

“CALL FOR COHERENCE”

‘Don’t let a WTO trade agreement undermine our ability to provide food security and stability’ urge farmers from throughout the world

We, the undersigned farmer organisations from Africa, America, Asia and Europe, share strong concerns about the WTO Doha Round negotiations on agriculture. We call upon governments and parliaments to commit to reaching an equitable agreement which takes into account non-trade concerns and is consistent with existing international commitments.

The special role which agriculture plays - providing food security to local populations, maintaining viable rural communities and looking after the world's precious land resources - would be totally undermined if the current draft WTO agreement were to be implemented. This draft agreement will benefit large-scale corporate farming and multinational traders. But it will be at the expense of smaller-scale vulnerable family farmers, thereby hindering agricultural and rural development in many countries throughout the world.

This would be in total contradiction with international commitments undertaken by WTO Member States such as the UN Millennium Development Goals, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which aim at reducing and preventing poverty and hunger.

There must be greater coherence between what is happening in WTO and the aims and objectives pursued in other international fora, including that on climate change and biodiversity.

We consider that the current WTO negotiating principles do not respect international legal commitments and standards already agreed to by WTO Member States. In the last WTO Agreement on Agriculture made in 1994 it was agreed that countries should take into account the reduction commitments agreed upon in the Uruguay Round and their impact, and have the right to meet non-trade concerns (art. 20¹). This commitment is being ignored in the current negotiations.

Yet, with rising world demand for food, increasing price volatility and the challenge of climate change, it is more important than ever to enable governments to provide their citizens with food security and stability, to encourage sustainable production which contributes to combating climate change and to meeting the needs of rural communities.

We firmly support the objective that all WTO members respect the same clear, transparent and predictable rules for world trade. But trade is a means of enabling human development, not an end in itself. Food is vital for human life and cannot be treated like other commodities.

The extent of liberalisation must therefore be tempered by the need to provide the means and economic incentives to farmers in all parts of the world so that they can fulfil their production potential in a sustainable way.

¹ Note: Article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) calls for future commitments to be made “taking into account:

- the experience to that date from implementing the reduction commitments;
- the effects of the reduction commitments on world trade in agriculture;
- non-trade concerns, special and differential treatment to developing Member countries, and the objective to establish a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system, and the other objectives and concerns mentioned in the preamble to this Agreement;
- what further commitments are necessary to achieve the above mentioned long-term objectives.”

To achieve this balance and coherence we believe that the basic principles and proposals listed below must be fully reflected in the outcome of agricultural modalities agreed in WTO. If not, we believe that no agreement is better than a bad agreement.

Basic Principles

- all countries must have the right to produce for domestic consumption in order to improve self-sufficiency and ensure their food security, including the use of tariff measures
- trade rules must allow for policy measures, including supply management, which promote stability of food supplies and prices
- special and differential treatment and capacity-building for developing countries must enable them to address the real concerns of resource-poor, vulnerable and small-scale farmers
- all countries should have the right to meet the non-trade concerns of their citizens including food safety, the environment, animal welfare and needs of rural areas so as to promote sustainable agriculture and help combat climate change and protect biodiversity

Proposals

The proposed modalities must be changed in the following way:

- tariff cuts must reflect the position of all WTO members
- each country must be allowed to self-designate an adequate number of sensitive products and these must be treated with maximum flexibility in terms of both tariffs and tariff quotas taking due consideration of their sensitivities
- all forms of tariff capping are totally unacceptable
- conditions applying to special products should respond to the development objective for rural areas, food and livelihood security, taking into account climatic conditions, population and employment
- WTO rules must not further erode preferential access given to imports from the least developed and ACP countries
- safeguard measures (Special Safeguard Measures –SSG- and Special Safeguard Mechanism –SSM-) to address import surges and/or price volatility must be maintained and developed for both developing and developed countries
- there must be parallel treatment of all forms of export support, so as to ensure predictable, transparent and non-trade distorting rules
- strengthened rules, with special and differential treatment for developing countries, should be applied to export prohibition/restriction and export taxes in order to secure food availability in each country
- there must be reinforced rules to protect biodiversity and geographical indications
- a formal assessment, as per Article 20 of AoA, of the reduction commitments agreed upon in the Uruguay Round and their impact on trade and non-trade concerns must be completed prior to finalising a future agreement.

The following farmers' organizations, representing farmers from 66 countries in Africa, America, Asia and Europe have endorsed the Call for Coherence Declaration on June 20, 2011:

Advocacy Center for Indonesian Farmers (Indonesia)
Canadian Hatching Eggs Producers
Chicken Farmers of Canada
Dairy Farmers of Canada
Eastern African Farmers Federation – EAFF
Egg Farmers of Canada
European Farmers and European Agri Cooperatives – Copa-Cogeca
European Council of Young Farmers
Independent Farmers Network (Sri Lanka)
JA Zenchu (Japan)
National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (Republic of Korea)
National Cooperative Union of India
National Farmers Union (United States)
Norges Bondelag (Norwegian Farmers Union)
Norsk Landbrukssamvirke (Federation of Norwegian Agricultural Co-operatives)
Réseau des organisations de paysans et producteurs agricoles – ROPPA
Sub-Regional Platform of Farmers' Organizations in Central Africa – PROPAC
Swiss Farmers Union
Turkey Farmers of Canada
Maghrebian Farmers Union - UMAGRI (Union magrébine des agriculteurs)
UPA (Union des producteurs agricoles – Québec)