

MULTILATERAL TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS
THE URUGUAY ROUND

RESTRICTED

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FOOD SECURITY: STATEMENT BY JAMAICA AT EIGHTH MEETING
OF NEGOTIATING GROUP ON AGRICULTURE

Jamaica welcomes the proposal presented by the delegation of the United States in NG5/W/61. We listened carefully to its introduction. The proposal contains many important elements. However, it does not address adequately the question of food security from a developing country perspective.

I will recall that my delegation presented in previous communications to this Group its views on food security. In paragraph 15(i) of NG5/W/32 Jamaica expressed the view that special and differential treatment will have to be extended to the agricultural sector of less developed contracting parties in recognition of their national objectives, inter alia ensuring food security through increased self-sufficiency and a stable supply of imported agricultural products at equitable prices. Food security is one element in the overall economic development strategy of developing countries.

In document NG5/W/42 it was emphasized that strengthened and more operationally effective GATT rules and disciplines underpin the expansion of trade through liberalization and thus these rules and disciplines will need to incorporate certain elements as basic principles. These elements included recognition of the close linkages between agricultural policies and measures adopted by governments and wider policy objectives including, inter alia, "food security (through domestic production and guarantees of supply) ..." Expanded production is necessary if developing countries are to have surpluses for exports, while satisfying the increasing demand for food and other agricultural products in their own countries.

I might elaborate on Jamaica's perspective on food security. Jamaica approaches food security with a number of considerations in mind:

- to satisfy the minimum food needs of the poor and undernourished;
- to modify the demand structure in order to adjust it to available resources;
- to reduce instability in food supplies and prices;

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- to increase autonomy in food production at national, regional and sub-regional levels.

When viewed in the light of the elements just outlined it will be clear that food security cannot realistically be divorced from the attainment of some minimum level of self-sufficiency. Yet food security does not equate strictly to self-sufficiency. I will be more specific. Jamaica's approach to food imports of which food security is one aspect takes account of, inter alia, two primary factors:

(i) disincentives

(ii) dependency.

On disincentives - Jamaica recognizes that incentives for increased consumption must neither be a disincentive to national food production nor impede trade liberalization. In pursuing food security we are neither seeking to subsidize inefficient production nor to restrict market access at the border. On the contrary, Jamaica seeks to increase local production through the appropriate use of incentives in order to increase productivity and so realize the potential comparative advantage of Jamaican agriculture. The success of this ongoing strategy will make Jamaica less dependent on food and other agricultural imports, and go to meet minimum nutritional and calorie needs. In a special sense, food security also means targeting the poor and vulnerable groups as an integral part of the government's Social Well-Being Programme. The interrelationship of policies in the agricultural sector is borne out by the positive results achieved through stabilization and structural adjustment programmes, which include substantial trade liberalization and other structural reforms.

Dependency - Jamaica has been historically dependent on basic food commodities such as wheat and maize - two essential basic food commodities. Our efforts to increase nutritional levels will result in higher imports of these commodities. Another factor which creates demand for certain food imports is decreasing purchasing power which forces the poor to spend proportionately more on basic foodstuffs of a certain nutritional and caloric value. In the case of Jamaica imported food of these products meets these requirements.

Food aid for development has a place in helping to underpin food security. Attention must be given also to Usual Marketing Requirements where developed exporting countries seek to limit food aid as a percentage of commercial imports, especially since a situation of reduced foreign exchange earnings exists in developing countries. With the Jamaican economy having undergone a successful structural adjustment programme at great sacrifice and with the economic indices moving in the positive direction there will be a re-stimulation of import capacities and a rise in food imports for the reasons just outlined. One clear benefit of structural adjustment of the economy is increased investment in agriculture and an increase in local food production. However, this requires the maintenance of incentives to ensure that comparative advantage is achieved.