Editorial: Slow Start
For a second week in a row, Members were unable to get into the right type of negotiations’ rhythm that will lead to tabling revised draft modalities by April. The meeting this past week, even though it focussed on critical areas of the Doha Round e.g. Agriculture, non agricultural market access (NAMA) and Services, essentially mirrored the sluggish pace that was observed when the talks restarted the week of January 10th. It is now up to senior officials from the Group of 11 (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the EU, India, Japan, Mauritius, South Africa and the U.S.) to gauge Members willingness to seriously engage in a process that would eventually help leading to a successful first month of negotiations.

Negotiations’ Second Week
WTO Members are off to a slow start two weeks into the critical negotiations calendar that has been set up to produce revised draft modalities texts by the end of the first quarter of 2011. Rather than the intensive discussions on key issues anticipated by some trade observers, both agriculture and NAMA negotiating groups were in fact relatively quiet, failing to impose the sort of pace that one would anticipate for the negotiations to conclude by the end of the year.

However, the chairs – Agriculture’s David Walker and Luzius Wasescha (NAMA) – were encouraged by Members’ positive feeling regarding the global negotiating atmosphere. Wasescha said he sensed a “change in spirit”, that Members are starting to engage and expressing themselves in concise and concrete terms which he said could be the “the beginning of what might evolve into the final phase” of the negotiations.

This week’s NAMA discussions meanwhile were almost entirely devoted to Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs). However, Wasescha said Members have started to discuss proposals that “have never been discussed before.” The contentious issue of sectorals was left to a select group of interested Members (e.g. Brazil, China, India and the U.S.) who have held bilateral discussions particularly on the chemical sector.

The U.S. asked for more time to be set aside for this issue in the next NAMA week. The NAMA chair, however, thinks it’s more productive to let Members negotiate among themselves at this particular stage in the talks adding that the issue will be brought to the multilateral level when the time is right.

Walker, for his part, expects more intensive discussions to take place during the next agriculture fortnight beginning the week of February 7th. However, he declined to provide a detailed work programme, only suggesting that he plans to undertake several Room E consultations which involve about 38 delegations.

He described his plan at this point as a “working hypothesis”, one that would largely depend on what the Director General, Pascal Lamy, would outline during the informal Trade Negotiations Committee scheduled for February 2nd, after the traditional Davos mini-ministerial meeting (January 29th).

G-7 Ministerial Meeting Confirmed
The EU Trade Spokesman, John Clancy, confirmed on January 14th that ministers from the G-7 (Australia, Brazil, China, the EU, India, Japan and the United States) have been invited by the EU Trade Commissioner, Karel De Gucht, to meet informally on the side-lines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, on January 28th.
It is believed that progress within this group of key countries is required if Members stand a chance to conclude Doha this year. However, Clancy said the meeting will not be about narrowing existing differences on substance. “At this stage, it is important to underline that whilst 2011 does present a real opportunity to conclude negotiations, this meeting is just a first step in exploring the way forward and without prejudice to the format of any future meetings,” the EU spokesperson said in a statement.

The EU Commission hopes that this first meeting among the seven will help building “a renewed momentum to the Doha talks” that would eventually help wrapping the talks in 2011.

**Upcoming Events**

- Agriculture, NAMA and Services Negotiating Group Meetings, January 17, 2011
- Senior Officials Meeting January 24-25, 2011
- World Economic Forum, January 26 - 30, 2011, Davos (Switzerland)
- G-5 Ministerial Meeting, Date TBC Brussels (Belgium),
- Informal Trade Negotiations Committee, February 2, 2011
- 2nd Agriculture Negotiating Group Meeting, Early February, 2011
- Regular Agriculture Committee, March 31, 2011; June, September and November 2011
- Revised Draft Modalities Texts, End of March 2011
- G-20 Summit on Agriculture, June 2011 Paris (France) (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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