

Argentina

KEY FACTS

Official name: República Argentina (Argentine Republic)

Head of State: President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (FPV-PJ) (from 2007; re-elected 23 Oct 2011)

Head of government: President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner

Ruling party: Alianza Frente para la Victoria (FpV) (Front for Victory Alliance) (from 2005; re-elected Oct 2011)

Area: 2,766,889 square km

Population: 41.03 million (2012)* (40,177,096; 2010 census figure)

Capital: Buenos Aires

Official language: Spanish

Currency: Peso (P) = 100 centavos

Exchange rate: P5.50 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

GDP per capita: US\$11,576 (2012)*

GDP real growth: 1.90% (2012)*

GDP: US\$474.95 billion (2012)*

Labour force: 11.77 million (2012)*

Unemployment: 7.20% (2012)*

Inflation: 10.04% (2012)*

Oil production: 664,000 bpd (2012)

Natural gas production: 37.70 billion cum (2012)

Balance of trade: US\$15.35 billion (2012)*

Visitor numbers: 5.33 million (2011)

* estimated figure



Within a short space of time, two deaths in the first half of 2013 caused Argentines to reflect on their country's recent history. In April 2013 the former British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, died in London. Mrs Thatcher's successful determination to regain the Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas, located in the South Atlantic Ocean, after their 1982 invasion by Argentina was probably the high point of her prime ministerial career. It certainly contributed to, or even caused, the return to democracy in Argentina. In 1983, a year after the two-month war with the UK, the junta military dictatorship, that had assumed power in 1976, surrendered power.

In 2013 the Falklands question had still not disappeared from the Argentine

political agenda; President Cristina Kirchner has seen fit to deploy the issue in a number of high level international gatherings, eerily repeating much of the policy statements made by the 1982 military junta. Rather futilely – a Falklands referendum on the islands' future resulted in a 99 per cent vote for retaining the *status quo* – Argentina's politicians continue to debate their country's approach to the question. Significantly, however, the prospect of a second military invasion appears to have been removed from the agenda. The preferred 'option' being that bi-lateral talks are required to secure 'the return of the Islas Malvinas back to their rightful owners.' The British response has consistently been one of indifference rather than engagement.

Videla

A month or so after the demise of Mrs Thatcher, in mid-May 2013, Argentina's former dictator, Jorge Rafael Videla, who had master-minded the *coup d'état* of 1976 passed away in prison – where he was serving a life sentence – at the age of 87. Organisations such as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo noted that Sr Videla had left behind a legacy of genocide, showing no sign of repentance, instead promising that he 'would do it over again, if necessary'. Human rights organisations put at around 30,000 the number of Argentines who simply 'disappeared' during the military dictatorship's seven year rule (1976–83). Appointed army commander by 'Isabelita' Perón in 1975 Videla had promptly set about planning a *putsch* with his opposite numbers in the navy, Admiral Emilio Massera, and the Air Force, Orlando Agosti. Following the March 1976 coup, the three leaders set about the so called 'Process of National Reorganisation'. Videla oversaw the most brutal phase of the dictatorship, during which most of the crimes against humanity were committed, not least the 'death flights' across the River Plate when prisoners were simply thrown out of military aircraft into the estuary's muddy waters. Writing in the respected daily *Clarín* (virtually the only opposition newspaper still publishing, despite the persistent threats from President Kirchner), popular independent journalist Jorge Lanata observed that 'The culture of the 'military party' lives on, crossing Argentine history in both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Much water will need to pass under the bridge until Videla is definitely dead.'

Kircherismo

On 25 May 2013, a symbolic date for Argentines commemorating both the birth of the republic and the May 1811 revolution, President Cristina Kirchner saw fit to hold an official celebration of the ten years during which she, and her deceased husband Néstor, had held presidential office. Even the President's opponents had to grudgingly admit that there had been some positive achievements in the Kirchner decade, even if these had been steadily diminished by abuse of power, increased levels of perceived corruption and increased revelations of presidential intolerance. The positive achievements certainly seemed to be concentrated in the earlier Kirchner years, under the presidency of husband Néstor, which led to the re-negotiation of Argentina's external debt on terms that

were considered to be exceptionally favourable to Argentina. To his credit, Néstor Kirchner also reactivated the human rights policies first introduced by Raúl Alfonsín by placing the leaders of Argentina's dictatorship on trial. Former President Carlos Menem was also placed on trial. It was Néstor Kirchner who introduced improvements to the minimum working age and to pensions, as well as generating increased employment. Investment in education and research was also increased and some democratic reforms introduced. The first years of *Kirchnerismo* also witnessed an effort to improve judicial independence. However, many proposed reforms foundered on the rocks of the government's Peronist identity. Its close links with the Confederación General de Trabajo (CGT) (Trades Union Confederation), as well as with the Buenos Aires metropolis political bosses and the leaders of newer political movements such as the *piqueteros* movement (literally, one who pickets or stands and blocks access to, for instance, a street) which had raised its profile during Argentina's economic collapse in December 2001 when thousands took to the streets in protests that brought together Argentines from nearly all socio-economic sectors. In the 1990s the *piqueteros* movement had begun to strike a chord throughout Argentina as the twenty-first century's

marginalised Argentines protested against the intolerable conditions they faced.

Cristina and Néstor seemed to have one thing in common, their failure to appreciate the importance of maintaining a dialogue with the opposition, however depleted that opposition might seem. More worryingly, the pair often seemed to consider their own ministers as constituting a body of opposition, preferring to do deals with co-opted governors who owed their positions to the Kirchners. Thus developed a policy of creating enemies rather than allies, dividing society by deploying a terminology which owed much to the nineteen-seventies with references to the 'people' and the 'oligarchy'. The isolation from the real world achieved by ignoring or dismissing the voices of common sense in preference to those of sycophancy extended beyond politics, as it embraced the media, business circles and even once friendly countries. Much of this could be laid at the feet of a system that allowed too much power to be concentrated in the executive while the opposition was both divided and languishing. The Kirchners' distance from reality was exaggerated by a fortuitous period of apparent prosperity resulting from the higher prices being paid for Argentine raw materials and what has been described as the 'Argentinisation' of the national economy.

KEY INDICATORS		Argentina				
	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	*39.70	*40.13	40.09	*40.50	*41.03
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	326.50	310.10	370.00	447.60	*474.95
GDP per capita	US\$	8,214	7,726	9,131	10,945	*11,576
GDP real growth	%	6.8	0.9	9.2	8.9	*1.9
Inflation	%	8.6	6.3	10.5	9.8	*10.0
Unemployment	%	7.9	8.7	7.8	7.2	*7.2
Industrial output	% change	4.0	-1.2	7.8	–	–
Agricultural output	% change	-2.5	-15.7	28.0	–	–
Oil output	'000 bpd	682.0	676.0	651.0	607.0	*664.0
Natural gas output	bn cum	44.1	41.4	40.1	38.8	37.7
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	70,589.0	55,669.0	68,134.0	17,104.0	80,908.0
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	54,547.0	37,141.0	53,868.0	14,644.0	65,555.0
Balance of trade	US\$m	16,041.0	18,528.0	14,266.0	2,460.0	15,353.6
Current account	US\$m	6,857.0	8,794.0	3,082.0	-673.0	360.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	44,855.0	46,093.0	49,734.0	49,056.0	39,920.0
Foreign exchange	US\$m	44,360.0	42,922.0	46,619.0	45,773.0	36,765.0
Exchange rate	per US\$	3.14	3.71	3.90	4.06	4.79
* estimated figure						

The 25 May 'celebrations' highlighted the extent to which Argentine society had become divided; on the one hand were the *Kirchneristas*, feverishly celebrating. On the other those who, with equal passion, sought to register their protest. Somewhere in the middle lay an aimless democracy, uncertain of the route it should be taking. Jorge Lanata said of the ten years of the Kirchners that 'It is a formal democracy but in truth, Kirchner controls Congress, seeks to control the judiciary and does not speak to the media.' Mr Lanata added that the Kirchner administration 'speaks on behalf of the left, but acts on behalf of the right'. What was evident to most political commentators was that under the Kirchners, the circular (rather than linear) pattern of Argentine political development was being adhered to. Mr Lanata considered that the Kirchners saw themselves as continuing a political process evident both in the 1950s, Peronism's first flowering, and of the 1970s which saw a more violent form of Peronism emerge.

All change? No, only some

Not long after the 25 May 'celebrations', Mrs Kirchner sought to reshuffle her cabinet, unchanged since her re-election in 2011. The defence and security portfolios were the two positions changed, reflecting internal questions rather than any change of policy. Far was it from Mrs Kirchner to acknowledge any possible crisis in the ministerial ranks, which might be interpreted as a sign of weakness within the presidency. The outgoing security minister was Nilda Garré, a one-time member of the Montonero terrorist group. Mrs Garré was beset with charges of spying on left-wing organisations. She became Argentine ambassador to the Organisation of American States (OAS), and was replaced by former minister of defence, Arturo Puricelli. Mr Puricelli was replaced at defence by Agustín Rossi, formerly leader of the Kirchnersita group of MPs. Perhaps surprisingly, Julio de Vido who had held the planning portfolio for ten years and who was constantly being mentioned in corruption cases was neither fired nor moved. No official announcements of the changes was made by the Casa Rosada, nor was a press conference held where questions might be asked.

Corruption was certainly damaging the President's reputation, casting doubts on the President's chances of remaining in power after the October 2013 elections. Allegations had been made that funds destined for the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

had been diverted elsewhere. Mr Lanata had himself unearthed a possible scandal close to the Kirchners, where a prominent Patagonian constructor had benefited from contracts awarded by the Kirchners. Were Mrs Kirchner to lose power, she wouldn't be impoverished. Official sources indicated that her personal wealth had increased by 800 per cent, to an impressive 82 million pesos (roughly US\$15 million) since her husband assumed power in 2003.

The economy

For a nation that has produced many recognised economists and whose public have had to cope with often alarming rates of hyper-inflation, Argentina's economic development has been at best patchy, reflecting the country's depressingly predictable political circularity. In early 2013 Argentina's economic prospects certainly weren't too promising. One newspaper correspondent described the atmosphere as *fin de siècle*. The real inflation rate in May 2013 was around 25 per cent, causing Argentines to hoard dollars, even though the government had declared this to be illegal. The simple truth confronting Mrs Kirchner was that Argentina's economy had slowed down in 2012, largely because of the contracting global economy (especially the slowdown in Brazil, which adversely affected Argentina's manufactured exports) and falling agricultural output because of the drought. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in September 2012, cumulative annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth stood at 2.1 per cent. For 2012 as a whole, GDP growth was expected to be around 2.2 per cent. Growth was expected to recover in 2013, to some 3.9 per cent for the year, thanks to improved agricultural output (chiefly soya and corn), a possible upturn in Brazil and the government's consistently expansionary fiscal policy stance.

