazil could face a full ban on meat exports to the EU from September 3, 2026, unless it proves compliance with EU antimicrobial resistance rules.
- Brazil is a key supplier to the EU, accounting for roughly 25% of chicken imports and 25% of beef imports, meaning any disruption would be significant.
- A suspension would tighten EU beef and chicken supply and push prices higher. While impact in beef markets would be more pronounced in premium segments, the impact in poultry would strike across categories.
- While the EU would increase sourcing from alternative suppliers – most likely Argentina, Uruguay, and Australia for beef, and Ukraine, Thailand, and China for poultry – it is unlikely that these sources would fully compensate the volumes missing from Brazil.
- Suspending EU beef imports from Brazil would further intensify pressure on Brazilian exports, which are already expected to face headwinds in the second half of 2026 due to China's tariff rate quota constraints.
- Brazil will face a major challenge in exporting breast meat and breast meat based processed products. They will likely try to sell bigger volumes in the UK, Mexico, the Middle East, and some Asian markets, but with significant price concessions.

Brazil must demonstrate full compliance with EU rules

As of January 28, 2022, the EU implemented strict new rules on veterinary medicines to combat antimicrobial resistance. Under these rules, antimicrobials must not be used to promote growth or boost production in livestock and other food-producing animals.

Brazil has historically taken a stepwise ban approach targeting certain antimicrobials. In 2020, antimicrobials such as tylosin, lincomycin, and tiamulin – typically used in poultry and swine production – were banned for growth promotion, although therapeutic use of these substances was still allowed. More recently, in April 2026, Brazil introduced a blanket ban on all antimicrobials for growth promotion, including virginiamycin and various forms of bacitracin, granting the industry a 180-day transition period and an additional 90 days to remove stocks.

Although alignment between Brazil and EU legislation has increased in recent years, the absence of a national surveillance and monitoring system for antimicrobial use and sales in Brazil makes it difficult to demonstrate full compliance, which has been subject to ongoing discussion between the authorities from both sides in recent years. Earlier this year, the EU further tightened restrictions on Brazilian beef imports. As of January 31, 2026, exports have been limited to an approved list of holdings that meet strict criteria and fully comply with EU import requirements.

For Brazil to regain its position on the list of countries eligible to export to the EU market after September 3, it will need to demonstrate compliance with EU rules. Brazilian authorities are confident and determined to achieve this within a short timeframe, ideally before September 3. While establishing and operating a fully functional national surveillance and monitoring system within just a few months is unlikely, it may be more feasible to provide guarantees for specific supply chains dedicated to EU exports, which could be sufficient to demonstrate compliance. Should they manage to provide the necessary guarantees, the EU will likely require an audit, further delaying the return of Brazilian exports to Europe.

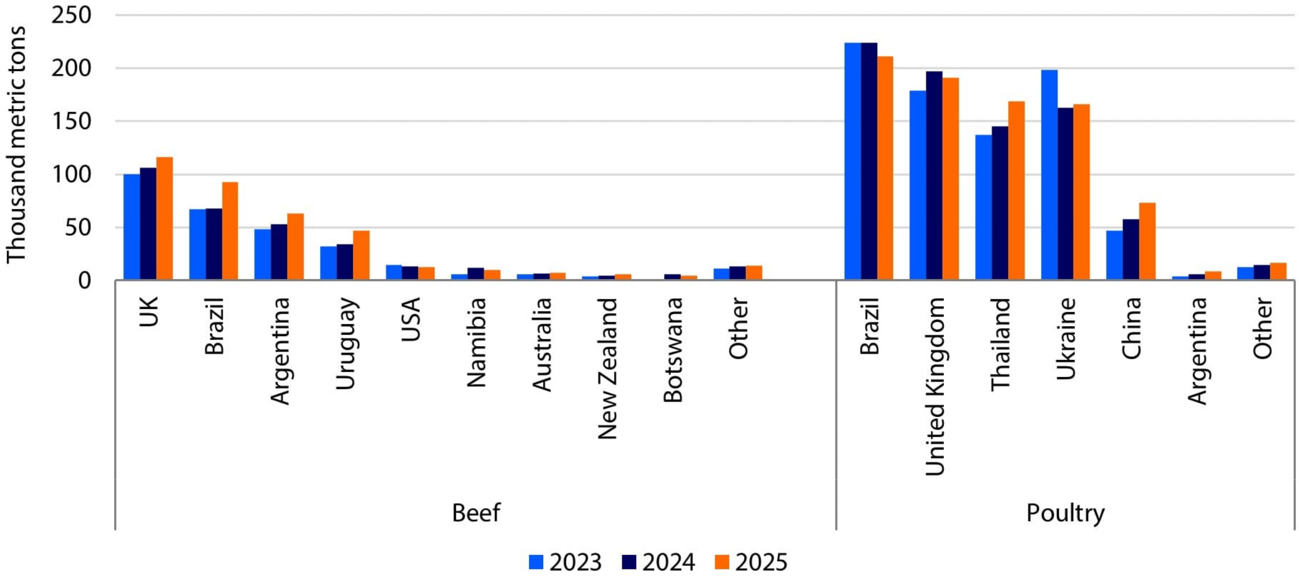
Uncertainty continues to cloud the future of Brazilian meat imports, and any disruption to Brazilian beef and poultry exports could have significant implications for both EU and Brazilian markets. RaboResearch outlines the potential impacts below.

