

Contact (Geneva): Jonathan Hepburn, ICTSD. Tel. +41 22 917 87 56; jhepburn@ictsd.ch
Contact (Washington, D.C.): Ellen Terpstra, IPC. Tel. +1 202 328 5001; terpstra@agritrade.org

New Farm Trade Rules Needed to Tackle Food Insecurity – Experts 24-member group calls for action to respond to climate change, new threats

(Geneva, 30 April 2014).

New rules and better information on farm trade are needed so governments can improve food security in the face of emerging threats such as climate change, a group of international experts has found.

The E15Initiative expert group on Agricultural Trade and Food Security, which met over a two-year period, found that more transparency and better rules in areas such as biofuels, farm subsidies and export restrictions could help governments tackle hunger and strengthen the farm trade regime.

New challenges include food demand rising faster than farm productivity growth; ever-growing numbers of regional trade deals; and increasing food security risks due to climate change, said the group, which was convened by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and the International Food and Agricultural Trade Policy Council (IPC).

“The international community must now focus on improving food security in poor countries”, said E15Initiative theme leader Stefan Tangermann, in a summary paper. “Doing so will demonstrate what international trade, and the regime governing it, can constructively do for developing countries”.

In the short term, governments could create a new instrument of financial solidarity that establishes a relationship between government support for farmers in developed and emerging economies and assistance to agriculture and food security in poor ones, the group's report says.

Other short-term solutions include exempting emergency food aid from export taxes and restrictions; making more information available about government support for biofuels; better monitoring of farm subsidies at the World Trade Organisation (WTO); and more help for developing country producers to meet standards for farm goods in international markets.

Over time, governments could set new ceilings on export taxes; create new incentives to encourage governments to report farm subsidies to the WTO; agree to new disciplines on support for biofuels; and clarify when WTO rules would allow countries to impose border measures in response to climate change.

The group also found that governments need to improve market transparency, support emergency reserves, strengthen safety nets, and foster farm productivity.

“A responsive trade regime with appropriate rules can do a lot to improve food security and assist the poor”, said Tangermann.

Notes to editors:

1. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an organisation based in Geneva, Switzerland, responsible for liberalising and regulating international trade in goods, services and other areas. It has 159 Members.
2. The International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) is a nonpartisan think tank, based in Geneva, which - by empowering stakeholders in trade policy through information, networking, dialogue, well targeted research, and capacity building – seeks to influence the international trade system such that it advances the goal of sustainable development. www.ictsd.org
3. The International Food & Agricultural Trade Policy Council promotes the role of trade in creating a more open, equitable, productive and sustainable global food & agricultural system. www.agritrade.org
4. The E15Initiative, jointly implemented by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and the World Economic Forum (WEF), is a non-partisan, expert-led, multi-stakeholder dialogue aimed at defining ideas, strategies, and scenarios for how the multilateral trade system can meet the challenges and demands of the global economy and sustainable development today and in 2025. www.e15initiative.org.
5. The E15Initiative expert group on Agricultural Trade and Food Security Challenges, convened jointly with the [International Food and Agricultural Trade Policy Council \(IPC\)](#), brings together leading experts to develop concrete policy options the multilateral trading system could employ to impact positively on agricultural trade and improve food security, especially for the poorest global citizens.
6. The members of the E15Initiative expert group on Agricultural Trade and Food Security are online here: <http://e15initiative.org/agriculture-trade-and-food-security-challenges/>

----- ENDS -----