The effect of the structural measures implemented in 2012 extended beyond the short term in the fiscal and monetary spheres and the external sector of the economy. The more significant actions had included re-nationalising a majority holding (51 per cent) in the oil company Repsol YPF (a Spanish/Argentine joint venture), introducing a set of measures aimed at curbing foreign currency hoarding by residents, and restricting the use of foreign currency in local commercial transactions (notably the real estate sector). The Kirchner administration

maintained an expansionary fiscal policy stance throughout 2012, based on cumulative annual growth in primary spending that, at 29 per cent to September, outpaced the 26.2 per cent rise in revenue during the same period of 2011. Public sector tax revenue grew by a cumulative annual 24 per cent; revenue from social security contributions rose 30.1 per cent on the strength of wage hikes and a higher employment rate. Current expenditure posted a year-on-year increase of 31.6 per cent owing mainly to expanding wages and social security benefits (up by an annual 28.7 per cent and 40.8 per cent, respectively, during the same period). Transfers to the private sector (which had shot up in recent years) slowed during the first nine months of 2012, increasing by just 18 per cent as subsidies (especially for public transport and residential gas and power consumption) were cut back. The draft 2013 budget foresaw a nominal 11.4 per cent decrease in government transfers to private companies.

The budget deficit rose from a cumulative 0.4 per cent of GDP in September 2011 to the equivalent of nearly 1.0 per cent of GDP for the same period in 2012. The draft 2013 budget provided for a deficit of 1.6 per cent of GDP at year end. This figure was similar to the one for the previous year and meant an even larger increase in the deficit for the fourth quarter of the year.

As it did in 2011, the administration once again drew on public sector resources (mainly from the social assistance sustainability warranty fund and the Banco Central de la República Argentina (central bank)) to meet national treasury funding needs. The central bank, in addition to the usual transfer of profits, transferred international reserves to meet external national treasury commitments and raised the ceiling for temporary advances from the bank to the treasury. These temporary advances reached a total equivalent to 5.3 per cent of GDP in October 2012, compared to 3.4 per cent of GDP in October 2011. According to data as of late June, the national public-debt-to-GDP ratio was down from year-end 2011 and stood at 41.5 per cent. Because of the sources of funding (public sector agency resources), the proportion of debt held by the private sector fell by 0.9 percentage points during the period, to 13 per cent of GDP. An amount equivalent to 9.4 per cent of GDP is denominated in foreign currency.

National-currency-denominated lending to the private sector continued to fuel

most of the growth in the money supply, posting a nominal increase of 37.5 per cent between October 2011 and October 2012 to reach the equivalent of 14 per cent of GDP. This jump was due in part to the credit line for productive investment announced by the central bank, which required that financial institutions allocate a minimum amount equivalent to 5 per cent of the monthly average of daily peso-denominated non-financial private sector deposit balances as of June 2012 for medium- and long-term productive lending at an interest rate not to exceed 15 per cent per annum. Despite the apparent complexity of these lending requirements, fifty per cent of this funding was scheduled to be channelled to small and medium-sized enterprises.

ECLAC noted that foreign-currency loans to the private sector, which were primarily aimed at the export sector, declined by 38.6 per cent, largely because of the drop in dollar deposits in the financial system. As for exchange-rate policy, the pace of nominal depreciation of the peso speeded up slightly between September 2011 and September 2012, with a loss of 11 per cent against the United States dollar. In real terms, though, the exchange rate continued its appreciation trend. The figures available for the first half of 2012, broken down into economic sectors, show a 5 per cent gain for service producing sectors and a 2 per cent decline for goods producing sectors. Among the latter, manufacturing and construction saw modest growth (1.2 per cent and 0.5 per cent, respectively) while agriculture posted a 16 per cent year-on-year decline that explains the lower figures for this sector. Agricultural output was lower than in 2012, with soya down by 18 per cent, corn by 12 per cent, wheat by 13 per cent and sunflower seeds down by 9 per cent.

Manufacturing fell by 1.3 per cent during the first three quarters of 2012. Tobacco products and chemicals both rose by 3.8 per cent, the latter boosted by the 7.5 per cent gain in pharmaceuticals. The base metal and automobile industries saw declines of 7.6 per cent and 11.7 per cent, respectively. The drop posted by the latter was due to a 28 per cent slide in exports and a cumulative 6 per cent decline in the domestic market to September.

Inflation held at a rate similar to 2011 and was above the regional average. Average wages climbed by nearly 25 per cent, reinforcing the upward trend in real wages. Private sector wages posted above-average gains between September 2011 and September 2012; public sector wages grew at a below-average pace. The employment rate for the third quarter of 2012 was similar to the level for the same period in 2011. The unemployment rate rose by 0.4 percentage points during the same period, to 7.6 per cent of the economically active population. As for the external sector of the economy, the balance of payments current account posted a surplus of nearly US\$1 billion for the first half of the year, topping the surplus for the same period in 2011. The main reason was the sharp decline in imports, which were down by a cumulative 8 per cent for the first nine months of 2012 compared with 2011. Exports fell by 3 per cent.

ECLAC also noted that Argentina's capital outflows were down sharply in 2012, measured by non-financial private sector external asset formation. The restrictions on currency purchases aimed at curbing hoarding by residents sparked a cumulative outflow of nearly US\$6.534 billion to the third quarter of 2012. Measures to stem this outflow began to be rolled out during the fourth quarter of 2011 when exchange-market tensions

arose. They included a special procedure for buying dollars for foreign travel, a ban on purchasing dollars for hoarding, a 15 per cent tax on online purchases of foreign goods using a credit or debit card and a ban on using peso-denominated mortgages to buy dollars. Despite the higher balance of payments current account balance and substantially lower capital outflows, international reserves at the end of November stood at US\$45.24 billion. This figure is US\$1.14 billion less than at year-end 2011, chiefly because central bank international reserves were used for net principal and interest payments to service foreign-currency denominated public-sector debt. By June 2012, total external debt (public and private) was equivalent to 31 per cent of GDP, which is 0.9 percentage points less than during the same period the previous year and the lowest in 19 years.

The energy mix

Argentina's natural resources 'luck' is not limited to the agricultural sector. Argentina is South America's largest natural gas producer as well as a major oil producer. However, an over-regulated energy sector has created policies that have limited the industry's attractiveness to private investors, while protecting energy consumers from rising prices. As a result, the demand for energy in Argentina's growing economy continues to rise while the production of both oil and gas are in decline – leading Argentina to depend increasingly upon energy imports. Largely self-sufficient in crude oil, Argentina imports oil products. Relatively low levels of exploration activity, combined with natural declines from maturing fields, explain the gradual reduction of oil production from its peak in 1998.

The US government Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports that

Leaving the Casa Rosada?

In the second half of 2013, things went from bad to worse for Cristina Fernández and the ruling FpV Peronist party. In early October Sra Fernández was re-admitted to hospital after doctors found a blood clot on her brain, due to a head injury she received a month or so earlier. She underwent surgery to remove the clot on 8 October and was ordered to rest

for at least a month, precluding her from campaigning in the 27 October mid-term elections.

The outcome of these were not good for the FpV – although they retained their majority in both houses, they lost in the important Buenos Aires province.

Despite the brain surgery she had undergone, and increasing pressure for her to retire from politics the ever

optimistic Mrs Fernandez was banking on remaining in the Casa Rosada (the Presidential residence), a tenure that had begun with the election of her husband Nestor Kirchner in 2003.

Waiting in the wings to move in was the photogenic Sergio Massa, whose victory in the province of Buenos Aires for his breakaway Frente Renovador (Renewal Front) list placed him among the favourites to become president in 2015.

labour unrest has periodically closed down Argentina's oil production, with inevitably adverse effects on exports, refinery runs and local product supply. A number of industrial disputes affecting output of up to 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) beset the sector in late 2010 and early 2011. The most recent was in the Cerro Dragón oil field, which produces about 95,000bpd, or roughly 15 per cent of Argentina's total output.

Argentina's provinces have ownership and control of the development of onshore hydrocarbon resources. Energía Argentina Sociedad Anónima (ENARSA), the state energy company since 2004, is responsible for concessions relating to new offshore resources. Federal regulatory oversight of the oil sector is directed by the *ministerio de planificación federal, inversión pública y servicios* (ministry of federal planning, public investment and services) and its *Secretaría de Energía* (Energy Secretariat).

The fiscal conditions for oil exploration in Argentina include a tax on profits of 35 per cent and a 12 per cent royalty on the value of oil production, but this can vary by province according to contracts with operators. In order to ensure that domestic demand is met, oil is subject to export taxes and restrictions on export volumes, which limit the profits that companies are able to generate from selling Argentine production abroad. The Petroleum Plus programme aims to encourage exploration and production by entitling firms to sell output from new and unconventional fields at above prevailing prices. Argentine fuel prices are not routinely set by the government, but some subsidies exist and the government occasionally intervenes to control inflation.

In early May 2012, the Argentine government had passed controversial legislation confirming the expropriation of the YPF oil and gas firm. The Spanish firm Repsol had exercised majority ownership of YPF since 1999, about six years after YPF was privatised. The expropriation affected only Repsol's 51 per cent share of the company. The government alleged that Repsol was under-investing in the country's hydrocarbon sector, which the government considered had contributed to the decline in Argentina's total oil production. Prior to the expropriation, some provinces had rescinded exploration and production licences from YPF also claiming under-investment. Many provinces, through the *Organización Federal de Estados Productores de Hidrocarburos* (OFEPHI) (Federal Organisation of

Producing States of Hydrocarbons), the federal organisation of hydrocarbon-producing provinces, have increased pressure on oil companies to increase output volumes.

YPF is the largest oil producer in the country and prior to the licence cancellations, it accounted for one-third of the country's total output. It also holds significant interest in four refineries and produces over 20 per cent of Argentina's total natural gas output, making it the second largest natural gas producer. YPF's year-on-year production and income earnings fell in 2011, with net profits down by 8.5 per cent. Repsol still maintains a 12 per cent stake in YPF and has sought compensation for the stake seizure.

The second leading oil producer is Pan American Energy (PAE), which is owned by BP and the Bidas Corporation. The Bidas Corporation is a 50–50 joint venture between the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) and Bidas Energy Holdings. PAE currently operates one of Argentina's largest oil fields, the Cerro Dragón field, and in 2011 the company produced about 114,000bpd or 20 per cent of Argentina's daily oil output. Aside from YPF and CNOOC, international oil companies that have had a significant presence in Argentina include Chevron (US), Petrobras (Brazil) and Sinopec Group (China). In late 2010, Sinopec purchased Occidental's Argentine assets, which included 23 exploration and production blocks that ranked Occidental among the country's five largest oil producers. Although the move marked Sinopec's first involvement in Argentina, it was consistent with the broader trend of increased Chinese involvement in South American energy interests.

