

# *Geneva Watch*

*An overview of the WTO negotiations on agriculture*

## **Editorial: Previewing the July G-8 Summit**

G-8 farm ministers, along with their counterparts from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa, met in Treviso, Italy the week of April 13<sup>th</sup> to tackle, among other issues, the problem of food security and price volatility in agriculture. They warned that “immediate interventions” are required in that department otherwise “serious consequences” will impact the security and the stability of the world.”

If that is the case, the group will have to seriously rethink the course of the current trade negotiations in order to, like they mentioned in their early draft, encourage “the development of local, regional and international” agricultural markets.

## **Trade Policy Review Body Meeting**

At a meeting of Trade Policy Review Body held on April 14, 2009, Director General Pascal Lamy presented the WTO’s second monitoring report claiming that “the best contribution to reviving economic growth is to conclude the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), which is one of the most appropriate collective stimulus packages.” The WTO secretariat report, which was first released on March 26<sup>th</sup> prior to the April 2<sup>nd</sup> G-20 Summit in London, shows that “there is no indication of an imminent descent into high intensity protectionism, involving widespread resort to trade restriction and retaliation.”

Lamy assured that an urgent ambitious and balanced conclusion of the DDA could result in tariff cuts of at least \$150 billion (USD) per year that could have direct positive impact on consumers. However, the accuracy of this number is now being disputed by several members including India’s Ambassador to the WTO, Ujal Singh Bathia who requested additional details of the WTO’s calculations. Bathia’s request also received the support of former U.S. Ambassador to the WTO, Peter Allgeier.

Lamy, who claimed that completing the Doha Round was the “surest way we have of safeguarding our individual trade interests and the multilateral trading system against the threat of an outbreak of protectionism,” will travel next week to the U.S. to meet with U.S. trade Representative Ron Kirk as well as U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke and Senator Max Baucus on April 24<sup>th</sup>, to try to convince them of the urgent need to conclude the DDA. When he met first with Lamy on March 23-24, Kirk stressed that the U.S. needed a few weeks to review its position and develop a new strategy before returning to the negotiating table.

## **Agriculture Negotiations’ Schedule**

WTO officials announced on April 17<sup>th</sup> that the next meeting of the WTO agriculture committee will take place the afternoon of Wednesday April 22, 2009. The purpose of this formal meeting will be to officially appoint New Zealand’s Ambassador David Walker as the new chair of the Special Session of the WTO Agriculture Committee in replacement of outgoing chairman Crawford Falconer.

Dr. Walker, whose appointment has been made by consensus, will become the third New-Zealander in a row to chair the agriculture negotiations, after Tim Groser (2003-2005) and Crawford Falconer (2005-2009).

## Upcoming Events

- Agriculture Committee Special Session, April 22, 2009
- General Council, May 27-28, July 28-29, Oct. 13-14, Dec. 17-18, 2009
- Official Appointment of the WTO's DG, May 31, 2009
- India General Elections, May 2009 (at the latest)
- EU Elections, June 7, 2009
- OECD Ministerial Meeting, June 24-25, 2009 (Paris, France)
- G-8 Summit, July 8-10, 2009 (La Maddalena, Italy)
- APEC Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Trade, July 21-22, 2009 (Singapore)
- WTO Public Forum, Sept 28-30, 2009

**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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