

Third Roundtable Five Highlights and a Quote!

“By not fully implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement, we are leaving money on the table. It’s about lost opportunities.”

Valerie Picard

Deputy Director

Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation

- Efficient facilitation of trade in food and other agricultural products promises a myriad of benefits. Because many foods are highly perishable, they require particularly efficient trade regimes and border crossings. Food security is enhanced when cross-border flows of food cargo are facilitated to minimize time spent in trade, thereby reducing physical losses and costs.
- The Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation stressed the need to fully implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) in the parts of the world that were lagging behind. E-Phyto certification, developed by the Alliance together with the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) had in a country like Senegal reduced the licensing fee by 40%, saving \$57 per certificate. In fact, it is estimated that a full implementation of the TFA would reduce trade costs globally by 7%. The International Federation of Freight Forwarders Association echoed these comments, indicating that the TFA would lead to more electronic processes, the digitalization of the supply chain, automated customs procedures and the more rapid transit and release of goods.
- The Digital Ag Association argued that technology and digitalization were vital to drive down inefficiency and reduce confusion in markets, and that the WTO plays a critical role in allowing innovation to flow across the globe. An unexpected outcome of the COVID-19 era is the extent to which the pandemic pushed the world to automate and digitalize business processes. Endless possibilities are now opening up in agriculture through technologies such as blockchain, Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, 3D printing, vertical farming, and quantum computing. Technologies fueled, in part, by the need to think of innovative ways to grow more food with less land, water and other natural resources.
- Digital platforms can allow producers and consumers alike to access a wider range of markets, and enable governments to monitor and enforce trade rules in new ways. These innovations are vital to the grain sector, a point stressed by the North American Export Grain Association. In fact, there are negotiations currently ongoing in the WTO on e-commerce, which should be brought to a successful conclusion the soonest.

Keywords:

#trade facilitation

#digitilization

#ecommerce

#global supply chains

#perishables

#transit of goods

#release of goods

#innovation

#technology

#reduced inefficiency