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LEAD STORIES

WTO AGRICULTURE WEEK: NO NEGOTIATING BREAKTHROUGH EXPECTED

Despite a new negotiations format focusing on informal meetings, a 24 March stocktaking session on the agriculture negotiations failed to indicate any significant advances. Members -- meeting in Geneva for the first special (negotiating) session of the WTO Committee on Agriculture (CoA) this year -- adjourned their bilateral and plurilateral consultations for a brief plenary meeting to report back on progress made so far. The meeting was extremely brief, with only three Members making interventions. Reportedly, New Zealand's Timothy Groser, who chairs the talks, felt that Members needed more time to consult and he said he "would not interpret silence as dissent". Nevertheless, sources have not characterised the consultations so far as particularly constructive. Some delegates felt that the aim of generating a positive atmosphere to move the talks forward was jeopardised by certain Members playing a "blame game," accusing others of blocking any compromise.

Members are currently in Geneva for a week of agriculture negotiations from 22-26 March. These meetings represent the formal re-launch of agriculture talks -- the key to the Doha round -- which came to a standstill after the Cancun failure. The goal of the talks, conducted on a very informal basis, is to accelerate negotiations with the aim of setting parameters, or modalities, for a framework for future talks. Members are hoping to agree on the parameters by July, with precise numbers to follow at a later stage (see BRIDGES Weekly, 26 February 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/04-02-26/story1.htm>). No major breakthroughs are expected. In the words of one delegate "don't expect anything seismic... but there might be some rippling under the surface that softens things up".

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Another open-ended informal special session is scheduled for the morning of 26 March to provide delegations with the opportunity to report back to the plenary and to discuss the way forward. A formal special session to conclude the 'Agriculture Week' will follow. Trade sources indicated that the formal meeting may wrap up already in the morning.

Major disagreements re-appear below the surface

The 24 March informal plenary session was very brief; Members were not yet ready to report back on the discussions of the last days. Reportedly, the tone of the stocktaking meeting was not very friendly, particularly as some delegations started to "call names" and accuse others of not being flexible enough or not taking sufficiently into account the concerns of others. In particular, the G-10 group of mostly developed country agriculture net-importers -- including Japan, Norway and Switzerland -- was accused by the Cairns Group of agriculture exporters of preventing consensus-building because of their protectionist stance. Switzerland defended the G-10 position, calling on delegations to employ a "new technique" in the talks, to start to really listen to each other. Hinting at the ambitious Cairns pro-liberalisation demands, Switzerland argued that the Doha mandate contained both a "liberalisation road" and a "safeguards road" -- as articulated in the recognition of non-trade concerns -- but regretted that some countries were merely focusing on the liberalisation track.

Another major stumbling block reported back was the situation of key actors pursuing opposite approaches to the general structure of the talks. While members of the Cairns Group and the G-20 group of developing countries linked the opening of their agricultural markets to ambitious results in the subsidies negotiations, others, including the US, said they would only talk about subsidy reductions once developing countries had made a commitment to significantly cut their agricultural tariffs. Reportedly, this pitted the US against countries such as India, which is not willing to reduce its farm tariffs using the blended formula proposed by the US and EC last summer (see BRIDGES Weekly, 21 August 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/03-08-21/story2.htm>), but demands access to the Uruguay Round formula across the board, leaving it with much more flexibility to cut tariffs than under the blended approach.

Members irritated by US proposal

According to trade sources, the US made a proposal on market access that caused irritation among many Members. US chief agriculture negotiator Allen Johnson reportedly mentioned to several delegations that, under a blended formula for tariff reduction, the US could only

accept at most three percent of all agricultural tariff lines falling under the rather generous Uruguay Round formula band, whereas the rest would be reduced using the much more stringent Swiss formula, or would be cut down to zero. . Members such as those of the G-10 or the EC, as well as certain developing countries, already find the blended, i.e. three-pronged, reduction formula too restrictive, and demand that the Uruguay Round approach be considered as the general rule rather than as an exception. In fact, a developed country delegate stated that "if this shows how the US is really looking at market access," the approach was so unresponsive to the needs of other groups that it would be difficult to move forward.

Relative power of G-20 weakens as Cairns Group regains strength

According to trade sources, the G-20, which had taken an active role since its creation just prior to the Cancun ministerial, was less visible than the Cairns Group during the talks this week. The Cairns group, on the other hand, had been rather inactive since the 2003 Cancun Ministerial Conference. Cairns, sharing several members with the G-20, is more ambitious in its take on liberalising agriculture trade than the G-20, and attaches much less importance to special and differential treatment for developing countries. Delegates also observed splits emerging within the G-20 itself, with core G-20 member India taking a more protectionist approach, and G-20 leader Brazil reorienting itself more towards Cairns. China, one of the four key figures in the G-20, is reportedly "staying in the underground," e.g. continuing to take a rather low profile in the talks compared to other G-20 countries. In general, observers noted earlier that the recent efforts of the newly revitalised Cairns Group to consolidate their position with the G-20 could, on the one hand, lead to a stronger pro-liberalisation voice in the debate, but could also potentially frustrate those G-20 Members that demand special consideration for developing countries.

