

Geneva Watch

An overview of the WTO negotiations on agriculture

Date Set for 8th WTO Ministerial Conference

WTO Members agreed on a date for the next WTO Ministerial Conference (MC8) at the October 21st General Council meeting. The Ministerial Conference which is expected to take place every two years has been scheduled for December 15-17, 2011. At this point in the negotiations, Members expect this upcoming ministerial gathering to emulate last year's conference which was a low-key event, only dealing with the organisation's day to day businesses.

However, things could change rapidly if Members manage to progress on the Doha Round which could subsequently be added to the agenda. For the time being, Canada's ambassador to the WTO, John Gero, also chairman of the General Council, said he will consult with Members to discuss details of the MC8, including the agenda.

Like most Members, U.S. ambassador Micheal Punke, believes 2011 is the WTO's window of opportunity to hammer a deal on modalities although no one has come forward and specified when this ultimate attempt should take place. There are two realistic dates to do so according to officials, either the traditional end of July or sometime during the fall, immediately prior to the MC8.

However for that to happen, delegates will need to roll up their sleeves and seriously narrow the remaining outstanding technical issues. It is unlikely that this week's second round sessions of brainstorming in Agriculture, NAMA and Services will lead to a breakthrough as negotiators are set to continue mapping out the outstanding matters without getting in proper negotiations. Talks however are expected to change gear once the G-20 leaders provide their "traditional" blessing to conclude the Doha Round at their upcoming summit in Seoul on November 11-13, 2011.

Upcoming Events

- U.S. Mid-Term Election, November 2, 2010
- G-20 Summit, November 11-13, 2010 Seoul, (South Korea)
- Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) November 13-14, 2010 Yokohama (Japan)
- Regular Agriculture Committee, November 18, 2010, March, June, September and November 2011
- NAMA Week, November 22, 2010
- OECD Global Forum on Agriculture, November 29-30, 2010, Paris (France)
- Agriculture Consultations, Week of December 6, 2010
- General Council, Dec.14-15, 2010
- G-20 Summit on Agriculture, March 18, 2011 (TBC)
- WTO Ministerial Conference (MC8), December 15-17, 2011

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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