



## VIRTUAL WTO AGRICULTURE SYMPOSIUM 2020 - AGRICULTURAL TRADE AND FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

### *"Big Take-Aways – Session One - AGRICULTURAL TRADE, A VITAL PILLAR FOR FOOD SECURITY"*

- This session discussed the critical role of international trade in food security. Today international trade feeds one in 6 people worldwide. The last 25 years have witnessed sweeping market and policy shifts, food crises, climate change, and a widening technological and digital divide, that have all pointed to the importance of continued reform of the international trading system for food systems transformation and for the mitigation of food insecurity.
  - Strengthening multilateral trade cooperation needs to happen within as well as beyond the realm of agriculture, with active, creative and flexible engagement by the WTO membership. The session called upon major WTO Members to promptly endorse a joint non-binding resolution to not disrupt supply chains and avoid trade protectionism; to properly implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement which is vital for food trade, in particular perishables; to ensure a well-functioning WTO dispute settlement system; to regulate the digital economy and ecommerce sites which are becoming the new shop fronts; and to pursue environmental regulations in the field of agriculture in support of the SDGs.
  - Noting growing support from the WTO membership, panel speakers issued a unanimous plea for the WTO to exempt WFP food purchases for non-commercial humanitarian purposes from export restrictions.
  - The panel argued that as a matter of urgency, the international community must find ways to reactivate the global economy. The recessionary impact of the crisis continues to depress employment and income, posing major risks to the access and consumption of healthy and nutritious foods. The very root of hunger remains poverty: economic recession threatens to unwind two decades of achievements by drawing 132 million more people into under-nourishment.
  - It was stated that trade is not a magic bullet. Rather, it should be mainstreamed within comprehensive and coherent policy frameworks in order to benefit rural and urban consumers as well as smallholder farmers, through social safety-nets that can be quickly activated, financial instruments, climate monitoring systems, precision farming, transformative policies in the food and agricultural sector, and capacity-building.
  - A call was made for timely and evidence-based market and policy intelligence to help reassure markets by bridging information asymmetries along food supply chains, reducing transaction costs, eliminating food loss and waste, pre-empting trade protectionism, and ensuring access to food and the stability of supply.
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