EC hosts informal meeting

On 22 March, the EC organised an informal breakfast meeting attended by EC Agriculture Commissioner Fischler, US chief agriculture negotiator Allen Johnson, high-level officials from Japan, Mauritius, Australia, Brazil and India, as well as Chair Timothy Groser. According to Brazilian Ambassador Seixas Correa, the atmosphere was rather positive, although the discussions were held at a very general level. The Australia ambassador added that there were "tentative signs of flexibility" among the participants, and that all three pillars in the current negotiations were discussed, i.e. export competition, domestic support and market access.

Asked about the importance of this negotiating week in Geneva, Seixas Correa replied that this meeting was not a "make or break" occasion, but rather an important step in order to get the negotiations back on track. "We're starting the game, we're back at the negotiating table," he added.

At a press conference on 22 March, Fischler stated that the EC eventually would be willing to discuss eliminating all export subsidies, and not necessarily only those on products of interest to developing countries. He said that it was up to developing countries "to say in which products they are interested, and if they say 'all products,' then we have to engage in a discussion also about that". Fischler thereby seemed to confirm recent rumours that the EC could be willing to look into the issue of phasing out all its export subsidies by a certain date; an action that many other Members see as key to catalysing real movement in the negotiations.

ICTSD reporting; "Cairns Group Eyes Meeting With G-20 Alliance in Geneva", WTO REPORTER, 3 March 2004; "US, EU Set to Meet G-20 Alliance To Discuss Moving Forward WTO Farm Talks", WTO REPORTER, 15 March 2004; "Officials Cite Convergence in Cairns, G-20 Positions on Agriculture Subsidies", WTO REPORTER, 18 March 2004; "Officials Cite 'Flexible Attitudes' in Start Of Week of WTO Ag Talks, Mum on Details", WTO REPORTER, 23 March 2004; "In WTO Export Credit Talks, EU Pushes For Focus on Disciplining Subsidy Element", WTO REPORTER, 23 March 2004.

OTHER NEWS

SPS COMMITTEE MOVES ON EQUIVALENCE, S&D DEBATE TO CONTINUE

The WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), meeting from 17-18 March in Geneva, adopted the last of three clarifications of an October 2001 Decision on Equivalence (G/SPS/19, available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>), paving the way for the Decision's implementation. However, Members made only limited progress on the issue of special & differential treatment (S&D) for developing countries, with discussions set to continue at the next meeting. In addition, the Committee, which deals primarily with trade aspects of health and sanitary standards, heard concerns regarding more than 20 SPS measures implemented by Members.

Equivalence decision finalised

Equivalence refers to the mutual acceptance of another Member's risk-minimising measures that may differ in process but have an equivalent effect. The Decision on Equivalence was adopted to address one of the 'implementation' concerns raised by developing countries by outlining steps designed to make it easier for all WTO Members to make use of the "equivalence" provisions of the SPS Agreement. The aim of the Decision is to help developing countries prove that their products are as safe as those in developed countries. The third and final clarification adopted by the SPS Committee aims to speed up the recognition of equivalence of SPS measures for products previously traded, for which information already exists.

Transparency in S&D

Members continued discussions on Canada's proposal on enhancing transparency of special and differential treatment within the SPS Agreement, which would require Members to engage in bilateral consultations if an exporting country identified significant difficulties in complying with proposed regulations (see BRIDGES Weekly, 5 November 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/03-11-05/story2.htm>).

Following the consultations, the notifying Member would inform the WTO of the S&D requested and provided (or reasons why S&D was not granted). The proposal had been adopted in principle at the April 2003 SPS Committee meeting, but the implementation details remain to be finalised. The Committee discussed the technical details of the procedures put forward by the Secretariat (G/SPS/W/132/Rev.1) as well as the changes proposed by the US (G/SPS/W/141). Among the issues discussed were concerns voiced by some Members over language in the US proposal that would treat technical assistance as separate from S&D, and thereby possibly as an alternative to giving developing countries more time to adjust to importing countries' new measures.

Trade concerns: coffee, GMOs

The Committee debated a range of specific trade concerns, ranging from India's new plant quarantine measures to the US's withdrawal of sanitary clearances for French meat processors. In this context, a group of coffee-producing countries -- including Colombia, Papua New Guinea, Nicaragua, Brazil, Cuba, India, Guatemala, Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Peru -- raised concerns over proposed new German health standards for ocratoxin A (a microtoxin contaminant) in soluble and roasted coffee. The countries claimed that the regulations were too strict, not based on science and inconsistent given that similar standards for wine and

beer were lower. In the case of Colombia, the German coffee market accounts for 17 percent of Colombia's total coffee export, and enforcing the standard could result in a rejection of up to six percent of Colombian coffee. In response, the EC noted that in the absence of an EU-wide standard, Germany could adopt its own levels. The EC added that EU-wide maximum ocratoxin A levels for coffee, wines and fruit juices were expected to be adopted by the end of 2004. The issue is also being discussed at the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants, meeting from 22 to 26 March in Rotterdam.