According to the *British Petroleum Statistical Review of World Energy June 2013* (BP 2013) Argentina had 2.5 billion barrels of proved oil reserves at the end of 2012. Argentine government data suggest that the Golfo San Jorge Basin (predominantly Chubut and Santa Cruz provinces) holds over 60 per cent of remaining reserves, followed by Neuquén Basin at 25 per cent. PAE's Anticlinal Grande-Cerro Dragón concession in Golfo San Jorge contains almost 30 per cent of the country's reserves.

Although most of the enthusiasm in Argentina regarding unconventional fossil fuel resources has centred on natural gas, in 2011 YPF had announced a large discovery of shale oil in the Loma La Lata field in the Neuquén province in the Vaca Muerta shale formation, the estimated size

of which has increased to 741 million barrels of recoverable shale oil.

The BP 2013 estimates that Argentina's total oil production in 2012 was just below 664,000bpd. The Neuquén and Golfo San Jorge basins comprise the vast majority of Argentine crude oil production, each accounting for slightly more than 40 per cent of national output. Chubut (Golfo San Jorge basin) is the most prolific oil province, followed by Neuquén, Santa Cruz and Mendoza.

In 2011, state energy company, ENARSA, had cancelled plans to tender new deep-water offshore exploration contracts, claiming that market conditions were not conducive for successful exploration. Consequently, there has been little oil exploration offshore and new discoveries in the offshore San Jorge basin have been disappointing.

Diplomatic tensions between Argentina and the United Kingdom (UK) over ownership of the Falkland Islands have escalated as UK companies commenced exploratory drilling in 2010, despite Argentine government objections. The islands are officially recognised as UK territory, but Argentina claims the area was historically under its sovereignty. Argentina has enforced restrictions on some companies pursuing oil activities in the Falkland Islands. Although there have not been any large confirmed oil discoveries yet, the offshore waters of the islands are believed to contain potential reserves of oil and natural gas.

Argentina exported just over 60,000bpd of crude oil in 2011, almost a 40 per cent decline from the previous year due to increased domestic consumption and decreased production. The United States and Chile accounted for three-quarters of exports, followed by China and Brazil. Argentina's exports to the United States in 2011 included 28,000bpd of crude oil and 4,000bpd of petroleum products, according to EIA data.

Natural gas

BP 2013 estimates that Argentina had proved natural gas reserves of 0.3 trillion cubic metres (tcm) as of end 2012, a decline of approximately 50 per cent from reserve levels of a decade ago. Almost three-quarters of proven reserves are in the Neuquén basin (42 per cent) and Austral basin (30 per cent), with the remainder in the Noroeste (Northwest), Golfo San Jorge and Cuyana basins.

Argentina produces more natural gas than any other country in mainland South America, but its output of 37.7 billion

cubic metres (bcm) has declined over 10 per cent from peak levels in 2006. It is also the continent's largest natural gas consumer (47.3bcm in 2012). Though once a net exporter of natural gas to neighbouring countries, Argentina became a net importer in 2008.

The EIA reports that slightly less than one-third of natural gas consumed in Argentina is used to generate electricity at thermoelectric power plants, while industry and the residential sector each account for 28 and 24 per cent of Argentina's natural gas demand, respectively. About seven per cent of natural gas consumption is also used in the transportation sector, as roughly 1.9 million of Argentina's vehicles operate on compressed natural gas.

Argentina has suffered severe winter-time shortages of natural gas – reportedly of up to 40 per cent of demand at prevailing prices – that have adversely impacted industrial users whose supplies were interrupted or diverted to satisfy basic residential needs. Seasonal shortages of natural gas also plague some summer months, as electricity demand soars with high temperatures. To avert similar problems in the future, the state energy company has taken steps to import greater volumes of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

The ministry of federal planning, public investment and services includes two relevant natural gas market institutions: the Ente Nacional Regulador de Gas (ENARGAS) and Energy Secretariat. The Secretaria de Energía oversees the relatively deregulated upstream production sector, while ENARGAS regulates the more tightly controlled natural gas transportation and distribution activities.

Price controls, which were imposed in 2001 to combat inflation and aid consumers during the economic crisis, remain in place and cause natural gas to be relatively inexpensive by regional standards. Industry analysts argue that frozen prices for natural gas have deterred investment and production, stimulated consumption and driven the country to rely on greater volumes of imports. In order to leverage Argentina's promising unconventional natural gas resources and revitalise domestic production, the government instituted the Gas Plus programme that entitles companies to sell natural gas from new or unconventional fields at higher prices. Projects that were approved in 2012 under the Gas Plus programme will reportedly be allowed to charge around US\$5 per million Btu (MMBtu) for their production, roughly double the national average price.

Total (of France), through its presence in Argentina as Total Austral, is the country's largest natural gas producer. Together, Total and the second-largest producer, YPF, produce about one-half of Argentina's natural gas. Other significant players include Pan American Energy, Petrobras (Brazil), Pluspetrol (Argentina), Tecpetrol (Argentina) and Apache Energy (US).

According to recent analysis by EIA and Advanced Resources International, Argentina has 774tcf of technically recoverable shale gas resources – the world's third largest assessed endowment, behind only China and the United States. The Neuquén Basin in western Argentina contains more than half of the country's technically recoverable shale gas resources.

Risk assessment

Regional stability	Fair
Politics	Fair
Economy	Fair

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1916–22 and 1928–30 President Hipolito Yrigoyen was Argentina's first popularly elected president. He was ousted in his second term by the armed forces.
 1939–1945 Argentina was neutral during the Second World War and initially refused to break diplomatic relations with Japan and Germany.
 1943 A military government, with pro-fascist sympathies, assumed power.
 1944 Argentina broke diplomatic relations with Japan and Germany and declared war on them.
 1946 General Juan Domingo Perón, a leading figure in the military government, won a free presidential election. He and his wife, Evita, became increasingly popular as social services spending grew. However, foreign exchange reserves built up during the Second World War were squandered by nationalising the railways and other public utilities. President Perón became increasingly repressive towards his critics and the Catholic Church.
 1949 A new constitution strengthened the power of the president and criticising the government became a criminal offence, leading to the jailing of Perón's opponents.
 1951 Perón was re-elected with a large majority.
 1952 Perón's populist wife, Evita, died of cancer and his grass roots support began to wane.
 1955 An attempted coup by the navy was crushed by the army. However, the armed forces did seize power later and Perón

was exiled. A series of unstable military and civilian governments in subsequent years saw the Perónists win the few elections held.
 1973 Hector Campora was elected president, following a Perónist victory. He resigned following widespread civil disturbances and was succeeded by Juan Perón, who had returned from exile.
 1974 Perón died and was succeeded by his third wife, Isabel María Estela Martínez Cartas de Perón (better known as Isabel Perón). The country sank into political and economic chaos.
 1976 The armed forces overthrew the government and installed General Jorge Videla as president on 29 March.
 1976–83 The military junta suppressed left-wing opposition groups and activists and up to an estimated 30,000 people 'disappeared' in the state-sponsored dirty war (Guerra Sucia), where violence and murder against citizens was undertaken by military and police forces, in extrajudicial activities.
 1981 General Leopoldo Galtieri became president.
 1982 The military invaded the Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas, which led to a conflict with the UK lasting ten weeks. Following Argentina's surrender its dead numbered over 700 and cost the economy billions of US dollars that all but collapsed and ended the military's power in office. General Bignone replaced Galtieri and instigated civilian elections.
 1983 Raul Alfonsín of the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) (Radical Civic Union) won the presidential elections.
 1989 Perónist, Carlos Menem, became president and began a programme of economic austerity in an effort to stabilise and restructure the ailing economy.
 1990 Full diplomatic relations with the UK were restored, although Argentina continued to claim the Falkland Islands.
 1992 The peso was introduced as a new currency and was pegged to the US dollar at a one-to-one rate.
 1995 Menem was re-elected president.
 1997 International pressure was applied when a judge in Spain called for the arrest of senior military officers involved in human rights violations during the 'dirty war'. However a blanket national amnesty protected them.
 1998 Argentine judges ordered arrests in connection with the abduction of hundreds of children of women arrested during the 'dirty war'. A protracted recession began.
 1999 Fernando de la Rúa won the presidency; his centre-left Alianza para el Trabajo, la Justicia y la Educación (Alianza) (Alliance for Work, Justice and Education) failed to secure an absolute majority in the lower house of Congress

but still had to deal with the economy which was US\$114 billion in debt.

2000 The IMF granted a loan of US\$40 million. Private Argentine aircraft and boats were again allowed to visit the Falkland Islands.

2001 The amnesty laws allowing members of the armed forces to escape prosecution for human rights abuses were overturned. The economy, devastated by years of recession and near to collapse led to public protests and a general strike against government spending cuts. The Perónists won the mid-term parliamentary elections and both houses of Congress came under opposition control. President Fernando de la Rúa resigned; Ramon Puerta took over briefly before Adolfo Rodríguez Saa became president. Saa's presidency lasted only until mass demonstrations against his austerity measures caused his resignation. Argentina defaulted on its public debt of US\$132 billion. Eduardo Camaño became acting president.

2002 Perónist Eduardo Duhalde was elected president by the Legislative Assembly on 2 January. He became the fifth president in two weeks, initially for only a few months until elections were held. The peso was devalued breaking the link with the US dollar. The president was given the power to pass some laws without congressional approval for the next two years. The peso was floated.

2003 Carlos Saúl Menem withdrew from the presidential election leaving Néstor Kirchner to win by default.

2004 Former president Carlos Menem returned from exile in Chile to face allegations of fraud. The IMF accepted that its handling of Argentina's financial crisis in 2001 had aggravated the deepening recession and that it had continued to lend Argentina money when its debt burden had become unsustainable.

2005 Argentina's US\$100 billion debt restructuring offer was accepted. The country hosted a thirty-four nation Summit of the Americas; violent protests accompanied proceedings.

2006 Argentina cleared its debt to the IMF. Price controls were extended in a bid to counter inflationary tendencies.

2007 Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (FPV), the wife of the former president Néstor Kirchner (2003–07), became president.

2008 Former president Fernando de la Rúa was charged with 'aggravated bribery' by a federal court. He was accused of bribing senators during the 2001 Congress debate to vote in favour of labour reforms.

