Agricultural Trade and food system transformation

virtual WTO Agriculture Symposium

2-3 December 2020

If we are to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, immediate and urgent action is required to transform how food is produced, transported, and consumed. Recognition of this need is growing, driven by serious concern regarding the continued prevalence of extreme forms of hunger across the globe, diet-related health effects, damage to ecosystem services, climate change and distress among millions of small-scale food producers.

The transformation of food systems will require an unprecedented degree of international cooperation given the globalized nature of our food system. The recently announced UN Food Systems Summit in 2021 will raise food system transformation to the highest level of political attention, affirming its centrality to the achievement of the majority of the SDGs.

The 2020 edition of the WTO Agricultural Symposium will explore the role of international agricultural trade in achieving this transformation. It will also assess and draw on the lessons learned from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agricultural trade.

Exactly twenty-five years have transpired since the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) came into place, with the aim of establishing a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system. This makes the Symposium an important rendezvous for assessing past achievements and charting a new path forward.

Sending a message to the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit on the centrality of international agricultural trade to the achievement of the SDGs, the Symposium will take a critical look at the role of the multilateral trading system in achieving global food security, nutrition, and addressing the twin challenges of climate change and environmental sustainability.

AGRICULTURAL TRADE IN FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

TENTATIVE AGENDA, 2-3 DECEMBER 2020

World Trade Organization

DAY 1: WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER

OPENING SESSION

10:00 - 11:30

**Alan Wolff,** WTO Deputy Director-General

Opening Remarks

**Qu Dongyu,** FAO Director-General

"Food Systems of the Future"

**Michael Fakhri,** UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food

"The Role of International Trade in Food Security"

**Agnes Kalibata,** Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit

"The Role of International Trade in World Food Systems Transformation"

**Edwini Kessie,** Director, WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division

"WTO Agreement on Agriculture @ 25"

Moderator: **Doaa Abdel-Motaal, Senior Counsellor,   
WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division**

**Live Q&A**

SESSION ONE:  
AGRICULTURAL TRADE, A VITAL PILLAR FOR FOOD SECURITY

11:30 – 13:00

International trade in agricultural commodities and processed foods has always been vital to global food security, and its importance is only likely to rise in future in view of natural disasters and climate change. Each year, the world's transport system moves enough maize, wheat, rice and soybean to feed approximately 2.8 billion people. Meanwhile, 190 million tons of fertilizers applied to farmland annually play a critical role in helping us grow enough food to sustain our expanding populations, with much of that fertilizer traded on the international stage. This session explores the interlinkage between international agricultural trade and food security.

**Speakers**:

**Maximo Torero,** Chief Economist and Assistant Director-General of the Economic and Social Development Department of the FAO of the UN.

**Anabel Gonzalez,** Nonresident Senior Fellow, Peterson Institute for International Economics (former Trade Minister, Costa Rica).

**Ertharin Cousin**, CEO and President, Food Systems for the Future (former Executive Director of WFP).

**Deep Ford,** Strategic Analysis Specialist, UN FAO (former Chair, WTO agriculture negotiations)

Moderator: **Diwakar Dixit, Counsellor,   
WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division**

**Live Q&A**

13:00 – 14:00 LUNCH BREAK

SESSION TWO:

AGRICULTURAL TRADE, LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID-19

14:00 – 15:30

The world is continuing to experience a health crisis – a global pandemic – that is unprecedented in modern times, one that has shutdown of large parts of the global economy. We have seen measures taken by governments to quarantine their citizens, impose travel restrictions, suspend non-essential economic activity, and seal-off national borders. At the outset of the crisis, airports and seaports were operating at a fraction of their total capacity with a dramatic impact on world trade and global production chains, including the production of food. This session explores the impact of the COVID‑19 pandemic on agricultural trade and food security, and the lessons learned.

**Speakers**:

**Ken Ash,** Independent Consultant, Visiting Fellow (Institute for International Trade, University of Adelaide), former OECD Director of Trade and Agriculture

**Josef Schmidhuber,** Deputy Director, Markets and Trade Division, FAO

**Cheryl Spencer,** Ambassador of Jamaica to the WTO, coordinator of the ACP Group in Geneva

Moderator: **Ulla Kask, Counsellor,  
WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division**

**Live Q&A**

SESSION THREE:  
AGRICULTURAL TRADE, NUTRITIONAL DIVERSITY

15:30 – 17:00

SDG2 recognizes the need for better nutrition, specifically aiming to "end all forms of malnutrition". It is generally argued that there are four main pathways through which international trade can improve nutrition: it can contribute to the stability of food supply and food prices acting as a buffer against fluctuations in the domestic market; it can contribute to the diversity of food supply thereby improving national diets; it can lower food prices making a healthier diet more accessible to consumers; and it can increase incomes thereby enhancing consumer purchasing power. This session explores the interlinkage between international agricultural trade and nutritional diversity.