The US, Canada, Argentina and Australia again raised concerns over the EU's recently adopted labelling and traceability regulations for genetically modified organisms (GMOs), which they regard as disproportionate, trade restrictive and not scientifically justified (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 27 June 2002, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/02-06-27/story3.htm>). The US requested further guidance from the EC for its farm industry, including how tests are to be conducted. The US is coming under increasing pressure from domestic farm groups to bring a WTO dispute against the EU's regulations -- set to come into effect in April -- in addition to the ongoing dispute over the EU's de facto moratorium on the approvals of new GMOs (see BRIDGES Weekly, 10 March 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/04-03-10/wtoinbrief.htm#2>).

The next meeting of the SPS Committee is currently scheduled for 23-24 June, preceded by informal consultations on 21-22 June.

ICTSD reporting.

IN BRIEF

SERVICE ASSOCIATIONS SAY WTO OFFERS "DISAPPOINTING"

From the 22-23 March, a delegation of global service industry associations met with officials and representatives from the WTO to discuss the ongoing service negotiations, highlighting the urgent need for more progress. "WTO Members must summon the political will necessary to make the difficult decisions, not least on agriculture that will ultimately break the impasse... Then we can press ahead with talks on services liberalisation from which everyone stands to gain," said Sir Iain Vallance, Chair of the European Services Forum. In a press briefing, the services organisations stressed the current lack of ambition,

noting that only 41 WTO Members had tabled services offers in the current request-offer phase of negotiations. Brazil, for example, has not yet made its offer, preferring to wait for the outcome of agriculture talks. The services associations called for further offers, noting that the services sector is important in developed and developing economies alike. The services sector accounts for 69 percent of economic output in OECD countries and nearly 50 percent of gross domestic product in low income countries, while agriculture accounts for 2.1 percent and 23 percent of economic output respectively. Service offers, according to the groups, should be both deeper and broader in their coverage.

ICTSD reporting; "Services Groups Decry Lack of Ambition In WTO Services Offers Proposed in Talks," WTO REPORTER, 23 March 2004.

RELATIONSHIP WITH BIODIVERSITY CONVENTION QUESTIONED AT WIPO

On 15-19 March, the World Intellectual Property Organisation's (WIPO) Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC) convened for its first meeting since its mandate was extended for another two years at the WIPO Assemblies in October (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 3 October 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/03-10-03/story1.htm>). The nature of the Committee's relationship with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was a source of substantial discussion during the meeting, which mirrored similar debates at the CBD's Conference of the Parties in February (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 20 February 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-02-20/story1.htm>). Many developing countries, including Brazil and the African Group, questioned whether the IGC was the appropriate body within WIPO to respond to the invitation by the CBD to assess the interrelation of access to genetic resources and disclosure requirements in intellectual property applications. These countries expressed concern that hosting the discussions in the IGC would not necessarily ensure that the Committee's work would flow into other discussions at WIPO, such as those on the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). Others felt that the WTO Council for Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights would serve as a more appropriate forum for the discussions.

The forthcoming issue of BRIDGES Trade BioRes will report in more detail on the meeting (see <http://www.ictsd.org/biores>).

ICTSD reporting.

EU AND CANADA TO ENHANCE TRADE TIES, COOPERATION

On 18 March, Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin hosted the EU Commission and European Council Presidents at a summit in Ottawa aimed at strengthening bilateral ties between Canada and the Union's soon-to-be 25 members. The leaders approved the framework for an EU-Canada Trade and Investment Enhancement Agreement (TIEA), which seeks to remove and prevent unnecessary obstacles to trade and investment. The agreement goes beyond traditional market access issues by addressing investment facilitation, intellectual property rights, government procurement, financial services and measures aimed at facilitating trade and investment between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the EU and Canadian. The Summit also approved a new Partnership Agenda to enhance co-operation in foreign and security policy, people exchanges, partnerships and environmental objectives. Much of the summit was devoted to discussing anti-terrorism, although participants also discussed international governance issues and UN reform, the protection of natural resources such as fish stocks, measures to combat climate change, and programmes to provide cheap HIV/AIDS drugs in Africa.

For further information on the Summit, see: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/canada/su m03_04/declaration.htm or <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/stories-en.asp>

"Canada's lot lies, increasingly, with the European Union," GLOBE AND MAIL, 18 March 2004; "EU, Canada unite to fight terrorism," GLOBE AND MAIL, 19 March 2004; "Canada, EU agree to negotiate stronger trade ties," TORONTO STAR, 18 March 2004; "Ahern leads EU-Canada summit," IRELAND ONLINE, 18 March 2004.

US, COLOMBIAN FTA TALKS TO BEGIN IN MAY

After a meeting in Washington, D.C., Colombian President Alvaro Uribe and US President Bush announced that the two countries would start free trade negotiations on 18 May this year. At the 23 March summit, the two heads of state also discussed cooperation in trying to eradicate the production and trafficking of illicit drugs. Commenting on the trade deal, Jorge Humberto Botero, Colombia's Minister for Trade, Industry and Tourism noted that while the agreement was wide-ranging, "we will obviously take differential periods and asymmetries into consideration throughout the process, aiming to place Colombia's export sector

into a suitable condition for foreign markets and giving our own productive sectors enough time to prepare to meet intense competition in the domestic market". US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick said, "A US-Colombia FTA will benefit both countries... Similarly, the inclusion of other Andean countries in the negotiations would expand benefits beyond the US-Colombia relationship and would foster additional reform and economic development in the region". The US, which recently sealed a free trade agreement with five countries in Central America, plans to begin talks with several countries in the Andean region. In addition to Colombia, the US might soon launch negotiations with Peru and Ecuador, followed by Bolivia. According to Zoellick, the US is waiting for the resolution of disputes between US investors and the Peruvian government, and the US is requesting Ecuador to "address certain concerns regarding both the protection of worker rights and investor disputes".

