



CAIRNS GROUP FARM LEADERS' PUNTA DEL ESTE COMMUNIQUE 19 APRIL 2010

Cairns Group Farm Leaders met today in Punta del Este, Uruguay, to discuss the long-running Doha Development Round of multilateral trade negotiations and how decisions governments make on trade policy impact on agricultural businesses, families and communities.

Farm leaders are frustrated with the lack of progress and call upon world leaders to demonstrate the political will and responsibility required to bring the Doha Development Round to a successful conclusion.

Farm leaders urge Cairns Group Ministers to hasten their resolve to finalise modalities which must deliver freer trade under a rules based system in agricultural goods through the multilateral approach.

We strongly advocate that Ministers pursue urgent engagement across the broader WTO membership – with the aim of mobilizing consensus when world leaders of the G8 and G20 meet in June in Canada.

This Round represents the best opportunity to remove the big distortions in international trade in agricultural products. It is the only means by which broad liberalization in agricultural trade can occur across the three pillars of market access, export competition and domestic support, including those measures that depress world prices for farmers.

Cairns Group Ministers should not allow a lowering of ambition from the draft text tabled in December 2008 and instead build from this base. Any additional trade distorting mechanisms within the negotiations must be strongly resisted, including the possible misuse of the Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM).

There is so much at stake if the Doha Development Round cannot achieve its full ambition.

Not only will the gains for the world's farmers and consumers be jeopardized but failure will also represent a lost opportunity for global economic stimulus and pose enormous risks to the WTO rules based system itself.

The benefits of having a robust and transparent rules based system should not be understated in terms of providing a binding and enforceable mechanism to resolve international trade disputes, making trade in agricultural produce more secure and predictable. Cairns Group Ministers must ensure that all countries abide by their agreed WTO responsibilities.

Farm leaders also note that multilateral liberalisation has the greatest potential benefits for the world's farmers and indeed the broader international community. Being a development round it should offer farmers from developing countries the opportunity to compete on an equitable footing on world markets.

Cairns Group Ministers must retain their commitment to the multilateral reform process as their priority. While farm leaders support trade liberalization, bilateral and regional trade negotiations must not be seen as a substitute for multilateral reform through the WTO.

Time is precious and with each wasted day the future of the multilateral trading system and WTO credibility is at stake.

Without lowering the level of ambition of the agricultural negotiations, solutions in the broader context of this round are required to bring this negotiation to a conclusion and this work needs to begin immediately. We stand ready to support you in finding a pathway to concluding the Doha Development Round.