

WEBINAR SERIES

Moderator: Doaa Abdel-Motaal

WTO

Trade Dialogues on Food

Big Take-Aways, A Very Quick Read

Volume 2
(2023)



PREFACE

The aim of the WTO Trade Dialogues on Food is to create a conversation around the role of international trade in food security. The Trade Dialogues on Food invite experts from governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses, academia, think tanks and foundations, to debate the most topical issues in food trade. Each year the international trading system moves enough wheat, maize, rice and soybean to feed approximately three billion people around the globe. Meanwhile, 190 million tons of fertilizer applied to farmland annually play a key role in helping us grow enough food to sustain our expanding population, with much of it traded on the international stage. Climate change will make international trade even more central to food security, acting as a vital conduit for food from food-surplus to food-deficit nations in the wake of natural calamities. The Trade Dialogues on Food are designed to shed greater light on the complexity of the food trade nexus, creating a safe space for public policy debate.

BIG TAKE-AWAYS

The "Big Take-Aways" seek to identify some of the most salient points made during the course of past dialogues, and are intended to act as a resource for trade experts and scholars. They are, however, only an informal set of notes and are done entirely under the WTO Secretariat's own responsibility.

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WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION



The WTO Trade Dialogues on Food

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2 Preface

WEBINARS

16 February 2023 **5 High Tech Foods and WTO Rules**

High Tech Foods and WTO Rules

Moderated by **Doaa Abdel-Motaal**, Senior Counsellor, WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division



[Watch here](#)

THE TEAM

Shir Slutzky, Deputy Permanent Representative to the WTO, Permanent Mission of Israel

Maximilian Marquart, CEO Planet A Foods

Phil Webster, Principal, Global Technology & Innovation, Arthur D. Little

Nir Goldstein, Managing Director, Good Food Institute, Israel

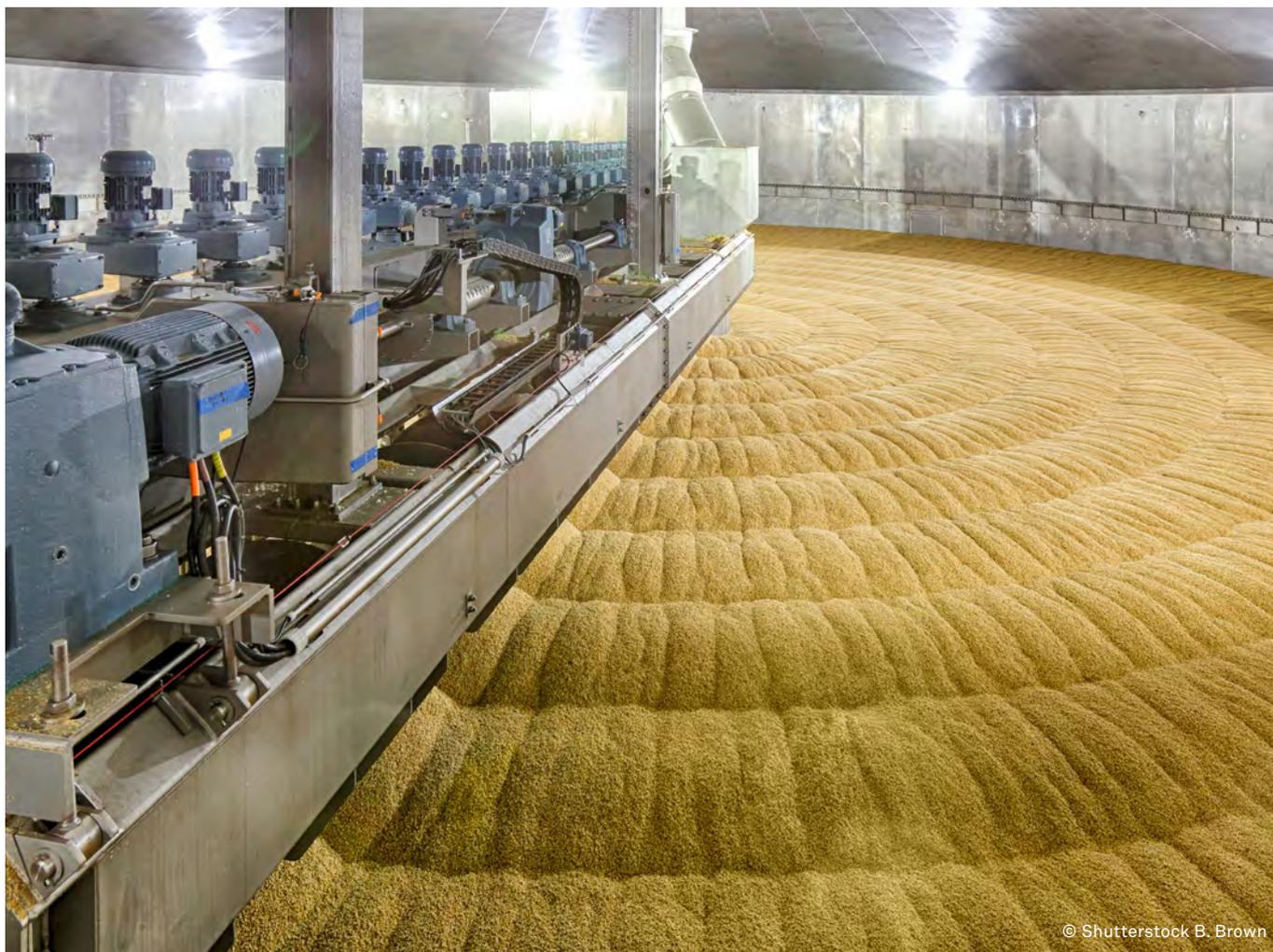
Gabrielle Marceau, Senior Counsellor, WTO Research Division

