

The Food Crisis cannot be solved by a WTO agreement

- The Voice of Farmers from Africa, Asia, America and Europe Must Be Heard -

We call upon all citizens to make their voice heard. The trade talks must not be allowed to destroy sustainable development in agriculture and put farmers throughout the world further at risk. We also urge ministers attending the WTO meeting not to sell wider food concerns in return for trade. Food is vital for human life and cannot be treated like other commodities or be the subject of speculation.

We, farm leaders from developing and developed countries throughout the world, share grave concerns about the current WTO Doha Round negotiations on agriculture.

It is clear that it is not lack of trade which has caused the current food crisis but lack of production: between 2000 and 2006 world trade in agricultural products grew twice as fast as world agricultural production. Further trade liberalisation will benefit large-scale corporate farming and multi-national traders at the expense of small-scale vulnerable farmers, thereby hindering agricultural and rural development in countries which need it most.

We firmly support the objective that all WTO members respect the same clear, transparent and predictable rules for world trade and a balanced outcome which contributes to growth and employment and to reducing poverty and hunger in the world.

However, the extent of liberalisation must be tempered by the need to provide the means and incentive to farmers around the world so that their production is profitable and they can fulfil their production potential in a sustainable way, thereby meeting the rising demand for food in the world.

We fear that the proposals currently on the table in WTO will undermine the ability of many countries throughout the world to provide their citizens with urgently needed food security and stability. In this situation no agreement is better than a bad agreement.

This is why we believe that the following basic principles and proposals must be fully reflected in the outcome of agricultural modalities:

Basic Principles

- all countries must have the right to produce for domestic consumption in order to improve self-sufficiency and ensure their food security

- trade rules must allow for policy measures, including supply management, which promote stability of food supplies and prices
- special and differential treatment and capacity building for developing countries must enable them to address the real concerns of resource-poor, vulnerable and small-scale farmers
- all countries should have the right to meet the non-trade concerns of their citizens including food safety, the environment, animal welfare and rural needs

Proposals

Chairman Falconer's proposals must be changed in the following way:

- tariff cuts must reflect the position of all WTO members, not only those of the major agricultural exporters
- each country must be allowed to self-designate an adequate number of sensitive products and these must be treated with maximum flexibility in terms of both tariffs and tariff quotas taking due consideration of their sensitivities
- all forms of tariff capping are totally unacceptable
- conditions applying to special products should respond to the development objective for rural areas, food and livelihood security, taking into account agro-climate, population and employment
- WTO rules must not erode preferential access given to imports from the least developed and ACP countries
- safeguard measures to address import surges and/or price volatility must be maintained for both developing and developed countries
- there must be parallel treatment of all forms of export support, so as to ensure predictable, transparent and non-trade distorting rules
- strengthened rules, with special and differential treatment for developing countries, should be applied to export prohibition/restriction and export taxes in order to secure food availability in each country
- there must be reinforced rules to protect bio-diversity and geographical indications

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Soral, Switzerland