



Bridges Weekly Trade News Digest

Weekly trade news from a sustainable development perspective

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LEAD STORIES

Food Price Volatility Dominates Farm Ministers' Summit

High and volatile food prices dominated discussions at a farm ministers' summit on trade and food security in Berlin this weekend. However, while participants reached broad agreement on the problem, they disagreed over its causes and preferred solutions, with the role played by financial market speculation proving particularly controversial.

The impact of farm commodity prices on food security has again returned to prominence with the UN's recent announcement that prices for some products have reached historic highs, and the decision by French president Nicholas Sarkozy to place the issue at the top of this year's agenda for talks amongst the Group of 20 leading economies. Unrest in North Africa, partly triggered by anger over rising food prices, has also propelled the issue back into policymakers' priorities and media headlines.

The 22 January gathering of some four dozen farm ministers sought to examine more broadly how trade could contribute to food security. In a final communiqué, ministers called on the G-20 to “endeavour to strengthen the ability of agricultural markets to function properly, to improve market transparency and market information and to fight the abuse and manipulation of prices.”

Nine G-20 members participated at the event - Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the UK. However, trading powers such as China, India and the US were absent, as were agricultural powerhouses Argentina and Australia.

Speculation source of differences

At the meeting, French Agriculture Minister Bruno Le Maire called for stronger regulation of commodity markets. "The reality is that today in these financial-agricultural markets, more than fifteen times the global cereal production is trading," he said. "That is asking for speculation."

Le Maire's comments were echoed by EU Agriculture Commissioner Dacian Cioloş, who argued that disclosing more information on farm commodity trading would help to "eliminate those who conduct these transactions only to speculate and make short-term profits".

However, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy cautioned that there was not yet a consensus on the role of speculation in prompting price spikes. "Some say that part of the solution to price volatility may lie in market instruments; financial instruments, such as futures," he observed. Instead he called on participants to consider the role of export restrictions in exacerbating food shortages, noting that some analysts consider these to be "the principle cause of the food price rise in 2008, for some of the most vital staples".

Lamy warned that decision-makers must "have an accurate diagnosis of the problem before designing a response." Bad weather, exacerbated by policy measures such as export bans, was at the root of the recent price spikes, he said.

Controls on rice exports in 2008, and restrictions last year on wheat exports from Russia and the Ukraine, had "hurt net-food-importing countries; and could actually starve them", Lamy added. He also called for countries to "at least explore" exempting humanitarian food aid from export bans.

Lamy: Doha deal would help

The ministers' statement also included an "appeal" to countries' chief negotiators to bring the WTO Doha Round to "a timely, ambitious and balanced conclusion", and asked them to bear in mind its contribution to global food security. While the communiqué failed to include any specific deadline, governments are currently attempting to conclude a long-overdue accord in the WTO talks by the end of this year.

Ministers also said they stood by the aim of "creating fair and balanced rules for the agricultural sector within the Doha Development Round."

Lamy told the Berlin meeting that a Doha accord "would greatly reduce rich world subsidies that have stymied the developing world's production capacity and which have, in certain commodities, cornered it completely out of the market". As well as completely eliminating export subsidies, the talks would bring down tariffs, albeit with certain 'flexibilities', "thereby increasing consumer access to food."

"Globally, what we would be likely to see as a result of Doha is more food being produced where this can be done more efficiently," he added.

Risk management

In their statement, the ministers said they were considering "reinforcing the importance of risk-protection measures" in order to tackle price volatility -- in a possible reference to instruments such as insurance schemes for farmers, or social safety-nets. The European Commission recently announced it is considering a new 'risk management toolkit' for the EU's post-2013 farm policy, with options "ranging from a new WTO green box compatible income stabilisation tool, to strengthened support to insurance instruments and mutual funds."

However, the Berlin communiqué also emphasises that free, transparent price formation is a "key prerequisite" for functioning markets. Arguably, while many developed countries have historically employed price control measures as a means to subsidise their producers, these can also prevent farmers from responding to signals from consumers, and distort trade and production.

