

Editorial: No Let Up

Although Doha negotiations were not supposed to be dealt with at the WTO 7th ministerial Conference scheduled to take place between November 28 and December 2, it was confirmed this past week that efforts will nevertheless be made to try to advance the talks during the ministerial. The Brazilians are the originators of this initiative because they believe that the current stalemate could very well bury the negotiations for a long period of time. Indeed, even though one could confidently claim that a breakthrough is unlikely at this point of time, doing nothing while all key trade ministers are expected to be assembled in one same location, is not an option.

U.S. Meets with Brazil and India to advance Doha's Agenda

With the objective to clarify what it could potentially gain from emerging developing countries, the U.S. started meeting bilaterally with Brazil and India this past week in Paris and is planning on meeting with South Africa to discuss Doha's possible outcome. The meetings, which were at the senior officials' level, took place in Paris from October 6–8 but ended without significant breakthrough. It has been reported that all 3 countries repeated their position while asking the other side to make the first move.

Since the failed ministerial meeting in July 2008, and the subsequent release of the December 2008 draft modalities text, the U.S. have urged emerging developing countries – India, Brazil, China, South Africa for most part – to provide some clarifications as to how they intend to use the flexibility provided to them in the areas of agriculture and non-agricultural market access (NAMA) and more specifically whether they will be inclined to participate in the sectoral discussions. Emerging developing countries for their part have asked the U.S. to come clean and specify what exactly it wanted in order to break the stalemate.

That said the bulk of the past week consultations was rather spent on technical issues regarding to templates where various papers submitted by the Cairns Group and the US constituted the focus of discussions.

Earlier this week, Brazil and the EU teamed up to put pressure on the United States, asking them to spell out any specific requests the USTR may have in order to move the negotiations forward. “Brazil and the EU believe that closure of the Doha Round in 2010 should take place on the basis of progress already made, including with regards to modalities, and therefore call on WTO Members to set out any specific demands they may have,” the two said in a statement released on October 5. They went on to warn that the absence of progress in the coming months will put at risk the G-20 objective to conclude the round in 2010.

Australia, the EU and Brazil have been the three most active countries advocating for a quick conclusion of the Doha Round. It is with that same goal in mind that Brazil is looking forward to host an informal gathering of trade ministers on the sidelines of the November 30–December 2, 2009 ministerial conference with hopes of breaking the current impasse. However, as the Director General, Pascal Lamy rightly put it during an interview with the New York Times published on October 3, “trade policy is shaped by trade politics and what shapes trade politics is job market.”

At times when the recovery of the global economy is still depicted as fragile and particularly when the U.S. unemployment rate is flirting with the 10% threshold – the highest level since the early 1980s – it should come as no surprise to anyone that nine months after the Obama administration took office, its trade agenda is still unclear and certainly not among the government's top priorities.

Upcoming Events

- Agriculture Consultations week of Oct 12, Nov. 16 and Dec. 7, 2009
- General Council, Oct. 13-14, Dec. 17-18, 2009
- FAO CSO Forum, Nov 12-13, 2009 (Rome)
- FAO World Food Summit, November 16–18, 2009 (Rome)
- Regular Agriculture Committee, November 19, 2009; March 1-2, June 10-11, Sept. 16-17, November 18-19, 2010
- 7th WTO Ministerial Conference, November 30–December 2, 2009

Geneva Watch is published by Dairy Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Canadian Egg Marketing Agency, 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.

For more information or comments, please visit: www.farmsandfoods.ca

Legal Deposit:
National Library of Canada
ISSN 1496-9254



EGG FARMERS OF CANADA
Dedicated to Quality



LES PRODUCTEURS D'ŒUFS DU CANADA
Dédiés à la qualité



Canadian Hatching Egg Producers



Les Producteurs d'œufs d'incubation du Canada