Christiane Wolff, Counsellor, WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division

Big Takeways, A Very Quick Read

In the context of the future of food, this webinar was designed to explore how the WTO can best accompany high tech foods. These foods solicit all aspects of the WTO rulebook from trade in goods, to trade in services and intellectual property rights.

- The webinar made clear that the food of the future will look nothing like today's, and that agriculture itself is being revolutionized. Speakers spoke of robotic farms, integrated crop protection systems, sensors in fields for data collection and the quick identification of diseases, and the application of machine learning and algorithms to agriculture. The Israeli Deputy Permanent Representative spoke of the 3D printing of beef in Israel; a country with the highest number of start-ups per capita which is trying to respond to its challenging soil and climatic condition, and the climate crisis.
- The entrepreneurs and innovation experts on the dialogue made a compelling case for the need for food system change and innovation. Planet A foods indicated that it was trying to create alternatives for palm oil and cocoa so as to reduce deforestation, decrease biodiversity loss and address child slavery. It described its mission as that of "decoupling supply chains from scarce natural resources." It added that cocoa production was in trouble anyway with climate change making it harder to grow cocoa in countries near the equator (Ghana and Ivory Coast); adding that most cocoa trees were ageing – exceeding 20 years of age. Cocoa trees were also amongst the most threatened tree species by pests, with cocoa alternatives now becoming necessary to meet growing demand. These alternatives would never displace traditional cocoa, but would co-exist with it to become an additional option for the manufacture of more premium cocoa products.
- The Good Food Institute argued that alternatives to fish, meat and dairy were necessary given the impact of the livestock sector on our climate, and the safety concern they raise with 70% of antibiotics going to animal use. It pointed out that extracting 1 calory from a cow required a cow to be fed with 40 calories, and that more efficient food/energy systems needed to be found. Israel has become a leading hub for protein innovation, and hosts the world's only two agricultural research centres working in this area.
- Arthur D. Little's innovation expert explained that innovation was also required in response to greater consumer demand for healthy food, for food labels, sustainable and traceable food, and for food more tailored to specific dietary requirements. Currently, it said that approximately 80% of new foods are



withdrawn for false health claims. Therefore appropriate regulatory environments were necessary to accompany these foods. The areas of focus in food innovation included the meats, flavours, vitamins and fragrances.

- The WTO explained how the WTO rulebook functions, and the number of WTO agreements that are relevant to high tech foods, which go much beyond the Agreement on Agriculture. The rules governing industrial products, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and the Agreement on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) were all equally relevant to high tech foods. The Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) were also explained, with the message being that while the WTO was not a standard-setting body, its goal is to ensure that food standards and regulations do not constitute unnecessary obstacles to trade.
- Emphasis was placed by the private sector on the need for regulatory frameworks that are grounded in science and knowledge, and that can react to innovation with speed, clarity and consistency. Some described the innovation in this sector as a “food tech arms race,” requiring agile regulatory structures.
- The Israeli Deputy Permanent Representative called for dialogue on high tech foods in the WTO, indicating that the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) had recently added a new agenda item to the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission on “New Food Production Systems.” She argued that the WTO could follow suit, with there being a need to discuss agreements such as the Information Technology Agreement (ITA), the SPS and TBT Agreements and TRIPs. Issues to do with the customs classification of these new foods would also need to be explored.



World Trade Organization

Centre William Rappard,
Rue de Lausanne 154,
CH-1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland
Website: <http://www.wto.org>

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