**Speakers:**

**Francesco Branca,** Director, Department of Nutrition and Food Safety, WHO

**Namukolo Covic,** Senior Research Coordinator, Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

**Chris Hegadorn,** Secretary, Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

**Dirk Jacobs,** Deputy Director General / Director Consumer Information, Nutrition and Health, FoodDrinkEurope

**Anne Marie Thow,** Associate Professor, Public Policy and Health, The University of Sydney

Moderator: **Erik Wijkstrom, Counsellor,   
WTO Trade and Environment Division**

**Live Q&A**

DAY 2: THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER

SESSION FOUR:  
AGRICULTURAL TRADE, PATHWAYS TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

10:00 – 11:30

International trade leads to a more efficient allocation of resources, including natural resources such as land and water. The declining availability of renewable natural resources poses a serious threat to agricultural production and food systems. Amid increasing water scarcity in many parts of the world, for instance, virtual water trade as both a policy instrument and practical means to balance the local, national and global water budget is being carefully studied. This session explores the interlinkage between international agricultural trade and environmental sustainability, and the trade policy reforms that can improve environmental outcomes.

**Speakers**:

**Ann Tutwiler,** Special Advisor, Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU)

**Carin Smaller,** Director, Agriculture, Trade and Investment, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

**Shenggen Fan,** Senior Professor at the College of Economics and Management in China Agriculture University, and former Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

**Wanjira Mathai,** Vice President and Regional Director for Africa, World Resources Institute (WRI)

Moderator: **Doaa Abdel-Motaal, Senior Counsellor,   
WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division**

**Live Q&A**

SESSION FIVE:  
AGRICULTURAL TRADE, FOOD SAFETY

11:30 – 13:00

Food safety regulations and the perception of risk are different among countries and consumers, with the COVID-19 pandemic leading to host of new food safety regulations. Although no major disruption to international trade has occurred for food safety reasons, serious trade frictions do and can occur. Risk reduction measures and quality certification programs can not only pre-empt food safety crises but can better position exporters in overseas markets. This session explores the important role of the WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Standards and Trade Development Facility in addressing these concerns.

**Speakers**:

**Markus** **Lipp,** Senior Food Safety Officer, Food Systems and Food Safety Division, FAO

**Steve** **Wearne,** Director, Global Affairs, UK Food Standards Agency

**Kateryna Onul,** Regulatory and Policy Lead, IFC Food Safety Advisory

**Tesfalidet Hagos,** Founder and General Manager of Luna Exports, Ethiopia

Moderator: **Melvin Spreij, Counsellor,   
WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division**

**Live Q&A**

13:00 – 14:00 LUNCH BREAK

SESSION SIX:  
AGRICULTURAL TRADE IN 2050, TOWARDS FORWARD-LOOKING DISCIPLINES

14:00 – 15:30

Two brainstorming sessions in this Symposium are dedicated to imaging the role of agricultural trade in the world of 2050. Looking across the different pillars of the AoA, this session will solicit the views of trade policy-makers on how best to reform agricultural trade policy and the design of forward-looking disciplines.

**Speakers**:

**Gerda Van Dijk,** South Africa, former Director at Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Agricultural Counsellor to the WTO

**Carmel Cahill,** Former Deputy Director Trade and Agriculture Directorate, OECD

**Sophia Murphy,** Executive Director, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

**Darci Vetter,** Former Chief Agricultural Negotiator, Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR)

Moderator: **Cédric Pene, Counsellor,   
WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division**

**Live Q&A**

**SESSION SEVEN:  
AGRICULTURAL TRADE IN 2050, LET'S HEAR IT FROM THE FARMERS**

15:30 – 17:00

Two brainstorming sessions in this Symposium are dedicated to imaging the role of agricultural trade in 2050. Looking across the different pillars of the AoA, this session will solicit the views of farmers organizations on the types of agricultural trade policy reforms that would strengthen the multilateral trading system and boost farm income.

**Speakers**:

**Theo de Jagger,** President of the World Farmers Organization

**Shawna Morris,** Vice President, Trade Policy, National Milk Producers Federation and Dairy Export Council

**Ibrahim Malloum,** Director of Cotontchad

**Raul Montemayor,** President of Free Farmers Association

Moderator: **Marieme Fall, Counsellor,   
WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division**

**Live Q&A**

CLOSING REMARKS by edwini kessie

DIRECTOR

WTO AGRICULTURE AND COMMODITIES DIVISION

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