



Cairns Group Farm Leaders

Urge Resolution of WTO Appellate Body Crisis and Renewed Ambition on Agriculture Negotiations ahead of MC 12

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The Cairns Group Farm Leaders representing Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, New Zealand and Uruguay issued the following statement following the meeting of trade ministers of the Cairns Group in Davos, Switzerland:

“We are gravely concerned by the crisis situation currently facing the multilateral trading system. The loss of functionality of the WTO’s Appellate Body on December 11, 2019 – the day after the terms of two of its three remaining Members expired without replacement was perhaps the most devastating trade policy development in 2019.

“Given the vital role the WTO’s dispute settlement system plays in the rules-based global trading system, we call on all WTO Members to seek an urgent resolution to this crisis.

“We are also urging all countries to commit to the defence of the multilateral system by making substantial and ambitious progress in agricultural reform in the lead-up to the 12th Ministerial Conference meetings set for June in Kazakhstan. We urge all WTO Members to intensify efforts to modernize the rules-based trading system and work hard to address disparities in domestic and export supports that distort global agri-food markets. This includes efforts to continue to eliminate market access barriers in all forms. Tariff escalation, tariff peaks, and tariff quotas for agricultural products must continue to be addressed.

“In terms of reducing domestic support, we strongly welcome the new approach proposed by the Cairns Group on domestic support reform, as a first step toward broad and comprehensive agricultural reform. This new approach seeks a WTO agreement that would cap and reduce by at least half the current sum of global agricultural trade and production-distorting domestic support entitlements by 2030.

“The Cairns Group has proposed that negotiations take into consideration all forms of trade and production-distorting domestic support entitlements and that the reductions by individual Members

be proportionate to the size of their current entitlements. This is an overdue paradigm shift in the WTO agriculture negotiations, which reflects and seeks to address current trade realities.

“This proposal has generated a new momentum in agricultural reform negotiations not seen since the launch of the Doha Round in 2001. We must not lose this momentum. As representatives of Cairns Group farmers, producers and exporters, we urge all other WTO Members to support and co-sponsor the *Framework for Negotiations on Domestic Support* as proposed by the Cairns Group. The 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in June this year in Kazakhstan represents a critical opportunity for WTO Members to commit to and launch new domestic support negotiations.

“Reinvigorating efforts to reform global trade in agricultural trade will improve the ability of farmers, producers, processors and workers around the world to secure win-win gains and play by rules that are fair, predictable and enforceable.

“The task ahead for all WTO members is not simple, but the stakes are high. We recognise that the challenges facing the current system are significant and that finding solutions will not be easy. But we call on all Members to redouble efforts to address the serious concerns of global farmers and consumers alike. Nothing less than the global trading system itself is at stake.”

The Cairns Group is a coalition of 19 agricultural exporting countries that work together to advance the liberalisation of agricultural trade. Cairns Group Farm Leaders is a coalition of farm and agri-food organisations from Cairns Group countries advocating for a world with an equitable and enforceable rules-based trading system in agriculture.

Key links: <https://cairnsgroup.org/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
<http://www.cairnsgroupfarmers.org/about.html>