

IPC Alert

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FROM GENEVA TO COPENHAGEN

Opinion piece by Carlo Trojan, IPC Chair

With the opening of the Copenhagen Summit on December 6, the attention of policymakers has promptly shifted to climate change and away from international trade, the subject of another international summit held just one week prior: the WTO ministerial conference of November 30-December 2 in Geneva. Such compartmentalization may make good sense in order not to overload the respective sets of climate change and trade negotiators, but it behooves them well to consider the important linkages between climate change and international trade.

As the latest paper released under the ICTSD-IPC Platform on Climate Change, Agriculture and Trade, “The Role of International Trade in Climate Change Adaptation,” demonstrates, food and agricultural trade flows are expected to increase substantially in a context of changing agricultural productivity around the world resulting from climate change. Trade has the potential to help counteract this effect by delivering agricultural goods to areas experiencing productivity declines. The role of trade as an adaptation tool becomes even more important in light of recent scientific studies putting the effects of carbon fertilization in question. It would be unwise, however, to rely solely on trade to help us adjust to climate change, and the international community must also importantly commit to increased and sustained investment in agricultural productivity.

Efforts to maintain an open and equitable global food system may also require some fine-tuning of international trade rules in response to trade related climate change measures, a proposition put forward by several delegations within the WTO, who are keen to bring the Doha Development Round to a conclusion but also believe that WTO members need to more actively address other “current and new” issues, such as clarifying the relationship of WTO rules and climate change measures. As illustrated in a recent article written by IPC for the Australian Farm Institute, there are topics such as border tax adjustments and carbon allowances that require clarification across the board, whereas others, i.e. standards and subsidies, may be particularly relevant for agricultural goods.

Both climate change and international trade negotiations and summits deserve our attention and progress in both is to be welcomed. Let us bear in mind, however, that they are also related and that those inter-linkages also require our attention.

IPC President and CEO Charlotte Hebebrand recently wrote an article on Climate Change Policies and Agricultural Trade Rules for the Australian Farm Policy Journal. This article is available with a paid subscription by clicking [here](#).

About IPC

The International Food & Agricultural Trade Policy Council (IPC) promotes a more open and equitable global food system by pursuing pragmatic trade and development policies in food and agriculture to meet the world’s growing needs. IPC convenes influential policy makers, agribusiness executives, farm leaders, and academics from developed and developing countries to clarify complex issues, build consensus, and advocate policies to decision-makers. More information on the organization and its membership can be found on our website: www.agritrade.org.