



## AN OVERVIEW OF THE WTO NEGOTIATIONS ON AGRICULTURE

### MC14 Roadmap: WTO Reform at the Top of the Agenda

WTO Members broadly agree on the need for the organization to “reposition” itself in the face of global trade tensions. As such, they agree to make the reform of the WTO a top priority at the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14), which will be held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from March 26 to 29, 2026.

The ideal MC14 outcome will be a reform declaration outlining the areas and modalities of the WTO reform. However, the WTO Director General, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, stressed at the May 20-21 General Council that she “received feedback cautioning that reform discussions should not be expanded into contentious areas, where Members may have differing interpretations of what ‘reform’ entails. This includes concerns about potentially altering the organization's fundamental character, its decision-making processes, its scope, or even exacerbating vulnerabilities for developing Members.”

But in the current global trade environment dominated by President Trump's unilateral tariff measures, Dr. Ngozi believes Members must ask themselves “what isn’t working, why is it not working and how do we fix it? There should be no sacred cows,” she said. “In today's environment, we can no longer afford to overlook the key challenges” Dr Ngozi added.

Among the challenges she referred to were “unfair trade practices/level playing field issues, approaches to policy space for developing Members, tariff escalation that penalizes value addition, outdated rules, unfulfilled ministerial mandates and a hobbled dispute settlement system.” Dr Ngozi urged Members not to “shy away from addressing a decision-making process that hinders progress -- one that stymies Members' ability to capitalize on emerging opportunities.”

In addition to the WTO reform, Members will also seek an “African package” that includes agriculture, development, and room for maneuver for industrial development. The Cairns Group and the African Group, which have been working together to identify potential outcomes for MC14, said ongoing discussions have taken place with other Members with a view to submitting draft modalities that could serve as a basis for negotiations on agriculture.

The objective is to finalize substantive work in Geneva so that Ministers can endorse the results at MC14. Members aim to decide by December 2025 which issues with real potential for convergence will be addressed at MC14. To this end, senior officials may be convened, as needed, to the December General Council (GC) meeting, where a decision will be taken on which negotiating issues are mature enough to be submitted to MC14.

### May 2025 to March 2026 Timeline

Between May and July 2025, several WTO negotiating groups—including the Negotiating Group on Agriculture (CoASS) and the WTO reform process—will advance their work on MC14 modalities and the so-called “scoping” areas of reform needed at the WTO. This process will culminate in a stocktaking meeting at the end of July, likely at the next General Council meeting, tentatively scheduled for 22-23 July 2025.

After the summer break, Members will continue their work on the MC14 priorities identified between May and July. A Head of Delegations (HODs) meeting will be convened in October to finalize and agree on items requiring the guidance of senior officials.

Then the “difficult decisions” will be taken at the December 2025 GC meeting where Dr Ngozi asked Members to ensure that their “delegation is empowered with the necessary decision-making authority” or to be prepared to have their “decision-maker present in Geneva at that time.”

Between January and March 2026, Members will endeavour to finalise the remaining work in Geneva, as decided at the

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December 2025 GC, before communicating the outcome of the negotiations to Ministers.

Building on the work completed in Geneva by March 2026, Ministers will meet in Yaoundé to approve the scope, modalities, and timetable of WTO reform at MC14. There is a “broad support from the Membership for a short, focused and flexible Ministerial Conference” which still leaves the door open for a possible extension of MC14 if necessary.

Geneva Watch is published monthly by Dairy Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Turkey Farmers of Canada, Canadian Hatching Egg Producers, and Egg Farmers of Canada to report on the various events occurring in Geneva, especially on agriculture.

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