Ministers avoid comment on biofuels

"If current policies continue, by 2019 about 13% of the global production of coarse grains will be used for ethanol, 16% of vegetable oil, and 35% of sugarcane", noted Lamy. He warned that "in pumping biofuels into our tanks, we are in fact

pumping corn, sugarcane, and other foods into our transportation systems”.

The ministerial statement made no mention of whether trade policies on biofuels affect food security or price volatility. The issue has been a major source of controversy, with some countries arguing that trade distortions resulting from tariffs, subsidies and non-tariff barriers serve to create or exacerbate production inefficiencies, and others claiming that the fuels represent a viable and sustainable alternative to fossil fuels.

Solutions

In separate proposals, French president Nicolas Sarkozy has called for a database to gather information on world agricultural production, consumption and stocks; recommended that an international organisation like the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation collect and provide transparent data on agricultural stocks; and suggested collaborating internationally to avoid unilateral imposition of measures such as agricultural export bans. He has also proposed finding ways for poor countries to protect themselves from price volatility or other adverse shocks, called for food aid to be exempt from export taxes, and is likely to use the G-20 presidency to try and ensure that market operators give a guarantee for trades of agricultural commodities, as part of a push for global commodity market regulation.

At the Berlin meeting, Lamy noted that “we need greater investment in agriculture, a sector in which we have under-invested for a while”. He added that countries also needed to reflect further on their biofuel policies, consider social safety nets for consumers and farmers, more robust food aid systems and provide strong support for the World Food Program.

Ukraine’s farm minister, Mykola Prysyazhnyuk, suggested that “the World Bank should launch an initiative to create a world grain bank,” Bloomberg reported.

Food prices are expected to remain on the agenda at G-20 meetings later this year. In addition to two summits involving heads of state or government -- one in May at the French seaside resort of

Deauville, and one in November at Cannes -- G-20 finance ministers are also likely to gather on the margins of the April and September meetings of the World Bank and IMF. A meeting of agriculture ministers is planned for the end of June.

“Agriculture Ministers Call for G-20 Action to End Food Price Manipulation” by Rudy Ruitenberg, Bloomberg, Jan 22, 2011; “Speculation, Price Swings Threaten Security of Food Supply, Ministers Says” by Rudy Ruitenberg, Bloomberg, Jan 24, 2011; “France’s Sarkozy Calls for G-20 to Regulate Commodities and Price Swings”, by Rudy Ruitenberg, Bloomberg, Jan 24, 2011; “Food price rises ‘may cause unrest’: ministers”, AFP, January 23 2011; “World Should Create Grain Reserve, Ukraine Farm Minister Says”, 22 January 2011, Bloomberg. Reuters, “FACTBOX-French proposals on commodity markets regulation”, 24 January 2011.

Waiting for Davos, NAMA Negotiators Discuss NTBs

The mood music surrounding the Doha Round negotiations is once again sounding less despondent. It remains unclear, however, whether the better atmospherics will translate into tangible narrowing in the deep divisions that have long kept governments from an accord in the struggling global trade talks.

WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy said over the weekend that the “political context” for an agreement is “more committed, more favourable,” than before. “We are now in a go period after two years of stop, or at least of very slow progress,” he told a meeting of agriculture ministers in Berlin, according to Agence France Presse. Two days earlier, the chair of the industrial goods negotiations, Swiss Ambassador Luzius Wasescha, told journalists that he had detected “a change in spirit” in the discussions, potentially “the beginning of what might evolve into the final phase” of the talks.

But for signs of whether members will be able to make it to that “final phase,” trade negotiators in

Geneva are looking to the upcoming summit of political and business leaders in Davos. Trade minister from key players in the Doha Round negotiations are slated to meet on the margins of the World Economic Forum's annual summit in the Swiss mountain resort. In the meantime, talks at WTO headquarters have broken little new ground.

Last week's talks on non-agricultural market access (NAMA) focused on non-tariff barriers (NTBs), as the negotiating group's meetings have over the past three months, skirting more contentious debates on market access.

At the start of the week's talks, Wasescha told members that if they are to meet the target of coming up with a revised draft agreement text by March or April, it would involve "either a hard work or several thousands of square brackets" – the latter would imply a text riddled with clauses on which members disagree. A "clean text" would require intensive work on all issues in the negotiations, he reminded delegates.

