

Cairns Group Farm Leaders Meeting – Geneva, 11 November 2016 – Headline Messages

The clear message from farmers during the Cairns Group Farm Leaders meeting was the need for governments to take action to advance agricultural trade reform. Trade distortions create thin markets for agricultural products, which impact on farmer returns, so levelling the playing field is a priority. The need for the removal of trade distorting domestic support was emphasised – in particular subsidies for farm inputs, price support, and concessional credit schemes were highlighted.

- Domestic support distorts market signals, allowing subsidising countries' farmers to increase production to the detriment of farmers in non-subsidising countries.
- Trade distorting domestic support suppresses global prices for agricultural products, lowering returns and directly impacting on farm incomes.
- Disciplining domestic support will result in more open and predictable markets, less prone to volatility

Market access was another key theme reiterated throughout the meeting. This includes the reduction and removal of tariffs, and a commitment to addressing non-tariff barriers (NTBs).

- Tariffs for agricultural products remain high – particularly for cotton, sugar, grains, meat and dairy.
- Tariffs are used to insulate domestic industries from market signals, distorting the global market.
- As tariffs are reduced, NTBs are increasingly being used as a means of protecting their domestic industries. The WTO needs to address the use of NTBs.
- The WTO should identify and quantify NTBs, and set rules that govern their use.

Cairns Group Farm Leaders were unanimous and unequivocal in their support for ambitious multilateral agriculture reform through the WTO. They stressed that agriculture domestic support and markets access reform is long overdue.

- The Eleventh WTO Ministerial Conference must deliver real outcomes for farmers – real and ambitious market access and domestic support reform.
- The WTO and the Cairns Group need to clearly communicate the importance of free trade in feeding the world and helping countries develop. The benefits of free-trade must be promoted and the WTO has a central role to play.
- A sustained approach is required from industry and government.