

## **Editorial: Autumn Call**

Following this week's consultations held by both agricultural and non agricultural market access negotiating groups, it has become unlikely that Members will reconvene another technical discussion on the remaining outstanding issues before September. This despite the call by trade ministers in Paris to intensify the Geneva process before the summer recess. All eyes will now turn to the G-8 leaders for guidance on how to bring the round back on track while the G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh, at the end of September, is being viewed as "the moment of truth" for the future of the Doha negotiations.

## **Negotiating Groups**

### **Agriculture Room E Session**

Thirty-six Member countries were invited by Agriculture Chair, David Walker, to participate in a Room E session the morning of July 3<sup>rd</sup>. Officials confirmed that Members agreed to undertake the scheduling workshop some time during the week of July 20<sup>th</sup>. The workshop is expected to focus solely on the templates e.g. determine what kind of data will be required and which base period will be used when Members prepare their schedule of commitments following an agreement on modalities.

Officials said Walker will consult with delegates with the view to develop an agenda based on priority issues. Members, particularly developing ones, asked that issues still bracketed in the draft text be discussed first. It is not clear yet as to when the Chair plans to start discussion on the remaining outstanding subjects, but WTO officials do not expect another major agriculture meeting – besides an open-ended gathering prior to July 28-29 General Council – before the summer recess.

### **Sectorals Moving Forward**

The NAMA negotiating group also met on June 29<sup>th</sup>, and according to one official, some Members expressed concerns with regard to their participation in the sectoral initiatives as it was agreed that participation was only on a voluntary basis. The U.S. wants emerging developing countries particularly Brazil, China, India, South Africa to participate in bilateral negotiations on market access, particularly in sectors such as chemical and electronic goods. Chairman, Luzius Wasescha claimed that work in this area of the negotiations is "moving forward".

Moreover, some officials expressed hope that senior trade officials would become more involved soon to make sure the negotiation intensifies. It certainly appears that the political climate has improved over the past couple weeks, Wasescha acknowledged, before adding that he will only move forward provided that Members collectively accept to do so. With respect to his workplan, the Swiss Chair said he intends to consult Members on the road map for the work of the Group in the autumn, pointing out that the starting point of the upcoming discussions was the December 2008 text.

## **UN Special Rapporteur**

On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Members were invited to attend an information session with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Olivier De Schutter, who presented the conclusion of his report exploring the relationship between WTO agreements, in particular the agreement on agriculture and Members' obligation to respect the human right to adequate food.

Speaking at a 3-hour session, De Schutter told Members in audience that trade can help promote human rights and access to food, but only if certain conditions are met, in particular, that countries must be able to protect their vulnerable populations from surges of cheap imports.

Failure to do so could result in the loss of a large number of small farmers due to the domination of a small number of large traders and processors.

## Reactions

His comments received a mixed reception from delegates, although all welcomed the opportunity to exchange views.

Most critical were, not surprisingly, Members from Cairns Group or other export oriented countries such as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Pakistan, Paraguay, South Africa and Uruguay. They said his comments create the false impression that trade conflicts with the right to food. Instead of defending protectionist policies, De Schutter should target the distortions caused by high trade barriers and subsidies in rich countries, the critics said, pointing out the critical role played by the WTO in the elimination of export subsidies and other trade distorting measures. Most of them complained about not being consulted for the study and urged him to listen to a broader range of opinions and to incorporate them in future reports.

Supporting De Schutter's report were Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Luxembourg, Mali, Mauritius and Tanzania. India welcomed, what it described, as the first opportunity to discuss food security in the WTO, adding that trade liberalization and food security needed to be linked together which is why "development" should remain at the center of the Doha Round. Egypt welcomed his remarks with respect to the net food importing developing countries in terms of food security and the right to food.

## Upcoming Events

- Agriculture Consultations (various formats) July, 2009
- Technical workshop on information for schedules, Exact date TBC
- G-8 Summit, July 8–10, 2009 (L'Aquila, Italy)
- NAMA Week, week of July 13, 2009
- Agriculture Open-Ended, TBC (toward end of July, 2009)
- APEC Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Trade, July 21-22, 2009 (Singapore)
- General Council, July 28-29, Oct. 13-14, Dec. 17-18, 2009
- G-20 Trade Ministers Meeting, September 2009 (TBC)
- G-20 Summit, September 24-25 (Pittsburgh, USA)
- WTO Public Forum, Sept 28–30, 2009
- WTO Ministerial Conference, November 30- December 2, 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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