Most of last week's discussions focused on meetings involving ten to 12 so-called "friends of the chair" on prospective rules for transparency in the use of technical specifications and standards; a proposed 'horizontal mechanism' for resolution of NTB's disputes; and trade in remanufactured goods.

As countries' applied tariffs have decreased, policies such as countries' differing regulations, health and safety standards and labelling requirements have taken on greater significance in international trade in manufactured goods. Existing WTO rules – on sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade (TBT), and import licensing procedures, to name a few – set out some principles governing such 'non-tariff' measures, to ensure that they are not more trade-restricting than strictly necessary. In the Doha Round negotiations on reducing NTBs, members have been discussing rules for transparency in the application of non-tariff measures. For sectors such as electronics and cars, governments have proposed guidelines such as asking countries to consider the costs to would-be exporters of compliance, to refer to international standards, and to allow other countries to

comment on proposed regulations. A key issue in the ongoing negotiations is whether any disciplines emerging from a Doha Round agreement that go beyond the existing TBT agreement should be applied collectively to all sectors or individually to different sectors.

Wasescha reported to a meeting open to all members that the small group was working on the basis of an outline, and that in many cases, countries' aspirations were similar even if their specific positions were not. He asked members to reflect upon the differences underlying references to international standard setting bodies, and how a focus on such bodies might affect developing countries. In urging members to compromise, he said "we are reaching a point where we should not think of wedding, but rather divorce – divorce from the texts that you have drafted yourselves, [in order] to accommodate others' views."

A proposed horizontal mechanism for swiftly adjudicating trade irritants arising from non-tariff measures remains the subject of disagreement over issues such as its relationship to the WTO dispute settlement system, how to treat confidential commercial information, and how "facilitation" would operate. Wasescha said that members need to reflect on the coverage of the proposed mechanism, and whether it makes sense follow a positive list (identify sectors to be covered by it), or negative list (identify those to be excluded) approach.

Discussions on 'remanufactured goods,' the chair said, did not advance. The US, Switzerland, and Japan have called for a Doha Round accord to include a ministerial decision calling on members to expand market access for remanufactured goods by reducing non-tariff barriers facing their importation. Many developing countries have expressed concerns that opening up trade in remanufactured goods could become a pretext for "the dumping of sub-standard products into their markets." India, which has been among the most vocal sceptics, called for a workshop that would clarify unresolved issues such as the definition of what constitutes a remanufactured good, and how remanufactured goods compare to products described as recycled, refurbished, reused, reconditioned, and so forth.

China, Hong Kong and India elaborated on their critique of a proposal for establishing rules for labels textiles, clothing, footwear and travel goods, arguing that the proposed rules were more trade-restrictive than necessary. The chair noted that the issue was clearly not the low-hanging fruit some had thought it to be, and urged members to focus on the main issue – that labelling requirements can be an obstacle to trade, especially if these requirements change from one country to another.

While the negotiating group at the WTO has focused on specific non-tariff policies, differences over market access concerns remain a major sticking point in the Doha Round negotiations. In particular, senior US officials have criticised large developing countries, especially China, for not signing on to voluntary sector-specific liberalisation initiatives for products such as chemicals. The US delegation did report last week that it had held bilateral meetings with several delegations on the chemical sector.

Speaking to concerns about the inclusivity of a negotiating process that is being pushed along primarily by a small group of countries, Wasescha stressed that the purpose of the smaller meetings was “exclusively and only to prepare working documents for discussion” in larger sessions. “Even though I understand that all those who are not in the small groups feel that they are missing something, the only thing they miss is hard work, fights about comma[s], semicolons, and square brackets, and more and more late-evening sessions” comparable in excitement to Swiss television, he said.

A new fortnight of NAMA talks is set to start 1 February, with meetings in a wide variety of formats, including time for bilateral gatherings. The chair stressed that the upcoming talks would cover all issues, including tariffs.

ICTSD reporting.

OTHER NEWS

EU Halves Production-Linked Farm Subsidies, But Delinked Support Jumps

The EU's production-linked farm subsidies fell to a record low of 12.3 billion euros in marketing year 2007/08, according to the bloc's latest formal report to the WTO. At the same time, payments that are supposedly unrelated to trade and production reached a new high of 62.6 billion euros.