"U.S. and Colombia to Begin FTA Negotiations on May 18; Larger U.S.-Andean Free Trade Area Envisioned As Other Andean Countries May Participate," USTR RELEASE, 23 March 2004; "Colombia gets US trade talks date," BBC, 23 March 2004..

CITES RULES ON IVORY, CAVIAR TRADE

The 50th Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) concluded a week-long session in Geneva on 19 March. Delegates focused, inter alia, on the ivory and caviar trades, with environmental groups responding with mixed reactions. The meeting drafted a plan to take action against four countries -- Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti and Nigeria -- on the issue of prohibited ivory sales. The plan will be submitted for approval at the thirteenth Conference of the Parties (COP-13), to be held this October in Thailand. Also on ivory trade, CITES ruled that South Africa, Namibia and Botswana could not yet carry out the one-off sale of 60 tonnes of stockpiled ivory. Opposition was led by countries like Kenya, which fear that legal sale will only encourage further illegal activity (see BRIDGES Weekly, 10 March 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/04-03-10/inbrief.htm#3>). Environmentalists expressed their support for the outcome on ivory trade, criticising a ruling on caviar. Four Caspian Sea countries --Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan -- were given an extra three months to fulfil international obligations to conserve sturgeon populations, which produce the lucrative eggs. While many groups protested the decision to allow the intensive spring fishing season to continue unabated, a UN spokesperson defended the countries, saying "These states have done a lot. There's no lack of political will".

The forthcoming issue of BRIDGES Trade BioRes will report in more detail on the meeting (see <http://www.ictsd.org/biores>).

ICTSD reporting; "UN Allows Caspian Countries More Time on Caviar Practices," UN WIRE, 22 March 2004; "Ecologists Upset That UN Prolongs Caviar Trade," REUTERS, 22 March 2004; "CITES Gets Tough With Ivory Trade," ENVIRONMENT NEWS SERVICE, 19 March 2004; "UN Body Considers Action Over Ivory Trade," REUTERS, 19 March 2004.

CONSULTATIONS ONGOING ON NORWEGIAN GENERICS EXPORTS LAW

Norway, the second country to release draft legislation aimed at allowing domestic generic pharmaceutical companies to produce and export patent-protected drugs to countries without manufacturing capacity, is currently conducting consultations on the draft legislative amendment. The draft law follows a 30 August Decision at the WTO (see BRIDGES Weekly, 4 September 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/03-09-04/wtoinbrief.htm#1>) on how to operationalise a deal cut at the 2001 Ministerial Conference in Doha spelling out the conditions under which countries without pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity can import generic versions of drugs still under patent. In Canada - the first country to draft legislation to implement the deal -- a draft patent law amendment is currently under debate (see BRIDGES Weekly, 10 March 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/04-03-10/story5.htm>). Reportedly, the EC will release a draft regulation to the same effect mid-year or later in 2004.

For further information and to view the draft amendment visit <http://www.dep.no/ud/engelsk/p2500832/p30003923/032121-290003/index-dok000-b-n-a.html>

ICTSD reporting.

US-QATAR INVESTMENT AGREEMENT SIGNED

Qatar and the US signed a trade and investment framework agreement (TIFA) in Washington, D.C. on 19 March. The agreement, which could lead to a bilateral free trade arrangement, was signed by Qatar's Minister for Economy and Commerce Mohammed bin Ahmed bin Jassim Al Thani and US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick. A Council of Representatives was formed to follow up on the seven-point agreement. The Council will establish a permanent dialogue with the intention of resolving trade

issues, expanding trade and investment and deepening the bilateral trade relationship. According to Robert Zoellick, Qatar is "a steadfast friend" in the war against terrorism. "The President is committed to helping Middle Eastern countries reform and open their societies through his Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) initiative," he added. Enhanced economic cooperation has been a way for the US to encourage economic and democratic reforms in Middle East countries. The US has signed a similar trade and investment agreement with the UAE and has concluded full free trade agreements with Jordan and Morocco (see BRIDGES Weekly, 10 March 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/04-03-10/inbrief.htm#4>), while negotiating one with Bahrain. This is the ninth TIFA the US has signed with a Middle Eastern country. In 2003, the United States exported US\$408 million worth of goods including machinery, aircraft, vehicles, optical and medical instruments and imported US\$331 million worth of goods from Qatar in the same year, including mineral fuel and fertilisers.

"US, Qatar sign trade, investment deal," REUTERS, 19 March 2004; "Qatar, US sign trade, investment framework pact," THE PENINSULA, 21 March 2004..

