

**WTO AGRICULTURE SEMINAR AND DIALOGUE FOR SENIOR OFFICIALS OF ASIA AND PACIFIC COUNTRIES**

**SINGAPORE, 25-27 MARCH 2019**

Agriculture is an important sector in the domestic economies of countries in the Asia and Pacific region. This region is a dominant actor in global agriculture as a major producer, consumer and trader of numerous agricultural commodities. Domestic agriculture and trade policies pursued in these countries are thus naturally important for the global agriculture trading system.

Given that the agriculture sector provides mankind's basic food needs and that a significant proportion of the population still works in this sector in many countries, it is a strategic and simultaneously politically sensitive sector of the economies of most countries, including those in the Asia-Pacific region. Agriculture also happens to be a sector which attracts extensive governmental involvement. This together with strong political economy overtones invariably associated with the sector makes multilateral policy collaboration and negotiations in this domain more difficult as has been evident throughout the history of the multilateral trading system since its inception seventy-years ago.

The 2019 regional agriculture seminar and dialogue for Asia-Pacific countries is targeted at senior government officials from the region who are involved in the field of agricultural trade policy formulation and in the ongoing agriculture negotiations at the WTO. The seminar will provide an opportunity for the participating senior officials to discuss the major challenges faced by the global agriculture and food systems, including those arising from sustainability and food security considerations and climate change and how these challenges may be collectively addressed through enhanced multilateral collaboration and a strengthened multilateral trading system. The seminar will also provide an opportunity for a critical assessment of existing multilateral agricultural rules contained principally in the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), as well the major outstanding issues and challenges being sought to be addressed in the ongoing agriculture negotiations. The high-level seminar will also provide an opportunity for the sharing of domestic policy experiences in dealing with the existing key challenges facing the sector.

The format of the seminar will include lectures from the experts as well as round-table sessions or panel discussions on some specific issues to brainstorm on the way forward on these issues. A targeted two and half days programme capturing these issues is accordingly proposed.

**Draft Programme**

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| **Monday 25 March 2019** |
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|  9:00 – 9:30 | Opening Session |
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|  9:30 – 11:00 | Multilateral disciplines in the Agreement on Agriculture: An overview* What has been accomplished?
* Major outstanding issues
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| 11:00 – 11:15 | Coffee Break |
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| 11:15 – 12:30 | Major challenges facing the agriculture sector in the Asia-Pacific region and the potential role of multilateral collaboration to address the following:* Enhancing productivity
* Judicious and sustainable use of natural resources
* Climate change
* Food security
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| 12:30 – 14:00 | Lunch Break |
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| 14:00 – 15:30 | Domestic farm Subsidies:* WTO disciplines and Multilateral reform template under the existing rules in the Agreement on Agriculture
* Unfinished business of the Uruguay Round and major outstanding issues
* State of play of the domestic support negotiations, major challenges to making progress
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| 15:30 – 15:45 | Coffee Break |
| 15:45 – 17:00 | Climate change and agriculture: sustainability challenge for domestic agriculture and trade policy, way forward [Round Table/Panel discussions]* Design of risk management/insurance policies
* Role of research, extension, training programmes
* Use of inputs (water, pesticides etc.), regional experience of use of input subsidies
* What would be the optimal relationship with multilateral disciplines on agriculture?
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| **Tuesday 26 March 2019** |
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|  9:00 – 10.30 | Elimination of all forms of agriculture export subsidies: a major accomplishment of the negotiations* Major elements of the Nairobi Decision
* What is deemed as outstanding in the export competition pillar?
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| 10:30 – 10:45 | Coffee Break |
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| 10:45 – 12:30 | Market access challenges in agriculture:* WTO disciplines including those under the Agreement on Agriculture
* Extensive use of tariff rate quotas (TRQs): why are TRQs preferred, could these be a potential tool of future market access reforms, implementation challenges
* Division of labour between FTAs and multilateral negotiations
* Challenges in the negotiations
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| 12:30 – 14:00 | Lunch Break |
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| 14:00 – 15:30 | Agriculture value chains (AVCs) [Round Table/Panel discussions]* Understanding AVCs
* Policy implications (productivity alone may not be enough, functioning food markets, role of logistics, limiting food losses, addressing trade costs, etc.)
* Increasing power of food retailers, competition policy issues, private standards
* AVCs and WTO rules/negotiations
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| 15:30 – 15:45 | Coffee Break |
| 15:45 – 17:00 | Agriculture value chains: discussions (continued)  |

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| **Wednesday 27 March 2019** |
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| 9:00 – 10:30 | Food Security discussions among WTO Members: * Understanding food security, difficult discussions among WTO Members (producer vs consumer interests, food security vs food self-sufficiency etc.)
* Interests of importing countries (access to food, export restrictions, international food aid, etc.)
* WTO rules and food security
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| 10:30 – 10:45 | Coffee Break  |
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| 10:45 – 11:15 | Export restrictions* WTO disciplines, including those under the Agreement on Agriculture
* State of play of the negotiations, major challenges to making progress
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| 11:15 – 12:00 | Public stockholding for food security purposes: * What is the problem, adopted Ministerial and General Council Decisions
* State of play of the negotiations, outstanding issues
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| 12:00 – 12:30 | Closing Session  |
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