

Geneva Watch

An overview of the WTO negotiations on agriculture

DDA, T-TIP, CETA, TPP and the G-8

G-8 Leaders (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) who met in Lough Erne, Northern Ireland, on June 17-18 released a statement calling for the completion of several trade agreements currently under negotiation, or which talks are about to start.

This includes negotiations on the Bali package for the WTO 9th Ministerial Conference in Bali this upcoming December, and which many see as a must for keeping the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) afloat. Other crucial negotiations that are underway include the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement (TPP) or bilateral negotiations between the European Union and the United States, the so-called Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) and the Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the EU.

Regarding the WTO, G-8 Leaders said they want to secure a deal in Bali that would cut “bureaucracy to make it easier and faster for goods to cross the borders”. This is in reference to Trade Facilitation (TF), the central piece of the Bali package, also seen as a win-win combination for both developed and developing countries. Trade Facilitation alone is estimated to comprise 44% of the total benefits available from the Doha Round by reducing the cost at the border, and behind the border, for importing and exporting firms.

Last month in Paris, negotiators were instructed to increase their effort and quickly reduce the 550 square brackets still contained in the TF text in order to find a breakthrough before the summer break.

In their final statement, G-8 Leaders pledged to make “determined efforts to reach agreement on a package that has Trade Facilitation at its core.”

The 18th round of the TPP negotiations among 11 countries (Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam) will take place in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, from July 15–25. Japan, which is the latest country to enter the negotiations, will be allowed to take part in the talks following the end of the U.S.’s 90-day consultation period with its Congress expected to conclude July 23.

The U.S. will be hosting the first round of T-TIP, launched last week on the margins of the G-8, the week of July 8th in Washington. This first round will be followed by two additional rounds this fall, informed sources said.

Canada’s Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, was in Europe last week but was unable to resolve the outstanding issues facing the CETA negotiations. Mr. Harper met with UK’s Prime Minister, David Cameron, as well as French President, Francois Hollande, and Irish Prime Minister, Enda Kenny, and called for a swift conclusion of the talks which he said could go down as historical for both countries. The CETA talks are said to be near completion, but neither side wants to set a specific deadline for closing the deal prioritizing the “quality” of the agreement over the pursuit of a quick conclusion.

Upcoming Events

- TPP Round XVIII, July 15–25, 2013, Kota Kinabalu (Malaysia)
- General Council, July 24-25, Oct. 8-9, Nov. 5-6, 2013
- Deadline for Bali Deliverables, August, 2013
- Regular Agriculture Committee, September 4, November 12, 2013
- WTO Public Forum, October 1–3, 2013
- APEC Leaders' Summit, October 1–8, 2013
- WTO 9th Ministerial Conference (MC9), December 3–6, 2013, Bali (Indonesia)

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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Legal Deposit: National Library of Canada, ISSN 1496-9254