2009 Argentina laid claim to 1.7 million square kilometres of ocean around its coast, up to Antarctica and including

island chains governed by the UK, including Las Malvinas/Falkland Islands. In elections for 50 per cent of seats in the Chamber of Deputies, the ruling Perónist coalition, led by Frente para la Victoria (FPV) (Front for Victory) won 47 seats and lost its overall majority. The newly formed Acuerdo Cívico y Social (ACyS) (Civil and Social Agreement) (coalition of three parties and others) won a majority 41 seats in both chambers. President Kirchner remained in office as head of government. Former military leader Raynaldo Bignone and five other retired generals went on trial charged with kidnapping, torture, human rights violations and the disappearance and killing of hundreds of opponents of the regime in the late 1970s.

2010 The government was thwarted again in its attempt to tap US\$6.5 billion of central bank funds to pay off debt when a court refused to allow the move. President Kirchner's original plan had been opposed by central bank governor, Martín Redrado, who was forced to resign. Argentina called on the UN to facilitate a meeting with the UK government to discuss sovereignty of Las Malvinas/Falkland Islands, just as UK-licensed oil exploration companies began exploratory drilling offshore of the islands. Long-term creditors agreed to accept new government bonds for two-thirds of the outstanding debt in a deal worth US\$12 billion. This meant that Argentina had settled 92 per cent of its outstanding debt (from 2001) and expected to be able to borrow on the international money market at a better interest rate than any since 2001. Former president Néstor Kirchner died. A national census was conducted. Former military ruler Jorge Videla was sentenced to life in prison, for crimes against humanity.

2011 General Bignone, the last military leader of Argentina, was found guilty of human rights abuses during the 1976–83 junta rule and was sentenced to life in prison on 15 April; he had already been convicted in 2010 for abuses perpetrated while he was in charge of the country's second largest torture centre between 1978–79. Anti-tobacco legislation was approved by the lower house of assembly in June. Advertising and sponsorship was banned, as was smoking in bars, restaurants and the work place, as well as the sale of single cigarettes and all sales to under 18 year olds. In June, the UK prime minister reaffirmed his government's determination not to negotiate over the sovereignty of Las Malvinas/Falkland Islands. On 21 June President Cristina Kirchner announced that she would stand for re-election in October. In presidential elections held on 23 October, seven candidates took part. The incumbent, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (FPV-PJ) won

with 53.96 per cent. Her closest rival, Hermes Binner (PS), won 16.87 per cent. 2012 On 17 April, President Fernández declared that the publicly owned energy company YPF would be re-nationalised, through expropriation of 51 per cent of the shares owned by the Spanish energy company, Repsol. On 18 May, Repsol announced that it had cancelled its contract to provide liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Argentina. On 25 May the European Union filed a suit with the WTO against Argentina for import restrictions and difficulties in obtaining export licences. EU exports to Argentina are valued at around €8.3 billion (US\$6.7 billion) annually. On 12 June, President Fernandez de Kirchner, while addressing the UN Committee on Decolonisation, demanded that the UK enter negotiations over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands/Las Malvinas. Prime Minister Cameron (UK) responded on 13 June by saying there would be 'absolutely no negotiation' on sovereignty rights. Meanwhile the Falklands Islanders decided to conduct a referendum on its 'political status' in 2013. On 1 November, parliament lowered the voting age from 18 years to 16 years, to come into effect in elections due in 2013. On 2 August Buenos Aires province, in a largely symbolic move, banned all British merchant ships passing to or from the Islands from using its ports. The move was to prevent Falklands' ships flying the British Red Ensign (instead of their own Falklands' flag) from using the ports. In 2011 the trading bloc Mercosur had banned ships flying the Falkland's flag from all their ports.

2013 On 8 August President Fernandez restated Argentina's demand for sovereignty of the Falkland Islands when speaking at a UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting in New York. Argentina became a non-permanent member of the UNSC in January. She reiterated her demand that UN Resolution 2065 should be observed and that both parties should 'sit down and discuss' the issue. The UK says there is nothing to discuss since the Islanders had voted overwhelmingly in a referendum in March 2013 to remain British. Argentina lost another appeal, this time to a New York appeals court, to avoid repaying US\$1.3 billion of debt dating back some 11 years. The appeals court did not order Argentina to repay the debt immediately, allowing a last appeal to the US Supreme Court, although it is considered unlikely that this will happen until 2014, which will be after the next elections in October this year.

Political structure

Constitution

Under the 1853 constitution which was reinstated by the military government in

1955, power is separated into executive, legislative and judicial branches at federal and state level. Each of the 22 states has its own subordinated constitution, elects its own executive and legislature and establishes its own judiciary. In November 2012, the voting age was lowered from 18 years to 16 years, with its first usage during elections in 2013. Although voting is compulsory for adults aged 18–70 years, for those aged 16–17 it will be optional.

Form of state

Federal presidential democratic republic

The executive

Executive power is vested in the president, who is elected by popular vote every four years, with a limit of two terms in office.

National legislature

The Congreso Nacional (National Congress) consists of two chambers. The Cámara de Diputados de la Nación (Chamber of the Deputies of the Nation) has 256 members, elected by proportional representation for four-year terms; every two years half the seats are up for election. Deputies are elected through a closed-list proportional representation system, representing 24 multi-member districts. The chamber has exclusive rights to raise taxes.

The Senado de la Nación (Senate of the Nation) has 72 members, elected for six-year terms. Elected members are chosen from three-seat constituencies (23 provincial and the federal capital), two seats go to the party or coalition winning most votes and one seat to the second largest party or coalition. Every two years one-third of the constituencies are elected.

Universal suffrage is from aged 18 years and voting is mandatory (with some exceptions).

Legal system

The judiciary is independent of the government and forms the third 'pillar' of the constitution. Since 1998, federal judges have been elected and dismissed by a body comprising lawyers and academics. The election of judges was intended to reduce the endemic political influence that had previously affected the Argentine legal system, especially at the local level, for many years. There is a Supreme Court system at national and provincial levels.

Last elections

23 October 2011 (presidential and parliamentary (national congress 50 per cent of seats; Senate 24 seats in contention))

Results: Presidential: Christina Fernández de Kirchner (FPV-PJ) won 53.96 per cent, Hermes Binner (PS), 16.87 per cent, Ricardo Alfonsín (UCR) 11.15 per cent; four other candidates each won less than 9 per cent. Turnout was 78.89 per cent.

Parliamentary (total seats after latest election): Alianza Frente para la Victoria (FpV) (Front for Victory Alliance) and allies 135 seats, Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) (Radical Civic Union) 41, Peronismo Federal (PF) (Federal Peronism) 29, Partido Socialista (PS) Social Party 21, Propuesta Republicana (PRO) (Republican Proposal) 11, Coalición Cívica (CC) (Civic Coalition) seven; other minor parties 13.

Senate (total seats after latest election): Partido Justicialista (Justicialist Party) (JP-FpV) 30, UCR 17, PF 14, PS four; five other political parties occupy the remaining eight seats.

Next elections

27 October 2013 (chamber of deputies and senate: 50 per cent of seats contested every two years); 2015 (presidential)

Political parties

Ruling party

Alianza Frente para la Victoria (FpV) (Front for Victory Alliance) (from 2005; re-elected Oct 2011)

Main opposition party

Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) (Radical Civic Union)

Population

41.03 million (2012)* (40,177,096; 2010 census figure)

More than a third of the country's population lives in and around Buenos Aires.

Last census: 27 October 2010: 40,177,096

Population density: 14 inhabitants per square km. Urban population 92 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 1.1 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Ethnic make-up

White (97 per cent), principally descendants of Italian and Spanish immigrants. Minority groups include the Buenos Aires Jewish community and Anglo-Argentines throughout the country. The major indigenous nations are the Quechua of the north-west, the Mapuche of northern Patagonia and the Maticos, Tobas and others who inhabit the Chaco and north-eastern cities like Resistencia and Santa Fé.

Religions

Roman Catholic (92 per cent), Protestant (2 per cent), Jewish (2 per cent), others (4 per cent).

Education

Education is compulsory and free, so that Argentina has one of the highest literacy rates in Latin America. Secondary education consists of basic general education and polymodal education (multipurpose schools catering to ages between 15 and 18). In parallel to the polymodal cycle, there is a technical-, professional course,

which leads after a further year's study to the title of *Técnico*. Higher education is provided by national and private universities, which are autonomous. There are 25 national universities. Technical institutes (Institutos de Formación Técnica) offer higher technical education, leading to the award of the *Título menor*. Professional courses are also available in a wide range of subjects.

Literacy rate: 97 per cent adult rate; 99 per cent youth rate (15–24) (Unesco 2005).

Compulsory years: 6 to 15

Enrolment rate: 120 per cent gross primary enrolment of relevant age group (including repeaters); 100 per cent gross secondary enrolment; 57 per cent in tertiary education (World Bank).

Pupils per teacher: 17 in primary schools

Health

Argentines have the right to choose between the union-administered healthcare system, known as *obras sociales*, and private healthcare providers.

Most children receive immunisations against childhood diseases.

HIV/Aids

In 2009, there were an estimated 110,000 people living with HIV (Unicef 2012).

HIV prevalence: 0.5 per cent aged 15–49 in 2009 (Unicef 2012)

Life expectancy: 76 years, 2010 (Unicef 2012)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 2.2 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef 2012); maternal deaths 38 per 100,000 live births (World Bank).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 14 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012); 5 per cent of children aged under five are malnourished (World Bank).

Welfare

The main portion of the Argentine social security system is borne by a pay-as-you-go system where employers' and employees' contributions fund payments. Workers must contribute 11 per cent of their pay regardless of whether workers participate in a private, or the public, social security system; employers must contribute the equivalent of 16 per cent of each workers' salary to the public system. Non-salaried workers must pay the full amount of 27 per cent of their income.

The whole social security system is adversely affected when employers fail to pay or withhold their social security contributions. However, the percentage of non-registered employees in Argentina is very high. According to non-official records of the Argentine Ministry of Labour,

20 out of 100 employees are non-registered employees, thus depriving them of pensions. Measures have been taken by the Argentine Social Security Authority (SSA) to force employers to register employees and contribute to the social security fund.

Ten of the country's largest private pension funds were nationalised in October 2008 at a cost of US\$30 billion. The decision was taken to save the funds from the global financial turmoil.

Pensions

Argentina reformed its pension system in 1994 to a mixture of the old government-administered system and an individual retirement account programme administered by the Retirement and Pension Fund Administrators (AFJPs).

Argentina has retained the pay-as-you-go system. This system provides basic, universal old-age coverage (known as PBU) for all workers who reach retirement age and who have contributed for at least 30 years including a portion of the wealthiest Argentines' pensions. Payment of retirement benefits begin at age 65 for men and age 60 for women.

Main cities

Buenos Aires (capital, estimated population 13.0 million (m) in 2012), Córdoba (1.5m), Rosario (1.2m), Mendoza (933,601), Tucumán (850,106), La Plata (769,427), Mar del Plata (575,133), Skip (566,732), Santa Fe (518,102), San Juan (498,751).

