

# Agricultural issues slow Canada-EU trade deal

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OTTAWA — Poultry, pork and beef are the stumbling blocks for negotiators in a potential free-trade deal between Canada and the world's largest economy.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper admitted "there remains some important issues to resolve" before the deal giving Canada access to the European Union's 27 member states and 500 million consumers is complete.

"We will only sign a deal when we're convinced we have a deal that's comprehensive and in the best interests of the Canadian economy," Harper told the media after meeting with French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault.

The Conservative government had been optimistic the deal would be wrapped before the end of last year — and Harper conceded a certain need for speed.

"It obviously would be an added benefit to us to get this done long before the Americans do such a deal, and for the Europeans it would be important to get this beachhead to Canada in terms of its own ambitions for a deal with the United States," he said.

If successful, Ayrault said the deal could serve as a blueprint for a similar one between the EU and the U.S.

But he said the "most sensitive issues have to do with balanced exchanges in the agricultural sector" as negotiators flesh out the final points.

"You have a concern about beef and pork and we have a concern about poultry, so I'm sure we'll be able to move closer together for a fair exchange," he said.

Ayrault said intellectual property rights and respect for cultural diversity are also sticking points.