WTO IN BRIEF

US INITIATES WTO CHALLENGE AGAINST CHINA TAX POLICY

Recent trade tensions between the US and China reached a new level this week as the US filed a WTO complaint against China on 18 March. The US complaint -- the first against China since it joined the WTO in late 2001 -- contends that China's value added tax (VAT) rebate policy gives domestically manufactured semiconductors an unfair advantage over foreign producers of semiconductors. According to the US, this tax policy is inconsistent with the WTO national treatment principle, which requires that countries treat imports the same as domestic products. In response, China's ambassador to the WTO, Sun Zhenyu, pointed out that the tax in question was adopted before China joined the WTO, and was never an issue in China's WTO accession talks. Semiconductors are one of the US's leading exports to China. According to the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR), the US exported US\$2.02 billion in semiconductors to China in 2003 (total exports amounted to US\$28 billion). The filing initiates a 60-day consultation period, after which the US can request a dispute settlement panel.

NEPAL COMPLETES WTO RATIFICATION

On 24 March, Nepal completed the ratification procedures for its WTO membership. Nepal will be the first least-developed country (LDC) to accede to the WTO since its creation. The membership will come into effect on 1 May, after the ratification documents have been forwarded to the WTO secretariat. Cambodia, whose membership application was approved at the same time as Nepal's at the fifth WTO Ministerial in Cancun in September 2003, has yet to complete the national ratification procedures. In its membership negotiations, Nepal agreed to, among other things: bind its tariffs at an average of 42 percent for agriculture and 24 percent for industrial goods; open 11 services sectors; and fully implement new legislation on customs valuation, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and technical barriers to trade by 1 January 2007. It will enact new legislation on intellectual property -- conforming with the WTO Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property -- by 1 January 2006.

ICTSD reporting; "Govt ratifies WTO membership," KANTIPURONLINE, 24 March 2004.

WTO AGREEMENT ON TEXTILES AND CLOTHING NEARING ITS END

On 16 March, the WTO Textiles Monitoring Body (TMB) met to continue discussions on the final implementation phase of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC). The ATC was set up as a transitional mechanism in 1995, with a view to phasing out a world-wide quota system for trade in textiles and clothing by the end of 2004. The EC, Switzerland, and India made notifications regarding the phasing out of any remaining restrictions on textile and clothing covered by the ATC as of year-end 2004 (see G/TMB/N/469, G/TMB/N/467, G/TMB/N/468 respectively; available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>). These notifications followed on the heels of those made earlier in the year by Japan, China, Canada, and the US. Members also discussed elements of the final major review of the implementation of the ATC (for the last phase running 1 January 2002 to 1 January 2005), which is to be presented early next year to the Council for Trade in Goods. Members reportedly did not address a 4 March proposal by a group of concerned US and Turkish textile producers, which called for a three-year extension of the ATC (see BRIDGES Weekly, 10 March 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/04-03-10/inbrief.htm#2>).

ICTSD reporting; "EU Notifies WTO of Plans to Eliminate Textile Import Quotas at End of Year," WTO REPORTER, 18 March 2004.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

EVENTS

For a more comprehensive list of events in trade and sustainable development, please refer to ICTSD's web calendar at: <http://www.ictsd.org/cal/index.htm>. If you would like to submit an event, please email events@ictsd.ch.

Coming Up: 25-31 March

25 March, Brussels, Belgium: SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - IMPROVING THE METHODOLOGY. Since 1999, DG Trade of the European Commission has been designing and implementing a methodological framework to assess impacts of trade policy on sustainable development. After almost five years of experience in different negotiation processes, DG Trade has launched a process to revise and improve SIA methodology. This meeting will discuss ways and means of improving DG Trade's SIA methodology. A summary agenda is available on the website. For further information contact the secretariat at tel: +322 295 2888; fax: +322 296 9854; Internet: http://trade-info.cec.eu.int/civil_soc/meet.php?action=consult&criteria=139

25-26 March 2004, Jeju, Republic of Korea: MEETING ON TRADE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. This meeting is to be held before the 8th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum. For further information see <http://www.unep.org>

26-27 March, East Lansing, Michigan, US: IP, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENDANGERED SPECIES: UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF THE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM. The Intellectual Property and Communications Law Program of Michigan State University will host a symposium exploring the possibility of sustainable development with regard to intellectual property. The balance between intellectual property protection and the public domain, broadband platforms and media access, the tension between real and intellectual property theories, biological and cultural diversity, technology transfer among developed and less developed countries, and open-source software and innovation barriers will be among the issues discussed. For further information contact Peter K. Yu, tel: +1 517 432 6908; email: peter_yu@msn.com

27-28 March, Jeju, Republic of Korea: FIFTH GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM (GCSF). This Forum

precedes and will present its results to the upcoming Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council. As in the UNEPGC/GMEF meeting, the GCSF will focus on the thematic issue cluster for the 12th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, namely water, sanitation and human settlements. For further information visit http://www.unep.org/dpdl/cso/global_csf/issues.html

27-28 March, Jeju Island, Republic of Korea: MEETING ON CAPACITY BUILDING FOR INTEGRATED POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. The meeting will provide an opportunity for representatives from Governments of both developing and developed countries, international organizations, multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), regional institutions and other stakeholders to develop concrete recommendations for enhancing future capacity building for integrated policy design and implementation for sustainable development. In particular, the meeting will focus on the development of mutually supportive trade and environment policies in the promotion of sustainable development and poverty alleviation. For further information contact Rahila Mughal, UNEP Economics and Trade Branch, tel: +41 22 917 8298; fax: + 41 22 917 8076; email: Rahila.MUGHAL@unep.ch; Internet: http://www.unep.ch/etu/Seoul/2003_Seoul.htm

