



Cairns Group Farm Leaders

Statement to Ministers at the

Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) 2017

9 December 2017

First and foremost, as Cairns Group Farm Leaders, we reaffirm our commitment to an open, transparent, rules-based global trading system. We are also seeking key commitments at the Eleventh Ministerial Conference (MC11) in December 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. WTO members should commit to lock-in the reforms undertaken in recent years and proceed to new commitments.

World agricultural trade has increased substantially in recent years and is crucial to all countries in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, in particular the eradication of poverty and hunger.

Farm representative organisations that make up the Cairns Group Farm Leaders have been consistently calling for meaningful trade liberalisation in the agriculture sector since 1998. In 2017, we are calling on our Governments once again to commit to meaningful agricultural trade liberalisation and urge all other WTO members to follow suit. Ultimately, liberalised trade and a rules-based global trading system contribute to food security and economic development.

Greater disciplines on domestic support payments from all WTO members is a key priority for Cairns Group Farm Leaders. They distort trade and have the most damaging effects on the countries that are least able to mitigate those effects. Therefore, the highest priority for Cairns Group Farm Leaders is disciplining all trade-distorting domestic support policies. We strongly urge all WTO members to move forward on solutions to reduce their damaging effects on world agricultural markets. The mechanism to do this is an overall cap on all trade-distorting domestic support with meaningful limits on spending by product.

While reform of domestic support should be the primary focus of WTO members in Buenos Aires, much remains to be done to improve market access. We urge WTO members to outline a pathway to genuine improvements in market access in coming years. The vast majority of the potential gains from trade liberalisation can be found in commercially meaningful improvements to agricultural market access.

Transparency around all commitments, both existing and new, is fundamental to the integrity of the rules-based trading system, as is participating fully in the dispute settlement process, and abiding by WTO decisions. We call on all WTO members to heed our call to action.

Recommendations to WTO members

Domestic Support

Recommendation 1:

WTO members should:

- agree to an overall cap on trade distorting domestic support payments, (including amber box, blue box and *de minimis* categories) and include effective limits on spending by product;
- ensure notifications of domestic support policies and programs are up to date; and
- develop a forward work program that contains the following elements:
 - retain only limited special and differential treatment for least developed economies;
 - commitments to reduce overall levels of trade-distorting domestic support payments by product;
 - review the ‘green box’ category of domestic support payments to ensure that these measures are truly ‘non-distortionary’; and
 - strengthen the system of notifications regarding domestic support programs with special attention to programs of public stockholding for food security.

Market Access

Recommendation 2:

WTO members should:

- reduce bound tariff rates to at least the applied tariff rate during the same timeframe as the elimination of export subsidies, acknowledging that special and differential treatment could apply for a defined number of special products in least developed economies; and
- commit to meaningful discussions on market access and outline a workplan for the lead up to MC12 in 2019.

Recommendation 3:

WTO members should:

- comprehensively review non-tariff measures affecting agriculture trade and outline a pathway to regulatory convergence; and
- aim to achieve meaningful reductions in compliance costs for agricultural exporters, while taking into account legitimate human, animal and plant health concerns.

Commitment to rules-based trading system including WTO dispute settlement

Recommendation 4:

WTO members should:

- reaffirm their commitment to a rules-based global trading system that facilitates trade; and
- agree to participate fully in the WTO dispute settlement process and abide by WTO decisions.

Organisations that supported this Statement

Argentina

Confederaciones Rurales Argentinas
Sociedad Rural Argentina

Australia

National Farmers' Federation

Brazil

Confederação Brasileira de Pecuária e
Agricultura
Sociedade Rural Brasileira

Canada

Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance
Canadian Federation of Agriculture

Chile

Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura

Guatemala

Camara del Agro de Guatemala
Asociación de Azucareros de Guatemala

New Zealand

Federated Farmers of New Zealand

Paraguay

Asociación Rural de Paraguay

South Africa

AgBiz

Uruguay

Asociación Rural del Uruguay

Signed:

FIONA SIMSON

CHAIR – CAIRNS GROUP FARM LEADERS

9 December 2017, Buenos Aires, Argentina