Languages spoken

Italian, German and French are still maintained within their respective communities. English is generally spoken in business circles. There are 17 native Indian languages, the most widely spoken of which is Quechua.

Official language/s

Spanish

Media

Argentina has a sophisticated media industry with over 150 daily newspapers, based in cities or regionally, hundreds of private commercial radio stations and dozens of television stations.

Press

Dailies: In Spanish, *La Nación* (www.lanacion.com.ar) is a respected publication, *Página 12* (www.pagina12.com.ar) has left-wing views, *La Prensa* (www.laprensa.com.ar), *La Razón* (www.larazon.com.ar) is a popular national broadsheet and *Clarín* (www.clarin.com). Regional newspapers includes *La Mañana de Córdoba* (www.lmcordoba.com.ar), *La Capital* (www.lacapital.com.ar) and *El Tábaro* (www.eltabano.com).

In English, *Buenos Aires Herald* (www.buenosairesherald.com), has a business supplement and *Buenos Aires Times* (www.buenosaires-times.com).

Weeklies: In Spanish, *168 Horas* (<http://168horas.com.ar>), *Noticias* (www.noticias.uolsinectis.com.ar) has features on business and current affairs, *Foco* (www.foco.uol.com.ar). In German, *Argentinisches Tageblatt* (www.tageblatt.com.ar).

Business: In Spanish, major newspapers include *El Cronista* (www.cronista.com), *Negocio Nea* (www.negocionea.com.ar), *El Economista* (www.economista.com.ar) and *Ambito Financiero* (www.ambito.com) with an online edition in English. Business magazines include *Alzas y Bajas* (www.alzasybajas.com.ar), *Apertura* (www.apertura.com), *Bolsafe Valores* (www.bolsafevalores.com), *Edición i* (www.edicioni.com), *El Grafico* (www.elgrafico.uol.com.ar), *Estrategas* (www.revistaestrategas.com.ar), *Fortuna* (www.revista-fortuna.com.ar), *Gestión* (www.gestion.com.ar), *Mercado* (www.mercado.com.ar), *Prensa Económica*

(www.prensaeconomica.com.ar) and *Realidad Económica* (www.iade.org.ar). Monthly magazines include *Tiempo Empresario* (www.tiempoempresario.com.ar) and *Negocios Magazine*.

Periodicals: There are numerous magazines available, covering all interests. *Viva Sophia* (www.vivisophia.com) is a monthly women's magazine.

Broadcasting

Radio: In Spanish, the national public radio is Radio Nacional (www.radionacional.gov.ar) with four channels. La Red (www.uol.com.ar) is a national, commercial network. Radio Intereconomía (www.intereconomia.com) has news and economic contents. One of the most popular radio stations is based in Buenos Aires, Radio Rivadavia (www.rivadavia.com.ar) along with at least 40 other FM stations. All musical genres are broadcast, as well as news (Radio America, www.estoesamerica.com.ar), cultural (Radio Continental, www.continental.com.ar) and religious contents (Red Puerto Libre, www.redpuertolibre.com.ar).

Television: There are five national television networks operated through affiliates and many more local services. Canal 7 (www.canal7.com.ar) is the state-run national TV service specialising in cultural and educational programmes but with the lowest viewer numbers. Telefe (www.telefe.com) with the highest viewer figures produces local content programmes as well as showing

internationally produced shows. Canal 13 (www.canal13.com.ar) is Telefe's rival, producing popular programmes as well as news and current affairs. América 2 (www.america2.com.ar) and Canal 9 (www.canal9.com.ar) are the remaining national networks.

Argentina has one of the world's highest take-up rate for cable television with over a dozen stations to choose from. Station contents can be specific to viewer interest such as sports, children's or lifestyle programming or general content.

National news agency: Telam: www.telam.com.ar

Other news agencies: Agencia DIB (in Spanish): www.dib.com.ar
Agencia Nova (in Spanish): www.agencianova.com
Clave Noticias (in Spanish): www.clavenoticias.com.ar
Noticias Argentinas (in Spanish): www.noticiasargentinas.com
Diarios y Noticias (DYN) (in Spanish): www.dyn.com.ar

Economy

Argentina has vast natural resources providing a good standard of living for the population. These include rich farmlands with yields destined for export, a diverse industrial base, an educated workforce and minerals such as petroleum and natural gas. The service sector, including its financial services and tourism, accounts for almost 60 per cent of GDP; industry constitutes over 30 per cent of GDP, of which manufacturing represents over 20 per cent. Agriculture contributes 10 per cent of GDP, and uses the abundant agricultural produce (Argentina is a major global producer of soya beans, beef and wheat) in its food processing industry. Its mineral resources are used in chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing, and iron, steel and aluminium production. Argentina has factories for motor vehicle and machinery assembly, as well as shipbuilding. GDP growth was 6.8 per cent in 2008, but as the global economic crisis deepened in 2009 GDP growth had almost collapsed with a rate of 0.9 per cent. However, in 2010 the economy bounced back and reached a growth rate of 9.2 per cent and was estimated to have remained high at 8.9 per cent in 2011. An agreement (in 2009) between Argentina and China to swap US\$10 billion worth of their currencies with each other allowed trade without recourse to the US dollar. Argentine business may buy Chinese imports directly in renminbi and the deal provides Argentina with hard cash. World prices of Argentina's commodities hit an all-time high in 2008 and boosted the trade surplus to US\$13.2 billion, allowing Argentina to build up official

reserves of US\$44.9 billion (August 2009), which permitted it to repay US\$12 billion to creditors on loans defaulted in 2001. This brought the total percentage of loans repaid, as of June 2010, to 92 per cent. However, by July 2011, Argentina had still to pay some Paris Club debts, which were hindering it from borrowing on global capital markets; it had been barred from these markets in 2001. Argentina is the second largest economy in South America (after Brazil).

The government was warned by the IMF in September 2012 that if no reliable growth and inflation figures were provided to the organisation by 17 December, then sanctions could be imposed (ultimately including expulsion from the IMF). A discrepancy had arisen whereby private economists reckoned that the 2012 annual inflation was projected to be 24 per cent, while the official rate was only described as 10 per cent.

External trade

The EU and Mercosur have had a trading agreement since 2006. Argentina typically has a trade surplus with the EU, over 66 per cent of which is made up of food and live animals (Argentina is ranked third in the EU's total imports of agricultural products (including prepared foodstuffs) in 2008); there is also a surplus, in favour of Argentina, of foreign direct investment (FDI).

On 25 May the European Union filed a suit with the WTO against Argentina for import restrictions and difficulties in obtaining export licences. EU exports to Argentina are valued at around €8.3 billion (US\$6.7 billion) annually.

In 2004, twelve South American countries signed an agreement to launch the South American Community of Nations (CSN), modelled on the European Union. In 2007 the name was changed to Union of South American Nations (Unasur). Unasur seeks to integrate with the Andean Community of Nations and Mercosur in a single market by 2014, when tariffs on non-sensitive products are abolished with the remainder eliminated by 2019. However political tensions within the region have hampered the ongoing process. Argentine plans to form a closer trading relationship with China have been in existence for some time due to the increasing trade in soya, coupled with Chinese investment in Argentina.

Imports

Principal imports include metal manufactures, machinery and equipment, vehicles, chemicals and plastics.

Main sources: Brazil (28.4 per cent of total in 2011), China (15.1 per cent), US (10.7 per cent).

Exports

Mineral products, agricultural products, vehicles and parts, electrical machinery, live animals and related products, chemicals. Food processing particularly meat, flour and other canned items are the largest manufacturing activities. Argentina is the primary source of tannin and linseed oil worldwide.

Main destinations: Brazil (20.5 per cent of total in 2011), China (8 per cent), Chile (5.7 per cent).

Agriculture

The agricultural sector as a whole contributes around 7 per cent to GDP and employs 11 per cent of the workforce, with the sector being composed predominantly of individual farmers and small companies. Arable land covers 12 per cent of Argentina's total land area. The country is an important producer of food, particularly soya beans, meat and wheat. Together, vegetable products and livestock account for nearly a quarter of total exports. Overall, the country is the fifth largest agricultural exporter in the world, with the sector accounting for 60 per cent of all Argentina's exports. It is the largest exporter of soy oil, soy flour oil and sunflower, the second largest exporter of corn after the United States, the third largest exporter of meat and the fifth largest flour producer.

Argentina's meat consumption is the highest in Latin America, at over 50kg per person per annum. Argentina is the world's third-largest organic meat producer, with 90 per cent of organic produce destined for export markets, particularly the EU. In previous years agricultural profitability has been hit by low international commodity prices, rising production costs, subsidisation of international competitors and an over-valued exchange rate which has diminished competitiveness.

The worst drought since the 1970s created an agricultural emergency by January 2009, particularly in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Cordoba, La Pampa and Entre Rios, where 90 per cent of the wheat crop was lost nationwide, and 800,000 head of cattle died. The cattle industry declined as herds fell in numbers from 57 million in 2005 to 48.6 million in 2010 (the lowest level since 1964). Years of drought and the quota on beef exports, in operation since 2006, resulted in exports falling by 57 per cent in 2010 to 166,265 tonnes.

Argentina has recently increased its fishing production and exports of surplus stock are becoming a valuable export earner, especially when processed into oil and fish meal. Because of the Argentines' preference for beef, the domestic demand for

fish is relatively weak. Principal fishing ports are Mar del Plata and Bahía Blanca. The typical annual fish catch is around 925,000 tonnes, including 550,000 tonnes marine fish and 350,000 tonnes shellfish.

For the first time, exports of fish and seafood at over 131,540 tonnes surpassed beef exports, (at around 70,000 tonnes) in the first quarter of 2011.

About 12 per cent of Argentina's total land is covered by forest, equivalent to 34.6 million hectares, and a further 6 per cent of other wooded land.

Argentina is not self-sufficient in forestry goods, with most of the domestic harvest going towards lumber. Pine and cedar used for pulp are harvested in the north-west of the country. Significant quantities of sawn goods, wood-based panels and chemical pulps are produced from domestic hardwoods and softwoods. A large quantity of paper is imported, although Argentina's pulp and paper industry relies mainly on domestic pulp production.

Industry and manufacturing

Argentina's main industrial centres are Cordoba and to a lesser extent Buenos Aires. Industry as a whole contributes approximately 29 per cent to GDP and employs 24 per cent of the workforce. Major sectors of production include food, textiles, machinery and transport equipment, consumer durables, industrial chemicals, metal working, engineering, paper, iron and steel and electrical equipment. The beef industry has given rise to a number of associated industries, including hides, leather, meat extracts and processed meats. Sectors that have gained in prominence in recent years include software and petrochemicals.

