

Special Preferences, Non-Trade Concerns And Consumer Concerns

October 31, 2002, Geneva, Switzerland

9:30-10:45 Special Preferences/Special and Differential Treatment

Many developing countries have relied on preferential access into OECD markets. This has left their economies dependent on exports of one or two commodities. As internal support prices in OECD countries are being reduced, and as market access is increasing, the value of these preferences is declining. Yet, in the short term, developing countries have little chance to re-orient their economies. How can the Agricultural Agreement facilitate the transition away from special preferences without disruption for countries that depend on them?

Rolf Moehler, Former Deputy Director General, Agriculture, European Commission

Tim Josling, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University

10:45-12:00 Addressing Non-Trade Concerns (Food Security, Rural Development, and Environmental Sustainability)

The Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture acknowledged the role of non-trade concerns in future agricultural negotiations. Included under the rubric of non-trade concerns are rural development, food security and rural development. While normally associated with developed countries, all three are also concerns for developing countries, albeit from a vastly different perspective. How are these concerns currently addressed in the Uruguay Round Agreement? Can these concerns be addressed with Green Box measures alone? If not, how can they be accommodated in the negotiations without imposing trade distortions?

Bob Thompson, Former Director, Rural Development, World Bank; IPC Chairman, USA

Joe O'Mara, Former Special Agricultural Trade Negotiator, USA

12:00-1:15 Addressing Consumer Issues (Geographic Indicators, Precautionary Principle, Production Process Methods)

Access to markets depends not only on tariffs and other "formal" trade barriers, but also depends on sanitary and phytosanitary standards, and labeling rules and regulations. While there is little sentiment for re-opening the SPS Agreement, some countries wish to clarify the right to exercise "precaution" in their regulatory framework. Other countries want to expand the system of geographic indications now in place on wines and spirits into foods. Finally, there are efforts in some countries to label products based on production methodology or country of origin. How can the WTO balance trade liberalization against individual societies' tolerance for risks? What are the implications of geographic indicators for developing countries? How do existing WTO rules address production process labeling? How can such labeling be trade-neutral?

Willem-Jan Laan, Agricultural Economic Advisor, Unilever

João Magalhães, Counselor, Agriculture and Commodities Division, WTO