

# Geneva Watch

*An overview of the WTO negotiations on agriculture*

## Editorial: The Problem with the G-19

So much has been said about the new group of 19 WTO Member countries that will get together on May 19-20 to brainstorm about the way forward with respect to the negotiations. The group is too big to take on substantive issues in a manner that could be efficient and help narrow the remaining gaps. The best the G-19 could expect to accomplish this week will be, at most, to help agriculture chairman, David Walker, prepare his own agenda for the months to come.

## Punke at Last!

Newly confirmed U.S. Ambassador to the WTO, Michael Punke has been reassuring WTO Members for the past year, since his predecessor, Peter Allgeier, left the post, about the strength of U.S. engagement in the Doha Round, claiming that there is a strong support from both U.S. business and political actors to bring the negotiations to an end.

"I am here with the support of my government to negotiate a Doha outcome that is balanced and ambitious," Punke said on May 11<sup>th</sup>. However, the new U.S. ambassador claimed that he does not sense the same from his counterparts. "I have been told by some of my counterparts that they don't have the power to negotiate," he said in apparent reference to leading emerging developing countries i.e. Brazil, India and China.

The three countries have long been blaming the U.S. for the blockage in the Doha negotiations stating that it has yet to clarify what it was exactly seeking from developing countries. But Punke rejected those criticisms saying that it is up to the emerging developing countries to provide additional market access "to the degree that is commensurate with the benefit they have gained from participating in the global economy."

"I find it irritating to hear that our counterparts don't know what the U.S. wants," Punke said claiming that it had been made clear during bilateral and small group meetings held with China, Brazil and India. He went on to cite additional market access in NAMA sectorals (chemical, machinery and electronic goods) but also the special safeguard mechanism (SSM) where the U.S. wants to "ensure that flexibility that has been discussed doesn't create enormous loopholes."

The new U.S. ambassador will have the opportunity to repeat the U.S. position when he will take part in the two-day G-19 meeting set to brainstorm the way ahead with the Doha negotiations on May 19 -20.

## Agriculture Open-Ended

At the May 17<sup>th</sup> agriculture open-ended meeting, Argentina, China and India distributed an unofficial paper described as "work in progress" listing questions on about 35 points in the December 2008 draft modalities. The three said these are questions seeking technical, non-political clarification rather than interpretation.

India, which presented the paper, said these questions should be taken up in meetings of the full Membership. It added that some questions have already been raised and clarified satisfactorily in previous meetings. The three see these points of clarification as a third strand of work, in addition to "templates and data" and unresolved (or "bracketed and otherwise annotated") issues in the draft modalities

The meeting also serves as an opportunity for Islam "Isi" Siddiqui, the new chief U.S. agriculture negotiator, to introduce himself. He said the U.S. government and Congress want to conclude the Doha Round successfully but the outcome has to provide real market access and a balance across agriculture, non-agricultural market access and services.

Walker will hold further meetings of the full Membership on Wednesday May 19, and on Friday morning (May 21). On Wednesday morning the EU will present a proposed “road map” for setting up templates for schedules (tables or lists) of commitments. In addition, the chair said he will continue consultations on the unresolved issues during the week and report back to the full membership on May 21<sup>st</sup>.

## Upcoming Events

- Agriculture consultations (templates), May 17, 18 and 21, 2010
- G-19 Meeting, May 19-20, 2010
- 2010 OECD Forum May 26-27, 2010, Paris (France)
- APEC Trade Ministers Meeting, June 5-6, 2010, Sapporo, (Japan)
- OECD Global Forum on Trade, June 8-9, 2010, Paris (France)
- Regular Agriculture Committee, June 10-11, September 16-17, November 18-19, 2010
- G-20 Summit, June 26-27, 2010, Toronto (Canada)
- General Council, July 29-30, Oct. 6-7, Dec. 14-15, 2010
- WTO Public Forum, September 15-17, 2010
- G-20 Summit, November 11-12, 2010 Seoul, (South Korea)
- OECD Global Forum on Agriculture, November 29-30, 2010, Paris (France)

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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