29 March, Brasilia, Brazil: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF TRADE REFORM IN THE AMERICAS: LESSONS FOR FUTURE TRADE AGREEMENTS. Organised by the newly formed "Working Group on Environment and Development in the Americas (WEDA)" -- a group of researchers and institutes across the Western Hemisphere who are assessing the environmental and social impacts of economic integration in the Americas in order to draw lessons for future trade agreements -- this symposium will feature a presentation of case studies on the environmental and social impacts of trade reforms in Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, Chile, and the United States. Furthermore, the symposium will provide an opportunity for policy-makers and civil society to engage in a constructive dialogue regarding the extent to which sustainable development is being considered in current trade negotiations. For further information contact Kevin P. Gallagher, Global Development and Environment Institute, Tufts University, email: kevin.gallagher@tufts.edu

29-30 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WORKSHOP ON DOMESTIC REGULATION. The purpose of the Workshop is to inform regulators, trade negotiators, and other relevant officials of the background and progress to date of the work taking place in the Working Party on Domestic Regulation (WPDR), as well as pertinent

issues raised in negotiating proposals made to the Special Session of the Services Council. Further information will be made available at http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/serv_e/serv_e.htm

29-31 March 2004, Seoul, Republic of Korea: EIGHTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL/FIFTH GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM. For further information contact: Secretary for UNEP Governing Council, tel: (254 2) 623431/ 623411, fax: 623929/623748, email: beverly.miller@unep.org, Internet: <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-viii/>

29 March to 2 April 2004, South Africa: 20TH MEETING OF THE CITES ANIMALS COMMITTEE. This meeting is organised by the CITES Secretariat. For further information contact the CITES Secretariat, tel: +41-22-917-8139; fax: +41-22-797-3417; email: cites@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.cites.org>

30 March, Brussels, Belgium: NEW ACP-EU TRADE ARRANGEMENTS: NEW BARRIERS TO ERADICATING POVERTY? A study on ACP-EU trade arrangements and poverty, launched by Eurostep together with partner organisations in ACP countries, will be presented to the Commission by the researchers. The report focuses on the issue of removal of barriers to trade in the ACP-EU trade arrangements and its consequences for ACP countries. It examines how the proposed free trade based regional agreements affect the fight against poverty in five ACP countries: Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Benin and Cameroon. For further information and to register see http://trade-info.cec.eu.int/civil_soc/meet.php?action=consult&criter e=143

WTO Events

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted at: http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/meets.pdf. Please bear in mind that dates and times of WTO meetings are often changed, and that the WTO does not always announce the important informal meetings of the different bodies. Unless otherwise indicated, all WTO meetings are held at the WTO, Centre William Rappard, rue de Lausanne 154, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland, and are open to WTO Members and accredited observers only.

25 March: WTO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE.

25 March: WTO COUNCIL FOR TRADE IN SERVICES.

25 March: WTO DISPUTE SETTLEMENT BODY - SPECIAL SESSION.

26 March: WTO WORKING PARTY ON THE ACCESSION OF CAPE VERDE.

26 March: WTO COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE - SPECIAL SESSION.

29-30 March: WTO COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS.

29-30 March: WTO WORKSHOP ON DOMESTIC REGULATION.

29-31 March: WTO NEGOTIATING GROUP ON MARKET ACCESS.

31 March: WTO WORKING PARTY ON DOMESTIC REGULATION.

Other Forthcoming Events

13-15 April, New Delhi, India: AFRO-ASIAN CIVIL SOCIETY SEMINAR - FROM CANCUN TO SAO PAULO: THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE INTERNATIONAL TRADING SYSTEM. This seminar is organised by CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS-CITEE), in association with partner organisations. The participants from Africa and Asia (including the Pacific region) will discuss and debate the issues on the themes of: assuring developmental gains from the international trading system and trade negotiations; does the international trading system promote the interests of the poor?; building and strengthening capacity in trade policy; and the role of UNCTAD in assisting national trade and development strategies. For further information, send an email to citee@cuts-international.org; or consult the website <http://www.cuts-international.org/forthcoming-events.htm#afro-backgrounder>

22 April, Geneva, Switzerland: PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR UNCTAD XI: THIRD HEARING WITH THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR. Provides an opportunity for dialogue among delegations from member States and civil society representatives on priority and concrete issues under the four sub-themes of the Conference: development strategies in a globalising world economy; building productive capacity and international competitiveness; assuring development gains from the international trading system and trade negotiations; and partnerships for development. For further information see <http://www.unctad.org/Templates/Page.asp?intItemID=2675&lang=1>

