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Ohio-Paraná Sister-State Relationship

The State of Ohio and the State of Paraná first began cultural and business exchanges in the 1960's. In 1986, the two states signed an official sister-state relationship to further the commitment to and the promotion of these mutually beneficial exchanges in the areas of business, education, culture, art and health care. In particular, the relationship has fostered ongoing exchanges between The Ohio State University and several educational institutions in Paraná.

A visit to Paraná in March of 2001 was the State of Ohio's most recent official visit to the sister state.

Governor Bob Taft led a Business Mission to Latin America with fifty representatives of Ohio companies, organizations, farms, media and government staff. With the untimely death of former Governor James Rhodes just one day into the mission, Governor Taft had to return to Ohio while First Lady Hope Taft and the fifty-member delegation traveled to Curitiba, the capital of Paraná.

Hosted by the Chief of Foreign Affairs and Protocol, Mrs. Taft visited sites and programs that highlighted Curitiba's innovative public works, environmental and educational programs, including the Lighthouse of Knowledge, a community center for children, equipped with computers. She also met with First Lady of Paraná, Fani Lerner; Secretary of Education, Alcyone Saliba; and First Lady of Curitiba, Marina Tanguchi. The meeting between Mrs. Taft and Ms. Saliba resulted in an educational exchange proposal to send small groups of teachers and students to live and learn for brief periods in their respective sister states.



Comparison

Ohio and Paraná have many similarities, including excellent geographic locations for industrial distribution both in their domestic markets and within their respective trading blocs (Ohio with Canada and Paraná with Mercosur). Each state has strong agricultural sectors (especially in soybeans) and a strong presence of automotive companies. Paraná has become Brazil's second largest hub in the automotive industry.

One area that is distinctly different between Ohio and Paraná is the geographic distribution of industry throughout the state. The area around and including the city of Curitiba, Paraná accounts for almost 60 percent of Paraná's economy; whereas in Ohio, the economy is spread among a few large metropolitan areas such as Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Columbus, and several mid-sized cities such as Dayton, Akron, Canton and Toledo.

Geographical Location and Population

Paraná is located in southern Brazil between the States of São Paulo and Mato Grosso do Sul to the north, and Santa Catarina to the south. On the west it shares international borders with Argentina and Paraguay. It is at the geographic center of Mercosur, an economic trade bloc formed by Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, with a market of 200 million potential consumers. It consists of 399 municipalities, 199,554 km of area (2.3 percent of Brazil), and 9.5 million inhabitants. Curitiba is the capital. The average temperature in the state is 18.5° Celsius, with more frequent rains in the summer and less rain in the winter.

Natural Resources

Except for the mountainous regions, almost all of Paraná is farmable. Owing to the wealth of its subsoil, Paraná is ranked eighth in mineral production in Brazil. It is Brazil's fifth largest producer of mineral water, with an annual production of 100 million liters. The conjunction of physical and natural factors offers Paraná a dense and enduring hydrographic network, offering enormous energy potential. Paraná is the largest producer of grains (leader in production of soybeans, wheat, corn and oats), the second largest producer of potatoes and yucca, and the third largest of coffee. It ranks second with regard to pig herds, second in poultry production and third as a pork meat producer in Brazil.

Leading Industries

The economy is led by the service industry, which accounts for 48 percent of the gross state product. The manufacturing segment is in second place with 38 percent, and the agricultural and animal husbandry sectors are next with 14 percent. The agricultural industry represents almost half of the gross state product. Paraná is the second largest center for automotive

production in Brazil; and in the computer field, Paraná is the second largest software producer, accounting for 7 percent of all Brazilian exports. The state is the country's largest producer of energy, and sells its surplus to other Brazilian states.

Tourism

Tourism is expanding in Paraná. Approximately 4 million tourists annually visit the Iguazu Falls and the Itaipu Hydroelectric Project. This tourist flow is the reason for the implementation of the West Coast Project, which is going to involve all of the municipalities located along the 1,400 km lakefront formed by the reservoir of the Itaipu Hydroelectric Project. Curitiba is also an important travel destination.

Economy, Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment

Paraná is the fourth-largest exporter among Brazilian states and has the fifth largest state economy in the country. Paraná's share of the Brazilian GNP is 5.8 percent with annual growth above 5 percent. Paraná is one of the states that contributes the most to Brazilian exports. Manufactured products represent half of the state's exported goods. Products derived from soybeans, alone, represent 42.4 percent of the state's exports. Paraná has a GSP of US\$45.5 billion and an investment portfolio worth US\$29 billion. The state maintains an accelerated rhythm of industrialization, is growing by more than 5 percent in annual rates, and will be the fourth economic force in Brazil by 2002. The currency is 3 Reals to 1 Dollar; it has been at this level since September 2001, but this may change.

Education and Research

Paraná has research and technology institutes that are national models. The university population of approximately 150,000 students is spread across 12 universities and dozens of colleges. Paraná is home to the only Brazilian University dedicated specifically to training public school teachers. The information technology industry is a field that is growing in Paraná with the creation of training centers and courses at universities. In the last six years, investments in technology in the state reached R\$680 million just for research institutions and universities. Paraná took second place nationally in the resources devoted to research and development, with a rate of 17.34 percent.

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