



# Geneva WATCH

An overview of the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade negotiations

Charles Akande, Editor

## Top Six Topics for Future WTO Agriculture Talks

**The March 8<sup>th</sup> agriculture negotiating group meeting allowed Members to take a first look at the way forward in this area of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) following the successful result achieved on export competition in Nairobi.**

As agriculture continues to remain central to the whole DDA negotiations, the Chair, New Zealand's Ambassador Vangelis Vitalis, explained that the consultations (over 70 bilateral consultations) he held with members since mid-January have focused mainly on finding what could be achievable for the World Trade Organization's (WTO) 11<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference in 2017.

Ambassador Vitalis identified six broad areas where work will be needed in the future:

1. The special safeguard mechanism (SSM) for developing countries and a permanent solution on public stockholding programmes remain top priorities for some Members. Ministers at the Nairobi ministerial conference instructed that work in these areas continue in agriculture negotiations sessions. "On both issues (...) there remains a lack of clarity from Members about what an eventual outcome might look like," Vitalis said.
2. Reduction or elimination of agricultural domestic support, including in cotton. The Chair noted that none of the countries have thus far tabled "specific ideas" for how to proceed in that area of the talks, but expects this to be the focus of his consultations in the coming weeks."

3. Negotiations on market access remains important as some delegates continue to draw a link between progress on both market access and domestic support to movement elsewhere in the negotiations.
4. A rapid implementation of the decision on export competition, though a few have mentioned unfinished business in areas such as export credits, the Chair said.
5. The importance of negotiating across all three pillars of the agriculture negotiations.
6. And finally, the need to address new issues such as export restrictions, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, private standards in agriculture, and subsidies for biofuel and bio-energy.

### Members' Reaction

Members lauded the MC-10 decisions, not only for their substance, but also for the momentum for future negotiations. Australia said that the Cairns group has been fighting for 30 years to get rid of export subsidies, and the Nairobi conference has indeed delivered an outstanding outcome. That being said, both Canada and the Philippines stressed that despite a positive outcome in export competition, additional work was needed on export credit and food aid.

Many members stressed the importance of implementing the Nairobi decisions. The WTO regular agriculture committee will monitor this. A first session focusing on export competition is scheduled for June.

Many members including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Paraguay mentioned domestic support and market access as top priority areas where they would like to see progress in upcoming negotiations.

Various developing countries including the G-33 (led by Indonesia and India), the Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific group of countries, and least-developed countries groups call for work on both SSM and food security to start ASAP, with the goal of finding a permanent solution to the issue of public stockholding by the MC-11 in 2017.

Some call for the Rev4 (the fourth revision of the draft modalities text) to remain the basis for negotiations, while others stressed the need for new approaches and ideas.

Generally speaking, Members do not want to rush into negotiations too soon. Canada said it sees some value in taking time to review the landscape on domestic support, while the U.S. urged Members to avoid starting formal negotiations too soon.

The Chairs will continue to consult on the issues and format of upcoming discussions.

**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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