23-24 April, Hanoi, Vietnam: LAUNCH MEETING FOR THE 7-UP MARK II PROJECT. This two-year research-based advocacy and capacity building programme

conducted by the CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS-C-CIER) seeks to accelerate the process toward formal competition law and policy, and advance the environment in which these laws and policies will be enforced. The focus is on Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. For further information contact Nupur Mehta at tel: +91 141 2207482; fax: +91 141 2207486; email: 7upmarkii@cuts-international.org; Internet: <http://cuts-international.org/7-up%20project.htm>

3-4 May, Washington, D.C., US: WORLD BANK ANNUAL BANK CONFERENCES ON DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS (ABCDE). The theme of the conference will be "Lessons of Experience". It will feature presentations on: the future of development - the next 10 years; a half century of development; evolution of thinking on development - lessons learned; infrastructure and development; and trade and development. An Economists' Forum will hold parallel sessions. For further information see <http://econ.worldbank.org/abcde/index.php?confid=33788>

10-11 May, Brussels, Belgium: WORLD BANK ANNUAL BANK CONFERENCES ON DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS (ABCDE). Co-organised by the World Bank and the Government of Belgium, this second part of the ABCD conference has been designed to expand the flow of ideas between thinkers, practitioners and policy-makers within the field of international development, and to provide a forum for discussion on key international development issues. The conference will also conduct region-based workshops on the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, East Asia, and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as thematic sessions on migration and the investment climate. For further information see <http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/EURVP/web.nsf/Pages/ABCDE-Europe>

26 May, Geneva, Switzerland: DISCUSSION PANEL ON A MULTILATERAL COMPETITION FRAMEWORK: WHERE AND HOW. CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS-C-CIER) will be organising a panel discussion during the WTO Public Symposium 2004. The discussion will examine the desirability and possible structure of a multilateral competition framework and explore alternatives from a civil society perspective. For further information contact Alice Pham, email: c-cier@cuts-international.org; Internet <http://www.cuts-international.org/>

14-15 June, Tampere, Finland: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FUTURES - TOOLS AND STRATEGIES. Organised by the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration, Finland Futures Research Centre and Finland Futures

Academy. The Conference is aimed at both researchers and corporate representatives. The aim of the multidisciplinary conference is to bring together those interested in sustainable development and futures oriented research. The participants will be offered new perspectives and methods for measuring sustainable development and creating strategies. The conference will also cast a look into how sustainability aspects are actually taken into consideration in corporations. For further information contact Paula Hakola at tel: +358 3223 8363; fax: +358 2481 4630; email: paula.hakola@tukkk.fi; Internet: <http://www.tukkk.fi/tutu/conference2004/default.htm>

25-26 September, Ithaca, N.Y., USA: GROWING INEQUALITY IN CHINA: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND RESPONSES. The object of this conference at Cornell University is to take stock of growing inequality in China, focusing on its causes, its consequences, and policy responses to it in the future. It will bring together international research on the subject in terms of theoretical, empirical and policy analysis. Submissions of completed papers, or extended abstracts are invited (to be submitted by 15 April). For further information contact Xiaobo Zhang at email: x.zhang@cgiar.org; Internet: <http://www.ifpri.org/events/conferences/2004/20040925/Cornell.pdf>

14-16 June, São Paulo, Brazil: WAIPA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2004. The World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA) meeting will be held in parallel with the UNCTAD XI Ministerial Conference and hosted by the Brazilian Government. The theme of the conference will be "Enhancing the Coherence between National Development Strategies and Global Economic Processes towards Economic Growth and Development". Investment strategists, economists and researchers will debate on controversial issues such as: "FDI Creating or Stealing Jobs" and "FDI in a Bad News Environment". WAIPA delegates will also have access to the public meetings and activities of UNCTAD XI dealing with trade, investment, finance, technology and development-related topics. For further information, contact: Ms. Hanna Daoudi, WAIPA Secretariat Coordinator, email: hanna.daoudi@unctad.org; tel: +41 22 907 59 97; fax: 41 22 907 01 97; Internet: <http://www.waipa.org/conferences.htm>

RESOURCES

BANANA WARS - THE PRICE OF FREE TRADE: A CARIBBEAN PERSPECTIVE. By Gordon Myers (Zed Books, 2004). Banana Wars tells how the US government, answering the grievances of a single American corporation, forced the WTO to nullify a

European Community commitment to protect small Caribbean banana growers. Dominated by a free trade ideology, the international trading system lacks the flexibility necessary to give states like the Windward Islands the protection that they need to survive. Moreover, increasingly powerful supermarket chains insist on ever-lower prices, to the short-term benefit of consumers but the serious detriment of growers in the developing world. This book calls for new EU arrangements to help the Caribbean banana industry beyond 2005 and for the WTO to give greater consideration to the needs of very small states with vulnerable economies. For further information see <http://zedweb.cybergecko.net/cgi-bin/a.cgi?1%2084277%20452%202>

TRADING MARKET ACCESS FOR COMPETITION POLICY ENFORCEMENT. By Kamal Saggi and Bernard Hoekman (World Bank, January 2004). Motivated by discussions at the WTO on multilateral disciplines with respect to competition law, the authors develop a two-country model that explores the incentives of a developing country to offer increased market access (by way of a tariff reduction) in exchange for a ban on foreign export cartels by its developed country trading partner. They show that such a bargain is feasible and can generate a globally welfare-maximizing outcome. To access the report visit <http://econ.worldbank.org/view.php?type=5&id=32555>

