

INFORMATION SESSION ON INTERNATIONAL FOOD AID

24 JUNE 2019 3 PM – 6 PM

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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Overview and objectives

International food aid has been a topic of interest in international trade discussions for some time both under the GATT as well as its successor, the WTO. Two main objectives have been at the heart of these discussions:

- To support open trade, with no or minimal commercial displacement especially with respect to commodities used in international food aid transactions; and
- To support global efforts to respond to emergency food situations and other legitimate food needs of developing countries including through the provision of food aid.

Specific disciplines in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture seek to ensure that international food aid transactions do not lead to circumvention of Members' export subsidy commitments. At the WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in December 2015, WTO Members adopted a Decision to prohibit all forms of export subsidies. The Decision also includes specific disciplines on international food aid with the objective of preventing commercial displacement. The Nairobi Decision establishes detailed transparency requirements, including in the area of international food aid. Pursuant to this Decision, WTO Members have been undertaking dedicated annual discussions to examine developments in the field of export competition and monitor the implementation of this Decision during the June meeting of the Committee on Agriculture each year since December 2015.

The 1994 Marrakesh Ministerial Decision on Least-Developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries provides another important reason for WTO Members to deliberate on international food aid. This Decision's primary focus is to ensure that the agriculture reform process under the auspices of the WTO does not negatively affect the access of food-importing developing countries to food. The Decision emphasizes the role of food aid and the international food aid architecture in supporting the availability of food in developing countries. Since the adoption of the Decision, the WTO Committee on Agriculture undertakes a yearly monitoring exercise (NF exercise) during which Members examine donor Members' actions in support of the beneficiary importing countries and contributions by relevant international organizations.

The global system of rules and principles governing international food aid transactions is thus composed of elements related to the work of multiple organizations.¹ Specifically, the Food and

¹ The disciplines in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture relative to international food aid notably make reference to the FAO principles of Surplus Disposal and Consultative Obligations and to the Food Aid Convention and the Nairobi Ministerial Decision also makes reference to the Food Assistance Convention.

Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Grain Council (IGC) as Secretariat of the Food Assistance Convention (FAC) all have a role to play. The OECD-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) also address international food aid and assistance. These organizations cooperate closely and the WTO in its discussions on international food aid has benefited in the last few years from inputs by the FAO, the IGC/FAC, the WFP and the OECD-DAC, including through their participation in WTO meetings, provision of data and participation in various events and discussions relevant for the monitoring or the negotiation of the WTO international food aid-related provisions.

The objective of this information session is to provide WTO Members with an overview of the current landscape regarding disciplines as well as the monitoring and data collection of information related to international food aid and food assistance by relevant organisations. In this regard, one significant development has been the adoption of recommendations by the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) in 2016 and endorsed by the FAO Council and Conference mandating the FAO to monitor and report on global food aid transactions.

This information session will focus on the issue of enhanced transparency of donors' food aid / assistance policies. The specific issue of availability of international food aid shipment data came up during the 2018 NF exercise held in the November 2018 meeting of the Committee on Agriculture, where it was noted that multiple channels and processes exist to monitor food aid and associated policies. The information session will offer the participating international organizations an opportunity to further strengthen their collaboration in this domain.

The information session will provide an opportunity for each organization to address the following points: *i)* Mandate and international food aid / assistance disciplines monitored by the organization and *ii)* monitoring of the disciplines and data collection. Following the presentations, participants will have the opportunity to comment and engage in a discussion with the speakers.

Programme

15:00 – 15:10	Opening Comments by Edwini Kessie, Director (WTO)
15:10 – 15:25	Susanna Sandstrom, Head of Unit (WFP)
15:25 – 15:40	Josef Schmidhuber, Deputy Director, Trade and Markets Division (FAO)
15:40 – 15:55	Olivier Bangerter, Chairman (FAC)
15:55 – 16:10	Julia Benn, Head of Unit (OECD-DAC)
16:10 – 16:20	Diwakar Dixit and Cedric Pene, Counsellors (WTO)
16:20 – 17:30	Open discussion moderated by Debora Cumes, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture (WTO)