Successive reforms of EU farm support policies have sought to delink payments from production levels, leading to a sharp decline in the payments deemed under WTO rules to be highly trade-distorting and belonging to the 'amber box' under the global trade body's traffic-light scheme for classifying farm subsidies. In 2007, subsidies in this category were little over half the level reached the year before, and nearly a third of 2004 levels.

At the same time, moves to provide farmers with direct payments to compensate for the lost income have led to a corresponding rise in 'green box' support – a WTO category intended for payments deemed to cause no more than minimal distortion of trade or production. Green box support tripled between 2004 and 2007, the new figures show.

Indeed, 'decoupled' income support payments accounted for half of all green box spending, at 31.3 billion euros. Other major sub-categories of support included spending on general services (6.7 billion euros); investment aids (7.6 billion), environmental programmes (6.3 billion) and regional assistance (4.5 billion).

How subsidy payments are classified is central to their fate under any deal in the WTO's Doha Round of global trade talks: while the EU's ceiling for 'amber box' payments is slated for a hefty cut, green box subsidies are to escape the axe altogether.

The EU reported that it also provided around 5.2 billion euros in 'production-limiting' payments: this amount is fairly similar to that reported for the previous year, after sharp declines in 2005 and 2006. While still considered to be 'trade-

distorting', blue box payments are generally seen as less damaging than amber box support.

Small amounts of support – known as 'de minimis' payments - are allowed under WTO rules without having to count towards overall reduction commitments: the EU reported that it spent 2.4bn on this kind of spending in the 2007-08 marketing year.

For the first time ever, the recent figures would put the EU's overall trade-distorting support below the proposed new ceiling of 22 billion euros that would be established by a Doha Round accord under the terms currently being considered at the WTO. The Doha deal would create a new subsidy cap that limits the total amount of amber, blue and de minimis support that countries are allowed to provide.

Asked about the new EU data, one Geneva-based delegate was unimpressed. "Subsidies, in one form or another, are still being provided in large quantities - so obviously it has an effect on global trade," the official said. "We may see the US and EU agreeing to cut their [overall trade-distorting support] further - because their spending is no longer classified as amber box." A continuation of the box-shifting trend would require WTO members to contemplate changes to WTO rules for agricultural subsidies. "Or, have an end date [for farm subsidies]. Let's start talking about that."

In 2006-08, subsidies and tariff barriers meant that EU farmers could sell produce at 15 percent above world market prices, a recent ICTSD study finds - although a succession of reforms has dramatically narrowed this price gap from two decades previously, when it stood at 76 percent. (Disclosure: ICTSD is the publisher of Bridges Weekly.)

"EU figures show that the share of direct payments and total subsidies in agricultural factor income is 28% and 40% respectively for the EU-27", notes the study's author, Professor Alan Matthews of Trinity College Dublin, "suggesting that much EU agricultural production would not be economically sustainable with current farm structures in the absence of this support".

The subsidy notification (G/AG/N/EEC/68) is available online at: <http://docsonline.wto.org/>.

ICTSD reporting.

DSU Review Talks Move Forward, But Depend on Doha Breakthrough

Trade officials from a group of 42 WTO members have recently ramped up talks to iron out differences in the ongoing negotiations on updating the rules governing WTO dispute.

The urgency comes from the new push to conclude the Doha Round by the end of this year. While the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) review negotiations are not formally linked to the Doha talks, officials insist that they cannot conclude without a broader accord in the troubled global trade talks. "The [DSU] review needs Doha to finish but Doha doesn't need the review to finish," the chair of the talks, Costa Rican Ambassador Ronald Saborio Soto told Bridges in an e-mail. Moreover, any outcome of the review would likely need to be adopted by parliaments, which could be difficult outside the Doha context. Some of the proposed reforms include changes in the rules governing what a country is permitted to do when it wins a dispute.