QUANTIFYING THE IMPACT OF SERVICES LIBERALIZATION IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY. By Denise Eby Konan and Keith E. Maskus (World Bank, January 2004). The authors consider how service liberalization differs from goods liberalization in terms of welfare, the level and composition of output, and factor prices within a developing economy, in this case Tunisia. Konan and Maskus consider how service liberalization differs from goods liberalization in terms of welfare, the level and composition of output, and factor prices within a developing economy, in this case Tunisia. Their final results point to the potential importance of deregulating services provision for economic development. To access the report visit <http://econ.worldbank.org/view.php?type=5&id=32582>

"WTO decision on implementation of Paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and public health: a solution to the access to essential medicines problem?" By Duncan Matthews in the JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC LAW 7 (1, 2004) pp. 73-107. The need for a legal solution to the compulsory license problem was outlined in the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health of 14 November 2001. The agreement subsequently reached by WTO Members on 30 August 2003 in response to paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration is seen as key to improving access to essential medicines in developing

countries. This article re-examines the negotiations that led to the 30 August agreement and assesses its likely impact. It then argues that compulsory licensing is one of a range of policy approaches that will ultimately assist in improving access to essential medicines in developing countries. The article suggests that a long-term achievement of the Doha-based negotiations is likely to be in refocusing attention on the potential of other measures that can operate alongside compulsory licensing provisions. It concludes that the debate about the Doha Declaration and compulsory licensing is part of a much wider problem and the solution requires a mix of policy initiatives.

"How Green is NAFTA?: Measuring the Impacts of Agricultural Trade". By Scott Vaughan in *ENVIRONMENT* 46 (2, 2004) pp. 26-42. In 1993, the Clinton administration hailed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as the most environmentally sensitive trade agreement in history. Less than a decade later, Public Citizen dismissed NAFTA's environmental provisions as "meaningless". To assess some of the environmental ramifications of the agreement, this article examines changes in U.S.-Mexican agricultural trade since NAFTA's enactment.

"What is the Future of WTO Dispute Settlement?" By Donald McRae in the *JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC LAW* 7 (1, 2004) pp. 3-21. The WTO dispute settlement system seems a permanent part of the international economic law landscape and it is difficult to conceive of the multilateral trading system without it. But is its future secure? The adoption of binding dispute settlement by the WTO was not inevitable; it resulted from a particular congruence of circumstances. Why, then, should the continuation of WTO dispute settlement be taken for granted?

POSITION OPENING

COORDINATOR FOR IP WATCH. IP Watch is a new, independent initiative to improve transparency of international intellectual property (IP) policymaking. The flagship activity of IP Watch will be its regular publication (in hard copy and electronic formats) of the same name. The Coordinator will have overall responsibility for establishing and leading this new project. S/he will: develop and implement the programme of work; forge and maintain relationships and liaise with key actors and sources in the field of IP policymaking, media and journalist groups; raise funds for the project, manage and lead its small team of staff, representing IP Watch, and maintain relations the Board, including organising the Board's annual meeting. To apply, please submit a cover letter explaining why you think you would be a good candidate for this position, CV, and 1,000 word, writing sample to

lpwatch2004@yahoo.co.uk by April 15, 2004. Successful candidates will be contacted on or before April 25 for interviews. A final decision will be made by early May with the goal of beginning operations of the organisation around June.

CALL FOR COMMENTS

STUDY ON GM MAIZE IN MEXICO. The Secretariat of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) recently released a report on the presence of genetically modified maize in Mexico for public comment. The study was initiated in 2002 after several communities and non-governmental organisations claimed that genetically modified material had been found within traditional Mexican harvests despite a moratorium on its planting. An advisory group appointed by the CEC Secretariat will present recommendations based on the report and public comments to the governments of Canada, Mexico, and the US. The closing date for comments is 12 April, 2004. To view the report, Maize and Biodiversity: The Effects of Transgenic Maize in Mexico, go to <http://www.cec.org/maize/resources/chapters.cfm?varlan=english>. For further information contact Chantal Line Carpentier at tel: +1 514 350-4300; email: clcarpentier@cceamt.org (with the subject line "Comments on Maize and Biodiversity Report"); mailing address: Maize and Biodiversity Report, Commission for Environmental Cooperation 393 rue St-Jacques Ouest Bureau 200, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y 1N9.

FELLOWSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

MARIE CURIE TRAINING SITE FELLOWSHIPS. Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM) invites applications from doctoral students who wish to develop their studies on environmental policies, modelling and decision-making, focusing on water resources management. Fellows will be involved in the so called ENVIRON Project, working within the FEEM Research Programme on Natural Resources Management in Venice. The proposed programme will address the following research themes: environmental decision-making and computerised decision support systems (DSS), including group decision-making techniques; European water policies, and particularly the issues related to the implementation of the EC Water Framework Directive and the role of DSS tools for the involvement of stakeholders; and GIS based hydrological modelling. For further information contact Riccardo Tarquini, email: riccardo.tarquini@feem.it; Internet:

<http://www.feem.it/Feem/Pub/Programmes/Natural+Resources+Management/Activities/ENVIRON.htm>

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