The automobile sector represents an important growth sector for the economy. In recent years the sector has suffered from poor consumer demand and an uncompetitive exchange rate. Many car assembly plants have been closed and operations have been transferred to Brazil, where labour costs are lower and there is a more lucrative domestic market. With the exception of the automobile industry however, the manufacturing sector has been boosted by the acceleration of economic integration within Mercosur.

Tourism

Tourism in Argentina has a wide variety of different activities, climates and terrains to offer visitors. Although the summer in the southern hemisphere (between December–February) offers the North American and European visitor a welcome break from a possible bleak winter, the majority of visitors to Argentina remain those from Brazil.

Tourist numbers for the summer season 2009–10 were the highest since the 1990s, reaching 9.5 million in January (2010), representing year-on-year growth of 10.2 per cent from 2009 and all statistics indicated that the 2010 summer would be a record. Employment related to tourism also grew accordingly, with an estimated 669,000 jobs directly involved in tourism in 2011 (3.8 per cent of total employment). Tourism represented 6 per cent of GDP in 2009. Around two million tourists arrived in Argentina in 2009 (down by 14 per cent on 2008 numbers) with foreign earnings of US\$2.7 billion; revenue was estimated to have risen by 9.3 per cent in 2011 (7.1 per cent of total exports). Since 2003, tourist numbers and their spending have doubled, while investment in tourist accommodation has risen by 1,000 per cent. The industry had been boosted by the favourable exchange rate between the peso and American dollar. The government recognised the importance of tourism to the economy by creating a Ministry of Tourism in July 2010, with the remit to represent an alternative development sector, which ‘boosts employment and modifies regional economies’. Investment in travel and tourism in 2011 was estimated to be P25 billion (US\$6 billion).

In April 2010, China and Argentina agreed to promote bilateral tourism exchange programmes and increase the number of Chinese tourists visiting for cultural events.

Environment

Argentina’s diverse environments have created a number of different ecological challenges from heavy pollution in Buenos Aires, deforestation in subtropical provinces to overgrazing in Patagonia.

Mining

Iron ore is the principal mineral extracted, mostly in Rio Negro province, but output is only sufficient to supply about half of the requirements of the country’s largest blast furnace complex, the remainder being made up from imports. Other minerals extracted include lead, zinc, tin, and uranium.

Argentina’s largest mining project is the Alumbrera copper and gold mine in Catamarca province, thought to be the ninth largest copper mine in the world. Annual production of some 15 tonnes of gold is also expected until the end of its 20-year life in 2019. In addition, the Cerro Vanguardia silver and gold mine produces approximately five tonnes of gold per year. Now a significant gold producer Argentina – which occupies a top twenty world position – has recently seen considerable production activity in the

north-west of the country, where the Veladero mine is situated.

Hydrocarbons

Argentina had 2.5 billion barrels of proven oil reserves at the end of 2012 (unchanged over end 2011), with production of 664,000 barrels per day (bpd), although production has fallen recently due to the lack of new capacity to offset declines in mature fields. Argentina became a net importer of oil in 2009, although it is the third-largest oil producer in Latin America. Domestic oil consumption was 612bpd in 2012.

In November 2011, Repsol confirmed that it had discovered its biggest ever shale-oil reserve in Neuquén province, with 927 million barrels of oil equivalent recoverable hydrocarbons.

On 17 April 2012 President Kirchner declared that the publicly owned YPF energy company would be re-nationalised, through expropriation of 51 per cent of the shares owned by the Spanish energy company, Repsol. The charge given was that Repsol has failed to invest in further exploration of hydrocarbons at a time when Argentina was in most need of reducing the country’s energy bill (US\$10 billion in 2011) and to recover sovereignty of Argentine natural assets. Repsol lost millions of dollars in the sale. The news resulted in warnings from the EU, saying the decision sent a ‘very negative signal’ to investors, while the Spanish government said Argentina faced retaliation.

On 18 May, Repsol announced that it had cancelled its contract to provide liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Argentina. In 2011 Argentina’s LNG imports from Repsol represented 20–30 per cent of domestic natural gas consumption.

Proven gas reserves amounted to 300 billion cum in 2012, with production at 37.7 billion cum (a fall of 3 per cent from 2011). Gas has become the country’s primary source of energy with consumption of 47.3 billion cum in 2012. Argentina became a net import of natural gas in 2008. Neuquén is the country’s major gas field.

Argentina has total coal reserves of 130 million tonnes. It produces 340,000 tonnes per year and consumes around 1.54 million tonnes per year.

There are comprehensive pipeline links with surrounding countries. As traditional inland sites of oil and gas fields have matured the government has licensed offshore exploration sites.

Energy

As the third largest power producer in Latin America, Argentina has a fully deregulated and diversified market. Most of its electricity generation comes from hydropower, followed by natural gas.

Argentina has over 25 million KW of installed generation.

Hydroelectricity is of prime importance to the energy sector, particularly the Yacyreta hydroelectric dam, which helps power Argentina and neighbouring Paraguay. The Salto Grande dam is also co-owned by a bordering country, Uruguay, and as is the case with the Yacyreta, power generated from the project is shared equally between the two nations.

Argentina relies on the Atucha I and Embalse nuclear power projects, both of which are operated by Nucleoelectrica Argentina SA. Construction of a third nuclear power station, Atucha II, was halted in 1999, although the government announced plans 2005 that it would invest US\$700 million to complete the construction. However, the primary problem with Atucha II is technological obsolescence and discussions with the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) to upgrade the design are ongoing. A feasibility study for a fourth nuclear power station began in 2006. Argentina has inactive uranium mines and is able to enrich uranium to process fuel rods but does not have a solution for spent radioactive waste from power plants.

Contracts were agreed between Canada-based Dynamotive and the province of Corrientes in 2008 for two 15.7 MW electricity generating stations, fuelled by biofuel from wood waste and other biomass residue.

Financial markets

Stock exchange

Bolsa de Comercio de Buenos Aires (BCDA) (Buenos Aires Stock Exchange)

Commodity exchange

MATba (Mercado a Término de Buenos Aires)

Banking and insurance

The country’s economic crisis of 2001 severely undermined Argentina’s banking system, when the freezing of deposit accounts and the conversion of deposits into pesos undermined liquidity in the financial system. The value of assets deteriorated throughout 2002 as the peso lost value and government bonds fell to a fraction of their purchase price. Banks were unable to meet claims on deposits, while savers filed law suits against institutions for failing to honour their deposits. As such, the entire banking system teetered on the edge of collapse in 2003. This led to the closure of many local subsidiaries of foreign banks. However, Argentina’s recent economic recovery has enabled the sector to rehabilitate itself somewhat, with an increase in money supply demand and a significant recovery on bank deposits and loans. The acceptance of the national government’s debt restructuring plan in

early 2005 has led to a much needed increase in foreign capital inflow and greater stability in the sector. Despite this gradual upturn the banking sector remains very sensitive to macroeconomic conditions and though the level of credit is growing, it remains at a slow rate.

A new Bank of the South, with a headquarters in Venezuela, will be launched in 2008 to provide an alternative source of development funding for the participating countries. Assets of US\$7 billion will underpin its operations.

The governor of the central bank, Martin Redrado was forced by the government to resign in January 2010 after he had refused to pay US\$6.5 billion of the country's debts from central bank reserves.

Central bank

Banco Central de la República Argentina

Main financial centre

Buenos Aires

Time

GMT minus three hours

Geography

Argentina is situated in the south-east of South America, facing the Atlantic Ocean to the east. Argentina is bounded by Chile to the west, Bolivia and Paraguay to the north and Brazil and Uruguay to the north-east. There are four main geographic provinces: the Andes, the lowland north, the Pampas and Patagonia.

The Andes Mountains line Argentina's western edge, forming the boundary with Chile. The highest peak, Aconcagua, stands 6,960 metres (22,834 feet).

Gently rolling plains extend eastward from the base of the Andes and descend gradually to sea level. Open savannas alternate with almost impenetrable thorn forests in the western part of the region.

Vast, generally treeless plains of central Argentina gradually rise from the Atlantic coast to the Andes Mountains. These fertile plains are Argentina's breadbasket.

They consist of the Humid Pampas along the coast and the Dry Pampas in the west and south.

Patagonia, south of the Pampas, is dry and desolate. The Patagonian steppes support flocks of sheep, the wool of which is exported to Europe.

The southernmost inhabited territory, Tierra del Fuego (Land of Fire), consists of various islands with the northern areas used for sheep farming, while the southern islands are mountainous and covered in glaciers and forests.

Hemisphere

Southern

Climate

Argentina's climate ranges from sub-tropical in the north to sub-antarctic in the south. The densely populated central zone

(including Buenos Aires) is temperate. Summer, from December–March, is hot and humid with temperatures ranging from 26–35 degrees Celsius (C); autumn is April–May, with temperatures in the range 10–25 degrees C; winter is from June–August, with temperatures of 0–20 degrees C, when nights can be cold with temperatures below freezing; spring is from September–November, with temperatures of 12–25 degrees C.

Dress codes

Dress codes are fairly formal in Buenos Aires. Suits are worn for business appointments and, for men, jackets and ties are required for dining out and other social occasions. Casual clothing is often worn on the coast, but shorts and beachwear should be worn only at the beach or pool.

Entry requirements

Passports

Passports are required by all visitors except nationals of neighbouring countries with identity cards.

Visa

All business travellers are advised to contact an Argentine embassy for requirements, before departure.

Tourist visas are not required by most nationals of the Americas, Europe, Australasia and some Asian countries. Citizens of neighbouring countries of Argentina need only national identification cards.

In 2010 a presidential decree was passed requiring a 'reciprocity fee' to enter Argentina from citizens of the United States (US\$131, multiple entries for 10 years), Canada (US\$70, single entry) and Australia (US\$100, multiple entry).

For further exemptions and details check with the appropriate embassy or consulate before departure.

Currency advice/regulations

There are no restrictions on the import and export of local or foreign currency.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

None

Advisable precautions

Typhoid and hepatitis A vaccinations are recommended. Yellow fever vaccinations are advised for visitors to the north-eastern forest area. Malaria prophylaxis is advisable for visits to some lowland tropical areas. Water precautions should be taken outside main towns. There is some risk of dengue fever and anthrax outside urban areas.

Medical insurance is necessary and doctors often expect immediate cash payment before treatment. Take medical kit.

Hotels

Wide range available, graded from one to five stars. There is a 21 per cent tax, which may be included in hotel tariff.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 25 May (Anniversary of the 1810 Revolution), 19 Jun (Flag Day), 9 Jul (Independence Day), 8 Dec (Immaculate Conception), 25 Dec (Christmas Day), 31 Dec (New Year's Eve).

Variable dates

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Malvinas Day (first Mon in Apr), Death of General José San Martín (third Mon in Aug), Columbus Day (second Mon in Oct).