Developing countries are pushing more vehemently for changes in compliance. They feel the current system is unfair because it leaves them with ineffective remedies. For example, it can be counterproductive for a small developing country to enact retaliatory tariffs – the sanctions provided for in current WTO rules – against a much larger trading partner. Developed countries, for the most part, remain satisfied with how retaliation works. "If something works, you better not disturb it," reported one developed country delegate, a view shared by many developed country members.

But even developed countries acknowledge that parts of the compliance regime need fixing. The US, the EU, and Japan remain divided over how to calculate levels of 'impairment', the injury suffered by the victim of WTO-inconsistent measures, in arbitrations under DSU Article 22.4,

which spells out the procedure for calculating injuries to the complaining country. Some developing country delegates argue that this support for modifications to the compliance regime implicitly favours their argument for broader fixes.

One area that had remained untouched, “sequencing,” has seen positive movement over the past several months, sources report. Sequencing refers to a flaw in current rules that creates ambiguity over the timing of retaliatory sanctions. If a complainant believes that the target of its case has failed to comply with an Appellate Body ruling within the time period determined by the judges, WTO rules authorise it to request permission to take countermeasures. After the complainant does so, if the two sides disagree on whether the violator has corrected the offending measures, they can request a ‘compliance panel’ to examine the matter. It is unclear whether the winner can retaliate before or after this compliance panel determines that the loser has in fact failed to comply with the WTO ruling. According to negotiators, the group of 42 countries have bridged some gaps and are beginning to come together on some of the proposals on sequencing in the draft text that the chair of the negotiating group put together in July 2008. Canada has been tasked with composing a new text that reflects current agreements and disagreements on sequencing, which will serve as the basis for future work.

Another one of the more contentious issues members have begun addressing in earnest is ‘post-retaliation’, the rules governing situations where a country facing retaliatory measures asserts that it has brought policies into compliance and that the retaliatory measures should therefore be lifted.

Despite the ongoing differences, the atmosphere has improved in recent months and negotiations have seen positive movement on issues that had gone untouched in the past. Nevertheless, while the chair, Ambassador Saborio Soto, has urged members to push for consensus on critical issues, and worked on narrowing proposals down to a single text, significant gaps remain. Moreover, consensus would need to include members

beyond the 42 that are participating actively in the discussions.

ICTSD reporting.

IN BRIEF

Obama Urges Ratification of FTA with South Korea

President Barack Obama used his State of the Union speech on Tuesday to call on Congress to pass a free trade agreement with South Korea “as soon as possible,” saying that it would boost exports and create jobs. He also pledged to “only sign [trade] deals that keep faith with American workers and promote American jobs,” referring to global trade talks as well as regional and bilateral deals with Panama, Colombia, and Asia-Pacific countries.

With unemployment in the United States still stubbornly high, Obama’s speech focused on job creation, and the need for the US to invest in education, infrastructure, and research to remain competitive with rising commercial powers like China and India.

Obama reiterated his goal of doubling the United States’ exports by 2014, and suggested that ratification of the South Korea FTA would create 70,000 jobs in the US. That deal, which was finalised last month after a multi-year delay, “has unprecedented support from business and labour, Democrats and Republicans,” he reminded Congress.

If ratified, the agreement would abolish tariffs over the next five years on over 95 percent of industrial and consumer goods trade between the two countries. The last-minute modifications to the deal necessary to win Washington’s assent included provisions allowing the US to slow the phase-out of tariffs on cars and trucks and obtain relaxed regulatory requirements for some auto exports to Korea. Washington also secured a special safeguard to protect against a surge of

Korean car imports. Korea was able to retain some import restrictions on US beef and pork.

Jean-Pierre Lehmann, a professor of political economy at the IMD business school in Lausanne and founder of the Evian Group economic governance think-tank, praised the absence of protectionist sentiment in Obama's speech. At the same time, he said that the president's support for an open trade agenda "could hardly be weaker or more diluted," without so much as a mention of the multilateral trading system or the struggling Doha Round negotiations at the WTO.

"Hopes expressed at the WTO and in some trade policy circles that Obama had 'seen the light' on trade and the WTO and that he would provide the American leadership that the Doha Round has so far dismally lacked may not be dashed, but have hardly been confirmed by this State of the Union speech," Lehmann added.

ICTSD reporting.

