



Toward a Common Agriculture Framework?

Prior to the July 5 CoASS, the African Group circulated a proposal in response to the roadmap tabled by Brazil. Unlike Brazil which submitted its proposal as draft decision for the July 2024 General Council, the African Group's draft text on agriculture is submitted for consideration to CoASS (Committee on Agriculture in Special Session) Members with the aim of achieving tangible progress and balanced outcomes in the negotiations by the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Cameroon.

The proposal builds on the Agriculture Negotiations Chair's text presented at MC13, essentially reiterates the need to pursue and intensify negotiations on domestic support, market access and other key agriculture topics. It additionally proposes that Members agree on the elements and methodology of implementation according to a timetable that resembles that presented by Brazil last April.

In a nutshell, the group suggests that:

- The CoASS Chair provides annual negotiating schedules to discuss all aspects, including elements and methodology, of each of the negotiating topics with priority given to development issues: public stocks (PSH), special safeguard mechanism (SSM) and cotton.
- Senior officials review the progress made in the negotiations, particularly on the PSH, the SSM and cotton.
- Members adopt an intermediate framework of the agreement four months before MC14.
- A decision on modalities, including a permanent solution on the PSH, be adopted by Members by MC14, and
- The modalities of each negotiating subject to be implemented within a timeframe to be decided by Members taking into account possible differences in the maturity of their discussions.

Brazil embraced the proposal, seeking to build a common framework by incorporating key elements of the African Group paper into its own proposed roadmap to be adopted at the July General Council.

Brazil has been consulting Members on a weekly basis since the end of May. The consultations are expected to continue until July 11.

“We still have time to make progress before the July General Council meeting”, Brazil said, referring to its plan to immediately consult the African Group, noting that the latter has carried out substantial work through weekly informal meetings alongside the Cairns Group.

“[Our] experts have been getting into considerable (technical) details, discussing (subsidy) reduction formula, product specific limits, green box, PSH etc.,” Brazil stressed. With the goal of identifying “elements that can be mutually supportive from amongst the proposals”, this avenue has proven to be “an extremely positive exercise overall”.

The African Group looks to push for domestic support reforms including disciplines on Green Box and Blue Box. On market access, the group has been working on a room document with the ACP and Cairns Groups to help identify key priorities.

Other Reactions

Cairns Group members supported the idea of building a common framework with Brazil's proposed roadmap to enable Members to start working toward achieving modalities after the summer break. The US, for its part, urged the African Group to show “restraint” by reaffirming its “extreme positions” and to “restore balance to the text.”

China, meanwhile, warned against insisting on a roadmap that pushes for sequencing, noting that MC13 failed because “some” (implying India) insisted on sequencing at the last minute. The EU also called for a flexible timetable that takes into account the interests of all Members, including food security, the environment, poverty and sustainable production.

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The ACP countries, the Cotton-4 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali), the G33 group and India all expressed their full support for the African Group's proposal aimed at obtaining “meaningful and concrete” results at MC14. They stressed that such outcomes are expected to strengthen the resilience of developing countries to food insecurity, boost domestic production and facilitate sustainable agricultural transformation. The group also expressed hope that the proposal could be finalized and submitted to the General Council for consideration.

G10 members (including Japan, Korea and Switzerland,) insisted on equal treatment for all agriculture matters, particularly export restrictions, domestic support and market access.

Regarding the resumption of negotiations after the summer recess, Ambassador Alparslan Acarsoy noted that Brazil-led discussions around its proposed General Council decision and upcoming deliberations on the African Group's proposal would shape future work. The Agriculture Negotiations Chair plans to organize formal negotiation meetings to narrow differences and identify potential areas of convergence.

Geneva Watch is published monthly by Dairy Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Turkey Farmers of Canada, Canadian Hatching Egg Producers, and Egg Farmers of Canada to report on the various events occurring in Geneva, especially on agriculture.

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