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Fri: 09/1000–1500.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0900–1300, 1500–1800.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0800–1700.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0900–2200, Sat: 0900–1300.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

GSM 850/1900 services are available in highly populated areas only.

Electricity supply

220V AC, 50 cycles

Social customs/useful tips

The normal form of greeting is a handshake. In general, European practices are followed. Standards on punctuality differ though and visitors may be kept waiting. Commercial quotations should be made in US dollars.

In their public behaviour, Argentines are very conscious of civilities. It is considered polite to first extend a greeting like *buenos dias* (good day) or *buenas tardes* (good afternoon) if you are approaching a stranger to ask for information.

Same sex marriage became legal from July 2010.

Tough anti-tobacco legislation was approved by the lower house of assembly in June 2011; the Senate had already passed the legislation. Advertising and sponsorship will be banned, as will smoking in bars, restaurants and the work place and sale of single cigarettes and all sales to under 18 year olds.

Security

Although street crime is increasing in Argentina, personal security is a minor problem compared to other Latin American countries. Violent crime is rare in Buenos Aires. Travellers should take precautions against petty theft such as bag snatching, especially on trains.

Getting there

Air

National airline: Aerolíneas Argentinas.
International airport/s: Ministro Pistarini Ezeiza (EZE), 35km south-west of Buenos Aires; duty-free shop, restaurants, bank, car hire. A bus service operates to the city, every 30 minutes between 0500–2300, taking 45 minutes. Taxis are also available. A coach service also connects to Aeroparque Jorge Newbery airport for domestic flight connections.

Other airport/s: Aeroparque Jorge Newbery (AEP), 8km north-east of Buenos Aires, domestic terminal; duty-free shop, restaurant, bank, car hire.

Airport tax: International departures US\$18; regional and to Uruguay US\$8. International arrivals US\$10. These levies are subject to inflation.

Surface

Road: There are well-maintained roads between all the neighbouring countries. Branches of the Pan-American Highway run from Buenos Aires to the borders of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Paraguay. Entry from Uruguay is possible via bridges over the Uruguay River at Puerto Colón, Puerto Unzué and the Salto Grande Dam. The long distances involved can make car journeys time-consuming: for example, the distance from Santiago in Chile to Buenos Aires is over 1,400 km.

Rail: The major direct route is north from Buenos Aires to Asunción in Paraguay. There are also direct rail links with Bolivia, Brazil and Chile. Services are often disrupted and delays can be expected.

Water: Ferry and hydrofoil services on the Río de la Plata link Colonia and Montevideo (Uruguay) with Buenos Aires. Ferries also operate from Paraguay on the Paraná River.

Main port/s: Buenos Aires, Ensenada (La Plata), Rosario and Bahía Blanca. There are numerous smaller ports and some specialised terminals (for oil, cereals, raw materials, etc).

Getting about

National transport

Air: Given the great distances involved, air travel is the logical method for reaching domestic destinations. Internal flights for Buenos Aires land at Aeroparque Jorge Newbery, 10 minutes from city centre by taxi.

An extensive domestic service is offered to regional airports and demand for services is high, so it is advisable to book flights in advance.

Road: The network has been improved in recent years and links major centres. Tolls are collected on major roads, which are privately-owned.

Buses: Long-distance bus services are operated by a number of companies, mostly

centred on Buenos Aires, and are extensive (e.g. routes to Mar del Plata, Córdoba, San Martín de Los Andes, Mendoza). The Buenos Aires bus terminal is next to *Retiro*, the central rail station.

Rail: Travelling by train is generally cheaper, but slower, than travelling by bus. A comprehensive rail system links main towns. Long-distance Pullman services, with air-conditioning, sleeping facilities and restaurants, are recommended. It is advisable to book well in advance.

Water: There are regular sailings to Rosario and Corrientes via the Paraná River. River transport company Flota Fluvial operates services on the Plate, Paraná, Paraguay and Uruguay Rivers. Patagonian ports are also served, but sailings are irregular.

City transport

Taxis: Taxis, of which there are some 32,000 in Buenos Aires, generally have yellow roofs. They can be hailed or found on ranks and are metered within cities. For trips in the Buenos Aires centre which are less than six blocks, it is usually faster to walk than to take a taxi. Tips are not necessary, though generally expected from tourists.

There is also a widely available and much-used system of cars called *remises*, which offer a safer and more comfortable service. *Remises* are also available for travel to and from the airports, where they can be booked at separate counters. Journey time from Ezeiza airport to city centre is 40 minutes and 10 minutes from Aeroparque Jorge Newbery.

Buses, trams & metro: All major towns have good local services. In Buenos Aires there is a comprehensive public transport system with 'pay as you board' bus services, operating round the clock.

The Buenos Aires metro, known as *Subte*, has five lines and 80 stations; it operates from early morning to late at night. Tokens can be purchased at booking offices.

Ferry: The principal ferry connection in Buenos Aires is to Colonia in Uruguay and is frequented by tourists heading for the Uruguayan resort town of Punta del Este. River buses in the suburb of Tigre serve communities in the river delta and are a popular tourist attraction on weekends.

Car hire

Car hire is available in Buenos Aires and most main urban centres. An international driving licence, in addition to home licence, is advisable

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially

to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling code (IDD) for Argentina is +54, followed by area code and subscriber's number:

Bahía Blanca	291	Resistencia	3722
Balcarce	2266	Río Cuarto	358
Buenos Aires	11	Río Grande	2964
Catamarca	3833	Rosario	341
Córdoba	351	Salta	387
Formosa	3717	San Juan	264
Las Calera	351	San Lorenzo	3476
La Plata	221	San Miguel de Tucumén	381
Mar Del Plata	223	San Pedro	3329
Mendoza	261	San Rafael	2627
Neuquén	299	Santa Fé	342
Paraná	343	Santa Rosa	2954

Useful telephone numbers

Fire: 107

Police: 101

Ambulance: 101

Chambers of Commerce

American Chamber of Commerce in Argentina, 1133 Viamonte, 1053 Buenos Aires (tel: 4371-4500; fax: 4371-8400; e-mail: amcham@amcham.com.ar).

Argentine Chamber of Commerce, 36 Avenida Leandro N Alem, 1003 Buenos Aires (tel: 5300-5000; fax: 5300-9058; e-mail: centroservices@cac.com.ar).

British-Argentine Chamber of Commerce, 457 Avenida Corrientes, 1043 Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4394-2762; fax: 4394-3860; e-mail: info@ccab.com.ar).

Rosario Chamber of Commerce, 1868 Córdoba, 2000 Rosario (tel: 425-7147; fax: 425-7486; e-mail: ccer@commerce.com.ar).

Banking

Asociación de Bancos Argentinos (ADEBA), San Martín 1229, Piso 10, 1004 Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4394-1430; fax: 4394-6340).

Banco Crédito-Op Cooperativo Ltda, Reconquista 484, Zona postal 1003, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4394-0105/0122; fax: 4325-9104).

Banco de Crédito Argentino, Reconquista 2, Zona postal 1092, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4334-1181/89; fax: 4334-5618).

Banco de Galicia y Buenos Aires, Tte Gral Juan D Perón 407, Zona postal 1038, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4329-6000; fax: 4329-6100).

Banco de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Florida 302, Zona postal 1313, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4325-5881/89).

Banco de la Nación Argentina (BNA), Bartolomé Mitre 326, Zona postal 1036, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4347-6000; fax:

4347-8078); international banking division (tel: 4347-8092; fax: 4347-8078); foreign trade promotion (tel: 4347-8763; fax: 4347-8764).

Banco de la Pampa, Reconquista 319, Zona postal 1003, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4325-3410; fax: 4325-8750).

Banco de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, San Martín 137, Zona postal 1004, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4331-2561/3584; fax: 4331-5154).

Banco del Buen Ayre, Cerrito 740, Zona postal 1309, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4350-020/054; fax: 4837-890).

Banco del Sud, Maipú 277, Zona postal 1084, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4326-3313, 4326-2965; fax: 4325-3177).

Banco Francés del Río de la Plata, Reconquista 165, Zona postal 1003, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4331-7071; fax: 4954-8009).

Banco General de Negocios, Esmeralda 120, Zona postal 1035, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4394-3003, 4394-2879; fax: 4394-2698).

Banco Hipotecario Nacional, Balcarce 167, Zona postal 1064, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4342-9732; fax: 4331-0620).

Banco Holandés Unido, Florida 361, Zona postal 1005, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4394-4553; fax: 4322-0839).

Banco Medefin UNB, 25 de Mayo 489, Zona postal 1339, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4313-4125; fax: 4312-9450).

Banco Quilmes, Tte Gral Juan D Perón 564, Zona postal 1038, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4331-8111/9; fax: 4334-5235).

Banco República, Sarmiento 336, Zona postal 1041, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4331-8385/87; fax: 4331-2130).

Banco Río de la Plata, Bartolomé Mitre 480, Zona postal 1036, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4331-7551, 4331-8361; fax: 4331-7551; internet site: <http://www.bancorio.com.ar>).

Banco Roberts, 25 de Mayo 258, Zona postal 1002, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4334-1723, 4334-6682; fax: 4334-6679).

Banco Sudameris, Tte Gral Juan D Perón 500, Zona postal 1038, Buenos Aires, F (tel: 4331-4061/9; fax: 4331-2793).

Banco Supervielle Société Générale, Reconquista 330, Zona postal 1003, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4394-4051/9).

Banco Tornquist, Bartolomé Mitre 531, Zona postal 1036, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4343-784/49; fax: 4342-6090).

Banco Velox, San Martín 298, Zona postal 1004, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 394-0115/0665; fax: 4394-8255).

Banesto Banco Shaw, Sarmiento 355, Zona postal 1041, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4325-6500; fax: 4312-4743).

Caja Nacional de Ahorro y Seguro, Hipólito Yrigoyen 1750, Zona postal 1308, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4476-4216; fax: 4111-568).

Deutsche Bank, Bartolomé Mitre 401, Zona postal 1036, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4343-2511/9; fax: 4343-3536).

The First National Bank of Boston, Florida 99, Zona postal 1005, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4342-3051/61; fax: 4343-7303).

Lloyds Bank, Reconquista 101, Zona postal 1003, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4331-3551/9; fax: 4342-7487).

Central bank

Banco Central de la República Argentina, Reconquista 266, 1003 Buenos Aires (tel: 4348-3500; fax: 4334-6489).

Stock exchange

Bolsa de Comercio de Buenos Aires (BCDA) (Buenos Aires Stock Exchange) www.bcba.sba.com.ar/BCBA

Commodity exchange

MATba (Mercado a Término de Buenos Aires) www.matba.com.ar

Travel information

Aerolíneas Argentinas, Paseo Colón 185, Zona postal 1063, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4320-2000; fax: 44317-3585; internet: www.austral.com.ar).

