



Geneva WATCH

An overview of the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade negotiations

Charles Akande, Editor

A Week Full of Agriculture Talks

There is a full week ahead for agriculture negotiators, including a series of informal meetings – starting with Monday’s meeting, which will be a general discussion on the recent consultations on the way forward with the agriculture negotiations.

Tuesday’s gathering will be devoted to public stockholding for food security and Wednesday is reserved for the special safeguard mechanism (SSM), and the continuation of Monday’s meeting. In preparation, and to get a better understanding of delegates’ positions on the issues, members of the Cairns Group¹ circulated a series of questions on SSM, public stockholding, domestic support, and market access.

On SSM, the group of agriculture exporting countries asked Members to describe their experience concerning the use of safeguards in free trade negotiations (FTAs) or in the WTO. “Have these been used and what is the perspective of exporters and importers?” In addition the group wants to know “what has changed in agricultural market access since the SSM was first called for?”

With respect to public stockholding, the Cairns Group Members asked those who use the program to provide information on the portion of the production under the public stockholding programs that has been exported. “What, if any, safeguards are in place to comply with the requirement in the Interim Solution that: ‘stocks procured under such programmes do not distort trade or adversely affect the food security of other Members,’ ” the group asked.

Domestic support has been one of the areas where Members have been very active lately. A series of

analyses have been produced on the latest trends in domestic support to help advance the negotiations. In its paper, the Cairns Group Members ask how to amend and reform domestic support disciplines in order to achieve “substantial progressive reductions in support and protection.”

“What are the main domestic support-related policies or problems in global agricultural markets today,” the group asks, urging Members to provide information on their programs that are similar to those that they perceive to be a problem in other countries.

On market access, the group asks delegates to list what they consider being the most important “market access related policies or problems in global agricultural markets today” and describe how these impact trade between Members or third parties. “How has the political capital of market access changed in recent years in your country? Is it influenced by the WTO, by FTAs or by other issues,” the group asks.

The answers to these questions are important to build a better understanding of the environment in which Members evolve. They will help shape the discussion by providing elements that would facilitate the discussion going forward, with the goal of finding a suitable solution in these areas of the negotiations, one official said.

Ministers in Nairobi instructed Members to advance negotiations on SSM and food security this year. The full Membership has also shown interest in tackling domestic support as part of the next set of deliverables. Market access for agriculture remains, for many, a top priority – particularly for Latin American countries who are exporters of agricultural products. Many see plurilateral negotiations taking place in this area of the talks, given the difficulties observed thus far.

The Chair of the agriculture negotiations, New Zealand ambassador to the WTO, Vangelis Vitalis, said he will report on his latest consultations, and

provide delegations with an opportunity to consider possible ways forward.

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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