Canada-EU FTA Talks Proceed, But Obstacles Lie Ahead

Despite a number of potential obstacles, Canada is confident that it will sign a bilateral free trade agreement with the EU by the end of the year, a senior Canadian official said following a round of negotiations last week.

Ross Hornby, Canada's ambassador to the EU, told a Brussels audience on Monday that the two sides had made "rapid progress" since starting talks in 2009, according to a report in TheParliament.com, a news service based in the EU capital.

Nevertheless, several sticking points remain, notably on government procurement, services, and intellectual property. The Montreal Gazette reported this week that a key difference on services is Canada's support for a "negative list" approach to services liberalisation, under which markets would be opened to companies from the FTA partner in all sectors except those specifically excluded. The EU favours a "positive list" that would identify all sectors and sub-sectors being liberalised; it believes this approach will give it

more control over services that emerge or become more prominent in the future.

Varying degrees of enthusiasm from different Canadian provinces has affected the talks on opening up government procurement to companies from the other side of the Atlantic, according to the Vancouver Sun. It cited a business lobby group as saying that Western Canadian provinces were keener than Ontario and Quebec to open public procurement contracts to European companies.

Another point of contention in the negotiations is intellectual property protections resulting from the agreement, and their potential implications for drug prices. Canadian generic drug manufacturers warn that changes to Canadian drug patent protection similar to those sought by the EU under the prospective deal – extended periods of market exclusivity to offset time lost to regulatory delays, and longer protection periods for clinical test data – would increase drug prices, benefiting brand-name pharmaceutical companies (many of them European) at the expense of Canadian businesses and the country's publicly funded healthcare system. Some Canadian business groups support similar changes in order to attract pharmaceutical investment to the country.

In Brussels, Canadian Ambassador Hornby was speaking an event to mark a November agreement between Ottawa and the EU that resolved a WTO dispute over beef trade, a longstanding irritant in bilateral trade relations.

The next round of negotiations between Canadian and EU officials is scheduled for April.

ICTSD reporting; "Statement from the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association Regarding Canadian Chamber of Commerce Report on Intellectual Property in the Pharmaceutical Sector," CNW GROUP, 19 January 2011; "Top Canadian official says FTA deal with the EU is imminent," THE PARLIAMENT.COM, 24 January 2011; "Ont., Que. Concerns holding up EU trade talks, roundtable says," THE VANCOUVER SUN, 14 January 2011; "EU nations reluctant to liberalize trade in services," MONTREAL GAZETTE, 26 January 2011; "Canada needs tougher drug patent protection:

report,” THE GLOBE AND MAIL, 19 January 2011.

WTO IN BRIEF

Dominican Republic Safeguard Case Enters Next Stage

After a first request was blocked by the Dominican Republic in this week’s DSB meeting, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador requested a special session of the DSB to be held 7 February to establish a panel to determine the legality of the Dominican Republic’s protective measures against imports of certain plastic bags and a fabric used to manufacture them. The panel will presumably be established in early February.

Since 16 March, the Dominican Republic has imposed tariffs of 38 percent on imports of polypropylene bags and the so-called tubular fabric. To justify the duties, it invoked the Agreement on Safeguards (SG), which allows for temporary release from tariff concessions when imports of a product increase to such an extent that it threatens “serious” injury to domestic producers of that product.

The Dominican Republic claims that unforeseen developments resulting from tariff cuts arising from the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which involved all of the parties to the dispute as well as the US, have led to increased imports in the disputed products that have significantly injured its domestic producers. Thus, Santo Domingo argues that it is in compliance with WTO rules under the Safeguards Agreement.

However, Costa Rica and the other complainants take issue with the methodology, calculations, and procedures used by the Dominican Republic during its investigation and subsequent imposition of safeguards. They also claim the investigations fail to demonstrate that the increased imports were a result of unforeseen developments, that a serious injury occurred, or that the increased imports were the cause of the injuries as required under the WTO Agreements.

Since the WTO dispute settlement system’s inception in 1995, relatively few developing countries have brought disputes to the body, with the exception of Brazil, India, and more recently China. This case is part of a growing trend of ‘south-south’ disputes among developing countries at the WTO. It is also notable for involving four countries from the same region and party to a regional trade pact (CAFTA).