Austral Líneas Aéreas (ALA), Avda Corrientes 485, Piso 9, Zona postal 1398, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4340-7800, 4317-3605; fax: 4317-3992).

Ministry of tourism

Secretaría del Turismo, Presidencia de la Nación, Suipacha 1111, Piso 21, Zona postal 1360, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4312-5624, 4311-2089; fax: 4313-6834; internet site: <http://www.sectur.gov.ar/eng/menu.htm>).

National tourist organisation offices

Asociación Argentina de Agencias de Viaje y Turismo (Travel Agents' Association), Viamonte 640, Piso 10, Zona postal 1053, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 4322-2804).

Ministries

Ministry of Culture and Education, Pizzurno 935, Zona postal 1020, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 424-1551/9, 445-666, 448-110).

Ministry of Defence, Av. Paseo Colón 255, Zona postal 1063, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 343-1561).

Ministry of Economy, Public Works and Services, Hipólito Yrigoyen 250, Zona postal 1310, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 342-6411, 342-6421/9, 349-8814, 349-8810/2; fax: 331-0292, 331-2619,

331-2090; internet site: <http://www.mecon.ar/default.htm>).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Reconquista 1088, Zona postal 1003, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 331-0071, 312-1775, 312-3434; fax: 312-3593, 312-3423).

Ministry of the Interior, Balcarce 50, Zona postal 1064, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 342-6081, 343-0880).

Ministry of Justice, Av Gral Gelly y Obes 2289, Piso 7, Zona postal 1425, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 803-1051/3, 803-5453; fax: 803-3955).

Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Av L N Alem 650, Zona postal 1001, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 311-3303, 311-2945).

Ministry of Public Health and Social Action, Av 9 de Julio 1925, Zona postal 1332, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 381-8911, 381-8919).

Office of the President, Balcarce 50, Zona postal 1064, Buenos Aires, CF (tel: 331-5041, 303-608, 331-3183).

Other useful addresses

Administration of Agriculture and Agroindustrial Markets, Paseo Colón 922, Piso 1, Of 131, 1063 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-2272/4; fax: 4349-2272).

Administration of Fish and Marine Resources, San Martín 459, Piso 2, 1004 Buenos Aires (tel: 4394-1869, 4394-5961).

Administration of Forestry Production, Av Paseo Colón 982, Piso 1, 1063 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-2101, 4349-2103; fax: 4349-2108).

Administration of Geological and Mining Resources, Julio A Roca 651, Piso 8, 1322 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-3131).

Administration of Livestock Markets, Paseo Colón 922, 1063 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-2287, 4349-2294; fax: 4362-5144).

Administration of Markets of Non-Traditional Products, Paseo Colón 922, Buenos Aires (tel: 4362-1738, 4349-2280/2; fax: 4349-2280).

Administration of Mining Development, Av Julio A Roca 561, Piso 8, 1322 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-3133).

Administration of Native Forestry Resources, San Martín 459, Piso 2, 1004 Buenos Aires (tel: 4394-1869).

Argentine Embassy (USA), 1600 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20009 (tel: (+1-202) 238-6400; fax: (+1-202) 332-3171; e-mail: info@embajadaargentinaeeuu.org).

Argentine Industry Association, Av L N 1067, Piso 10, 1001 Buenos Aires (tel:

Nations of the World: A Political, Economic and Business Handbook

4313-2012, 4313-2512, 4313-2561;
fax: 4313-2413).

Argentine Institute of Plant Sanitation and Quality, Av Paseo Colón 982, 1063 Buenos Aires (tel: 4313-8311).

Argentine Petrochemical Institute, Av Santa Fe 1480, Piso 5, Buenos Aires (tel: 4813-3436; fax: 4813-3436).

Argentine Petroleum Institute, Maipú 645, Piso 3, Primer Cuerpo, Buenos Aires (tel: 4322-3233, 4322-3652, 4322-3244; fax: 4322-3233).

Association of Importers and Exporters, Av Belgrano 124, Piso 1, 1092 Buenos Aires (tel: 4342-0010/9; fax: 4342-1312).

British Embassy, Dr Luis Agote 2412/52, Casilla de Correo 2050, 1425 Buenos Aires (tel: 4803-7070/1; fax: 4803-1731).

Bolsa de Comercio de Buenos Aires (Stock Exchange), Sarmiento 299, 1st Floor, AR 1353 Buenos Aires (tel: 4311-1174, 4311-5231, 4311-5235; fax: 4312-9332, 4312-6636).

Bureau of Export Promotion, Av Julio A Roca 651, Piso 6, 1322 Buenos Aires (tel: 4334-2975; fax: 4331-2266).

Centre for Business Promotion, Buenos Aires Stock Exchange, Sarmiento 299, Piso 1, 1353 Buenos Aires (tel: 4311-5231/4, 4313-4812, 4313-4544; fax: 4312-9332).

Customs Authority, Hipólito Yrigoyen 250 Of 606, 1310 Buenos Aires (tel: 4331-7330; fax: 4331-9839).

Department of Public Works and Transport, 250 Hipólito Yrigoyen Street, 11th Floor, Office 1141, PC 1310, Buenos Aires (tel/fax: 4349-7728; e-mail: arco@meyosp.mecon.ar).

Federal Board of Investment, San Martín 871, 1004 Buenos Aires (tel: 4313-5557; fax: 4313-1486).

Junta Nacional de Carnes (National Meat Board), San Martín 459, 104 Buenos Aires (tel: 4394-5161; fax: 4322-9357).

National Administration of Customs, Azopardo 350, 1328 Buenos Aires (tel: 4343-0661/9, 4343-0101/9).

National Administration of Fishing and Aquaculture, Av Paseo Colón 982, Anexo Jardín, Piso 1, 1063 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-2330/1; fax: 4349-2332).

National Administration of Fuels, Av Paseo Colón 171, Piso 6, Of. 620, 1063 Buenos Aires (tel: 4319-8030/1).

National Commission of Telecommunications, Sarmiento 151, Piso 4, Of 435, 1041 Buenos Aires (tel: 4331-1203).

National Institute of Industrial Technology, Av L N Alem 1067, Piso 7, 1001 Buenos Aires (tel: 4313-3013).

National Institute of Mining Technology, Parque Tecnológico Migueletes, Casilla de Correo 327, 1650 San Martín (tel: 4754-5151, 4754-4141; fax: 4754-4070, 4754-8307).

National Institute of Statistics and Census, Dirección de Difusión Estadísticas, Centro de Servicios Estadísticos, Av Julio A Roca 615, 1067 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-9651).

National Viticulture Institute, Av Julio A Roca 651, Piso 5, Of 22, 1067 Buenos Aires (tel/fax: 4343-3816).

Public Works and Transport Department, 250 Hipólito Yrigoyen Street, 11th Floor, Office 1141, PC 1310, Buenos Aires (tel/fax: 4349-7728; e-mail: arco@meyosp.mecon.ar).

Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Av Paseo Colón 982, 1063 Buenos Aires (tel: 4362-2365, 4362-5091, 4362-5946; fax: 4349-2504).

Secretariat of Energy, Av Paseo Colón 171, Piso 8 Of 803, 1063 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-8003/5; fax: 4343-6404).

Secretariat of Finance, Hipólito Yrigoyen 250, 1310 Buenos Aires (tel: 4331-0731, 4342-2937, 4341-8900; fax: 4331-0292).

Secretariat of Industry, Av Junio A Roca 651, 1322 Buenos Aires (tel: 4334-5065, 4342-7822; fax: 4331-3218).

Secretariat of International Economic Relations, Reconquista 1088, 1003 Buenos Aires (tel: 4331-7281, 4331-1073; fax: 4312-0965).

Secretariat of Mining, Av Junio A Roca 561, Sector 9, 1322 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-3212, 4349-3232; fax: 4343-3525).

Secretariat of Public Works and Communications, Sarmiento 151, 1041 Buenos Aires (tel: 4499-481; fax: 4312-1283).

Secretariat of Transportation, Av. 9 de Julio 1925, 1332 Buenos Aires (tel: 4381-1435, 4381-4007).

Secretariat of Trade and Investment, Hipólito Yrigoyen 250, 1310 Buenos Aires (tel: 4331-2208).

Sociedad Rural Argentina (one of the main associations of big landowners), Florida 460, 1005 Buenos Aires (tel: 4392-2030, 4322-2111).

Subsecretariat of Economic Planning, Hipólito Yrigoyen 250, Of 843, 1310 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-5079; fax: 4349-5730).

Superintendencia de Seguros de la Nación (Insurance Superintendency), Av Julio A Roca 721, 1067 Buenos Aires (tel: 4306-653).

Telecom Argentina Stet-France Telecom SA, Maipú 1210, 9th Floor, Buenos Aires (tel: 4968-3604, 4968-3606).

Trade Information and Opportunities, Reconquista 1098, 1003 Buenos Aires (tel: 4315-1125; fax: 4311-1331).

Undersecretariat of Air, River and Maritime Transport, Hipólito Yrigoyen 250, 1310 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-7205; fax: 4342-6365).

Undersecretariat of Interior Security, Baleance 50 Post box 1064, Buenos Aires (tel: 4342-9440 Ext 579; fax: 4331-7051).

Undersecretariat of Investments, Hipólito Yrigoyen 250, Piso 10 Of 1010, 1310 Buenos Aires (tel: 4349-8515/6, 4349-5037; fax: 4349-8522).

Undersecretariat of Medical and Sanitary Inspection, 9 de Julio 1925, Piso 10, Of 1003, 1332 Buenos Aires (tel: 4383-1811; fax: 4381-8912).

Unión Industrial Argentina (main private sector industrial association), Avenida Leandro N Alem 1067, 11 Piso, 1001 Buenos Aires (tel: 4313-2762).

US Embassy, Avenida Colombia 4300, 1425 Buenos Aires (tel: 5777-4533; fax: 5777-4240).

World Trade Centre Buenos Aires, Moreno 584, Piso 6, 1091 Buenos Aires (tel: 4331-3432, 4331-2604; fax: 4343-4270).

National news agency: Telam: www.telam.com.ar

Other news agencies: Agencia DIB (in Spanish): www.dib.com.ar

Agencia Nova (in Spanish): www.agencianova.com

Clave Noticias (in Spanish): www.clavenoticias.com.ar

Noticias Argentinas (in Spanish): www.noticiasargentinas.com

Diarios y Noticias (DYN) (in Spanish): www.dyn.com.ar

Internet sites

Argentina: www.surdelsur.com

Automóvil Club Argentino: www.aca.org.artigua-barbuda

Buenos Aires: www.buenosaires.com

Fundación Invertir Argentina: www.invertir.com

Tourism Secretariat: www.turismo.gov.ar