Brazil is a major supplier of chicken and beef in the EU

Brazil is the EU's second-largest supplier of beef (after the UK) and the largest supplier of chicken. The EU imports around 211 thousand tons of chicken and 92 thousand tons of beef from Brazil, accounting for approximately 25% of total chicken imports and 25% of beef imports (see figure 1).

In the beef segment, a suspension of imports would mainly affect high-end markets, including foodservice and premium retail, as a significant share of volumes consists of high-value cuts. In contrast, chicken imports are more large-scale and commodity-driven; any disruption would therefore impact core supply chains, particularly the breast meat market.

Figure 1 EU beef and poultry imports by destination

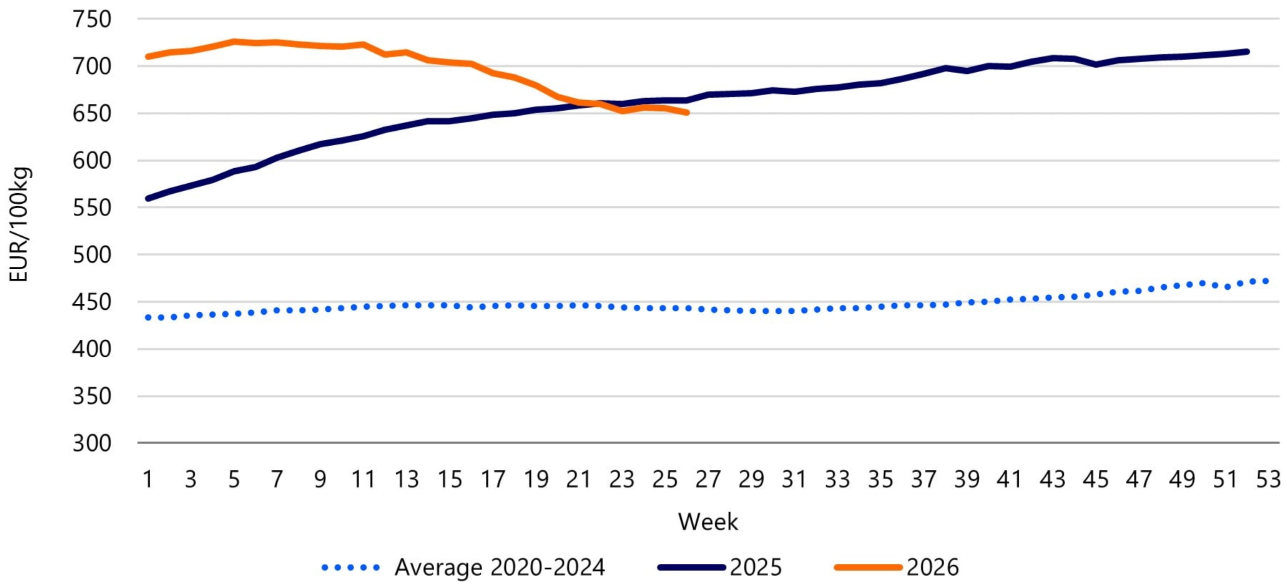


Source: Trade Map, RaboResearch 2026

Suspension of Brazilian beef imports would limit beef price relief in the EU

In the EU market, tighter supply due to reduced imports from Brazil could provide a renewed boost to beef prices, just as earlier price increases started levelling off amid weakening demand in Q2 2026 (see figure 2). Although this effect may be partially offset by higher imports from alternative suppliers, we expect upward pressure on prices, should imports be suspended.

Figure 2: EU beef carcass prices soften on weakening demand



Source: European Commission, RaboResearch 2026

Argentina and Uruguay are likely candidates to fill the gap, although China's tariff rate quotas create additional incentives for these countries to redirect exports toward China to compensate for reduced Brazilian and Australian volumes – particularly as their quotas are set below last year's levels. Australia may also be well-positioned to increase shipments, depending on the availability of EU-compliant beef. That said, its ability to compete on price may be limited once quota ceilings to the EU are exhausted.

