



Press Conference on Trade and Development: The Cotton Issue; National Press Club, Oct. 25 Tue Oct 24, 11:15 AM ET

To: Assignment Desk, Daybook Editor

Contact: Yvonne Siu of the International Food & Agricultural Trade Policy Council, 202-328-5056 or siu@agritrade.org

News Advisory:

WHAT: Press Conference on Trade and Development: The Cotton Issue

WHERE: National Press Club (Lisagor Room), Washington DC

WHEN: October 25, 2006, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

WHO: Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore (via video conferencing), Benin Trade Minister Moudjaidou Issifou Soumanou, Chad Trade Minister Youssouf Abbassalah, Mali Trade Minister Choguel Kokalla Maiga, Burkina Faso Agriculture Minister Bonoudaba Dabire

Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad (C4) have been waiting for the removal of trade-distorting cotton subsidies since they submitted their cotton initiative to the WTO in 2003. They are now taken hostage by the inability of the big countries to complete the Doha Development Round. Meanwhile, the situation in West and Central Africa has deteriorated. The cotton producers are facing critical conditions.

The C-4 Ministers will participate in the October 26, 2006 international conference on cotton, "The Next Steps for Africa," hosted by the IDEAS Centre, the International Food & Agricultural Trade Policy Council, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The aim of the conference is to have a comprehensive discussion on the cotton issue, focusing on trade, competitiveness, and donor coordination, and to urge for a resumption of the Doha negotiations. A press conference is scheduled for October 25, one day prior to the cotton conference, at the National Press Club's Lisagor Room, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Cotton is a unique product that can help the C4 reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With the new Farm Bill, the USA has an opportunity to enable the African cotton producers to compete on a level playing field, and by doing so, demonstrate their commitment to help reach the MDGs in Africa.

The USA is the largest cotton exporter globally. It subsidizes 25,000 cotton farmers, of which 10 percent receive 90 percent of the total cotton support. In contrast, in West and Central Africa, 15 million people depend on this crop with currently little or no substitute.

The international distorted market is not the only challenge the C-4 faces. Because of the loss of revenue over the last years, it has been unable to invest in the enhancement of their competitiveness. However, they now need urgently short-term help from the international community, or else there might not be any cotton production left to reform. Longer-term support is also required to ensure that African cotton producers remain competitive.

At this point in time, the cotton issue needs a comprehensive discussion. The C-4 call for the liberalization of the international cotton market, internal reforms in the C4 countries, and for foreign aid to ensure the survival of the sector in the short-term, and to improve its efficiency in the long-term.

IDEAS Centre offers policy advice services to developing and transition country governments in the areas of international trade, development and economic governance. In relation to the World Trade Organization (WTO), IDEAS Centre helps low-income countries defend their trade interests and thus use their WTO membership in a way that supports their development.

<http://www.usnewswire.com/>