

Weekly Asado

August 25, 2017

Argentina Project, Wilson Center

Biodiesel: Commerce cries foul

On Tuesday, the U.S. Department of Commerce accused Argentina (and Indonesia) of [unfairly subsidizing](#) biodiesel producers and threatened duties that would raise the price of Argentine biodiesel in the United States by more than 50 percent. A final decision is expected in November. “The U.S. values its relationships with Argentina and Indonesia, but even friendly nations must play by the rules,” Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross said. Argentine producers fear the duties would shut them out of the U.S. market. This is no small matter; last year, Argentina exported \$1.2 billion in biodiesel to the United States, its primary market (see Commerce data below). The foreign ministry has [threatened](#) World Trade Organization action, politely promising to “llevar adelante las acciones legales pertinentes.”

IMPORT STATISTICS:

ARGENTINA	2014	2015	2016
Volume (metric tons)	156,497	659,661	1,475,038
Value (USD)	136,035,141	470,305,187	1,199,817,824

Good neighbors: Joint World Cup bid

Argentina and Uruguay are reportedly submitting a [joint bid](#) to host the 2030 World Cup, 100 years after Uruguay hosted (and won) the first World Cup in 1930. (Uruguay also won the 1950 World Cup in Brazil.) Presidents Mauricio Macri and Tabaré Vázquez are expected to announce the bid formally on Wednesday. Argentina hosted (and won) the 1978 World Cup, and won again in 1986 in Mexico. The joint bid is another sign of reconciliation between neighbors who feuded bitterly during the *decada kirchnerista*, including a dispute over a riverine Uruguayan pulp mill that reached the International Court of Justice and a 2013 dustup over then-President José Mujica’s assessment of his Argentine counterpart, “*Esta vieja es peor que el tuerto.*” (The diplomatic quarrel was reminiscent of a notorious 2002 incident, when then-President Jorge Batlle observed, “*Los argentinos son una manga de ladrones.*”)

UNGA: Can't make it there

Mr. Macri is apparently skipping the UN General Assembly in September. The Argentine government has not confirmed his plans, but it looks like he prefers to stay in Argentina in the run-up to the October 22 midterms. (In that case, the vice president, Gabriela Michetti, would represent Argentina on the podium.) Mr. Macri might still get a chance to hobnob with at least one prominent politician: Barack Obama is reportedly planning to return to Argentina in October, on personal travel, following up on his historic visit in March 2016.

Pitchforks: Unions protest Macri

Argentina's largest labor unions organized massive street protests Tuesday to criticize the pace of the economic recovery. Assembled in the Plaza de Mayo, demonstrators criticized low wages and expected labor market reforms designed to improve the investment climate. The unemployment rate was 9.2 percent in the first quarter of the year. On the bright side, Argentina saw encouraging economic activity in the 2nd quarter, including in the manufacturing sector.

San Martín: 'Inmortalidad' indeed

It is hard to keep track of Argentina's holidays, but Monday's was notable – the anniversary of the death of General José de San Martín (*Paso a la Inmortalidad del General José de San Martín*). San Martín died August 17, 1850, but the holiday is a *feriado trasladable*, so it was celebrated on a weekday. As South American historical figures go, San Martín looms large. The independence fighter is memorialized in bronze equestrian statues in Central Park (1950) and Washington, at Virginia Ave. /20th St. NW (1925), where at its dedication, President Calvin Coolidge said it would “stand through the centuries as an inspiration to all who love liberty.” High-profile visitors to Buenos Aires – such as Mr. Obama and Vice President Mike Pence – typically lay a wreath at the general's tomb in the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Cathedral.

Eclipse fever: Argentina's turn

NASA reports that the next [total solar eclipse](#), on July 2, 2019, runs through Argentina. The *Lonely Planet* is already urging readers to plan South America trips to the path of totality.

El Al: Ben-Gurion to Buenos Aires

Relations between Israel and Argentina, strained in the CFK era and stained by the bombings of the Israeli Embassy (1992) and AMIA Jewish community center (1994), are improving. Israel's national carrier, El Al, and its Argentine counterpart are reportedly starting direct flights between the countries, and the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, is considering a visit to Argentina next month. (If you like the pairing, you should visit the Matto cafe on East 40th St., in NYC, where the alfajores and rugelach happily share a display case.) The rapprochement follows Mr. Macri's swift decision to jettison his predecessor's fox-in-the-henhouse agreement with Iran to investigate jointly the AMIA bombing.



Apóstoles: Shaken, not stirred

New Heights, on Calvert St. NW, in Woodley Park, serves Argentine Apóstoles gin (notes of yerba mate, peppermint and eucalyptus).

Mil disculpas

Brazil, of course, is in the G-20. The August 18 *Weekly Asado* omitted Brazil from a list of Latin American G-20 members.