

# Geneva Watch

*An overview of the WTO negotiations on agriculture*

## Key WTO Ambassadors Discuss Doha Next Steps in Corfu

The EU hosted a brainstorming session on how to advance the WTO talks in Corfu, Greece. Discussion during the three-day meeting (May 3–5) on the Greek island was mostly on how to progress on issues such as trade facilitation and matters pertaining to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) such as simplifying LDCs' accession to the WTO.

In addition, sources said, key ambassadors taking part in the Corfu meeting agreed to mandate the WTO secretariat to produce various analytical reports on the so-called 21<sup>st</sup> century issues (food security, energy, trade and exchange rate) in order to better understand their implication on global trade.

The discussion was carried over to Geneva on May 10<sup>th</sup>, where Ambassadors also agreed to pursue their conversation on the sidelines of the June 22–24 OECD Forum in Paris, France (OECD is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). Australia, which traditionally hosts a WTO mini-ministerial meeting on the margins of the OECD annual meeting, has listed trade facilitation and development issues on its Paris agenda, observers said.

## Lamy's Future

Meanwhile in Geneva, rumors continue to swirl around the WTO Director General's future. After reports stipulating that Pascal Lamy may be nominated as Francois Hollande's prime minister other rumors have it that he might also be targeted to lead the ministry of finance or foreign affairs.

However, informed sources rate the probability that Lamy be selected to be the next French prime minister as very slim, partly due to his relative non-participation to President-elect Francois Hollande's campaign but more importantly, the competition from several high profile members of the socialist party, starting with its first secretary, Martine Aubry; Mr. Hollande's campaign director and communication director, respectively Pierre Moscovici and Manuel Valls or City of Nantes' mayor, Jean-Marc Ayrault.

That being said, things may change in a year from now as French presidents traditionally reshuffle their government mid-way through their first term at which point Lamy may then be given his chance.

President Hollande will announce his pick for prime minister on May 15<sup>th</sup>. The full government will be unveiled a day later.

## Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Round XII

Chief negotiators of the nine Trans-Pacific Partnership countries (Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, U.S., and Vietnam) started their 12<sup>th</sup> round of negotiation in Dallas. On May 11<sup>th</sup>, several sector-specific negotiating groups, including cross-border services, textiles, labor, customs, technical barriers to trade (TBT), intellectual property and e-commerce issues, have held meetings. In addition, several countries including the U.S. met bilaterally with each other on market access, but officials said negotiators have not gotten down to the nitty-gritty aspects of this sensitive part of the negotiations which may have to wait until the end of the U.S. presidential to move closer to completion.

So far, the negotiations have made "excellent" progress according to one senior U.S. negotiator. In fact, negotiating groups in areas such as cross-border services, customs, labour, horizontal and crosscutting issues (i.e. small & medium enterprises, regulatory coherence & competitiveness, business facilitation and development), telecommunications, TBT and trade remedies are already done for the week. The discussions on all these areas have progressed well and negotiators are within striking

distance of closing them, minus a couple of political issues that are not likely to be resolved before very late in the negotiations, the U.S. official added.

The first group to have fully closed its negotiations was Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). TPP countries have made this a priority due to its link to jobs creation. The SME chapter – which has been largely inspired by what was done under APEC in that regard – outlines commitments on how TPP members are going to provide information to firms so they can better understand how the agreement operates, the U.S. official said.

Chief negotiators look to push the negotiations as far as they can the week of May 14<sup>th</sup> with the hope to see continuous progress being made in the remaining groups. Potential new members were also briefly addressed. So far, negotiators have only exchanged views on the status of their respective bilateral discussions with Canada, Mexico and Japan and look to pursue that discussion in the coming days.

On May 12<sup>th</sup>, chief negotiators turned to a “Direct Stakeholder Engagement Event,” a new way to engage with business stakeholders which was tested for the first time since the beginning of the TPP negotiations. The event, which some observers say was slightly adjusted to address critics describing the TPP negotiation as non-transparent, provided business stakeholders with the opportunity to engage in face-to-face sessions with negotiators to discuss various issues of interest and concern to them.

In addition, plans for the June 4-5 APEC trade ministers meeting in Kazan, Russia, was also raised as TPP trade ministers look to meet on the margins of the summit. Officials said negotiators will elaborate recommendations for their respective Ministers regarding the next round of negotiation, scheduled for early July in the U.S.

## Upcoming Events

- TPP Round XII, May 8–18, 2012, Dallas (U.S.)
- OECD Forum, May 22–24, 2012, Paris (France)
- APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade, June 4-5, 2012, Kazan (Russia)
- CETA, Week of June 4, 2012, Ottawa
- G-20 Summit, June 18-19, 2012, Los Cabos, Baja California Sur (México)
- TPP Round XIII, Week of July 2, 2012, (U.S. TBC)
- Trade Facilitation Negotiating Group, July 9–12, 2012
- WTO General Council, July 25-26, October 3-4, December 19-20, 2012
- APEC Leaders Summit, September 2–9, 2012, Vladivostok (Russia)
- Regular Agriculture Committee, September 20-21, November 14-15, 2012
- WTO Public Forum, September 24–26, 2012

Geneva Watch is published by Dairy Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Egg Farmers of Canada, Turkey Farmers of Canada and Canadian Hatching Egg Producers to report on the various events occurring in Geneva, particularly on the WTO negotiations on agriculture.

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