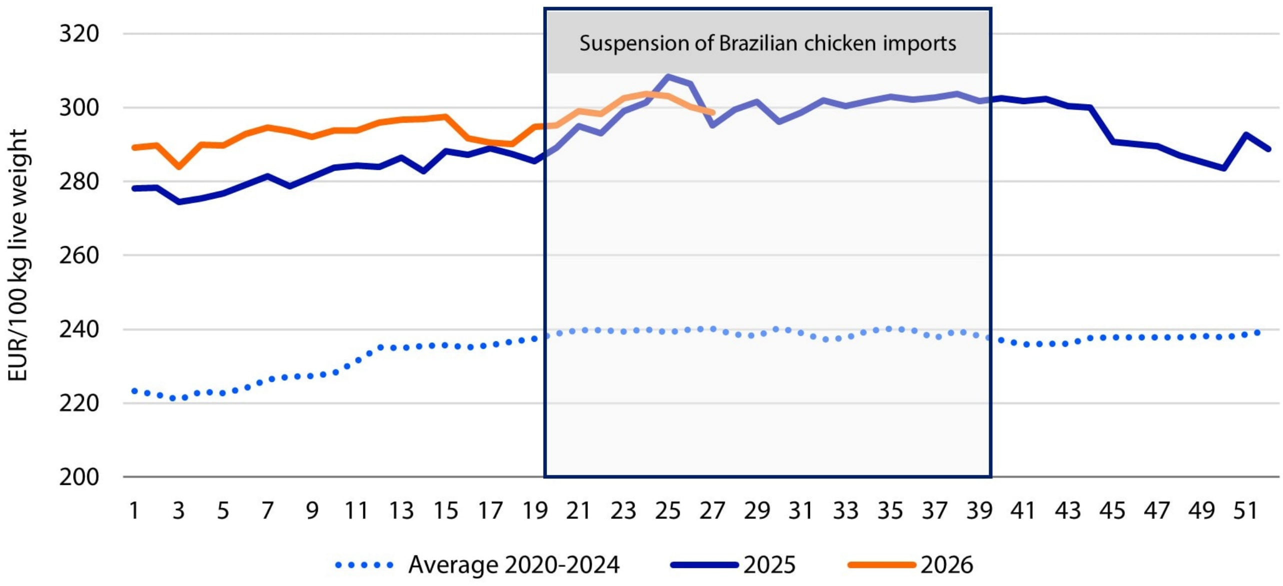
From Brazil's perspective, the EU represents a limited share of total Brazilian beef imports: 3% to 4%. However, the volume of exports has significantly increased in recent years, reaching record exports of 117 thousand tons in 2025. Although most Brazilian beef exports to the EU have occurred outside the Hilton Quota – resulting in underutilization of Brazil's allocated share of 10 thousand tons – the recent provisional implementation of the EU-Mercosur agreement enables more efficient use and expansion of in-quota volumes.

Restriction of market access never comes in a good moment, but this may be a particularly sensitive time for Brazil. This year, Brazil is already facing the need to reallocate significant volumes of beef, circa 200 thousand tons, in the global market due the China tariff rate quotas. The EU suspending Brazilian beef imports would lead to further surpluses. We discuss the impact of China tariff rate quotas on global beef trade in this publication.

Market-wide impact on EU poultry

Like beef, the suspension of Brazilian imports would put EU chicken prices under significant upward pressure. Here, the impact would entail a broader impact across product categories – mainly to the European breast meat market, but also indirectly to processed products. This pressure would mirror the dynamics observed during the supply shock of 2025, when Brazilian chicken imports were suspended following highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreaks in mid-May and late September. At that time, EU fresh chicken prices were already at historically elevated levels due to HPAI and Newcastle disease outbreaks across Europe. While the suspension of Brazilian imports mainly impacted the frozen breast meat market and customers dependent on Brazilian supply, the effects extended beyond this segment as well. Brazil has only a small share in the EU cooked chicken market, but some buyers responded by increasing purchases of fresh European chicken, adding upward pressure to prices (see figure 3).

Figure 3: The suspension of Brazilian chicken imports in 2025 created upward pressure on EU chicken prices



Source: European Commission, RaboResearch 2026

The potential EU ban on Brazilian imports would lead to global trade flow shifts. EU producers and traders would primarily shift sourcing toward alternative supply options like local European supply or markets such as Ukraine, Thailand, and China. Supply in these markets is currently more abundant as we explain in our recent publication, but the volume of EU compliant product and remaining quota space might not be sufficient to fully offset the missing volumes from Brazil.

In the Brazilian market, the impact of losing access to the EU market would depend on the length of the restriction, but we expect downward pressure on prices. Having said this, the Brazilian meat and poultry industry has proven to be very flexible in dealing with disruptions in global trade, due to the fact that they have opened many export markets. This resilience has also helped them during the recent Strait of Hormuz closure. We expect that Brazil will redirect a larger share of its poultry exports toward markets in the UK, Mexico, the Middle East, and Asia, likely leading to oversupply in these alternative destinations. As a result, prices outside the EU may come under pressure, intensifying competition among exporters in those regions.

Ban or no ban, the effects are already being felt

As the implementation date draws closer and uncertainty around compliance remains, Brazilian product is already being frontloaded into Europe. Brazil's chicken exports to the EU were up 53% year-on-year in 1H 2026 compared to the same period last year, while beef exports increased by 7% over the same period. This may be driven not only by the anticipated ban, but also by the implementation of the EU–Mercosur agreement in May 2026, which could create additional incentives for increased imports. If the ban does take effect, however, chicken markets would face a broad tightening of EU supply, with added pressure on breast meat and processed product segments. For beef, the impact would be more concentrated in high-value segments, while adding to Brazil's challenge of redirecting volumes in an already pressured global market.

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