Costa Rica initiated the dispute on 15 October, while the other Central American countries followed suit a week later. Subsequent consultations failed to generate a solution, which led to the initial request for a panel during this week’s DSB meeting. Under WTO rules, a responding party can only block a panel once.

The DSB meeting also saw the US formally announce its plan to implement the ruling (see Bridges Weekly, 19 January 2010). In addition, China and the EU asked to extend the deadline for appealing the WTO panel decision in the steel fastener dispute, in order to relieve pressure on the Appellate Body, which is currently working on the massive Boeing/Airbus cases involving the US and EU. The new deadline for China and the EU would be the end of March.

ICTSD reporting.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

Events

Coming soon

26 - 30 January, Davos-Klosters, Switzerland. WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM ANNUAL MEETING 2011. This annual meeting of world leaders in industry, government, academia, civil society, and media aims to provide a re-thinking of the WEF systems and explore strategies and solutions that have positive transformational implications. Particular emphasis for 2011 will be placed on addressing the question of “How,” going beyond analysis and elaborating innovative ideas and solutions to key global challenges. More information can be found on the [WEF website](#).

27-28 January, London. ILLEGAL LOGGING UPDATE AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION NUMBER 17. This meeting, organised by Chatham House, will provide an update on efforts from around the world to improve forest governance and reduce illegal logging. Topics to be considered include recent EU and US legislation to tackle the trade in illegal timber, and efforts to improve forest management and control in producer countries. The links between these initiatives and those being developed in order to reduce deforestation as part of climate change mitigation efforts will also be considered. For more information, visit the event [website](#).

31 January – 1 February, Geneva. GLOBAL COMMODITIES FORUM 2011 (GCF 2011). This major multi-stakeholder meeting will discuss and find better solutions to perennial problems of the commodity economy. The GNF 2011 will also address the performance of commodity supply chains and the state of business practices and innovation. For more information, please refer to the [UNCTAD website](#).

WTO events

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted at: http://www.wto.org/meets_public/meets_e.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.

31 January: Working Party on the Accession of Afghanistan

31 January: Council for Trade in Goods

Other upcoming events

2 February, London. EMERGING AGENTS OF CHANGE? THE ROLE OF AFRICAN STATES IN INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS ON AID, TRADE AND CLIMATE CHANGE. This event, organised by

Chatham House, will address the recent heightened presence of African governments in international questions and discuss if this presence signifies an emerging influence for African states within an increasing multipolar world or if it is merely continued subversion of the sovereignty of small states by larger powers. For more information, please refer to the [website](#).

9 – 13 May, Istanbul, Turkey. FOURTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. The purpose of the conference is to assess the results of the 10-year action plan for the Least Developed Countries adopted at the Third United Nations Conference and to adopt new measures and strategies for the sustainable development of the Least Developed Countries into the next decade. Read more on the [UN Website](#).

Resources

ASIA'S FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS: IS BUSINESS RESPONDING? By Hasahiro Kawai. (Asian Development Bank, ADB Institute, Edward Elgar, 2011.) Motivated by the rapid spread of free trade agreements in Asia over the last decade, this study delves into the business impact of Asian FTAs by using enterprise surveys in several East Asian economies. This book is available for purchase.

THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ELEMENTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE. International Climate Change Information Programme, January 2011. This book is the second in the series of "Climate Change Management" publications from Springer and ICCIP. It compiles papers from across the world that reflect on the social, economic, and political aspects of climate change. The selection of papers included within this volume attempt to illustrate the diversity of approaches to climate change management that are occurring globally. The book can be purchased from Springer's website.

ASIA AND EUROPE: ENGAGING FOR A POST-CRISIS WORLD. By Gareth Price. Chatham House, January 2011. This paper

highlights the benefits of cooperation between Asia and the European Union, particularly as future challenges are as likely to be global as they are regional. This paper attests that while many Europeans consider there to be a crisis of global leadership, many Asians perceive current trends as marking the end of Western domination and emergence of a more representative global leadership structure. For the complete text, please consult the [website](#).
