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New WTO Agriculture Text Falls Short – Again

Time for a New Agenda to Fix Global Food and Agricultural Trade

Minneapolis/Geneva – New draft agricultural trade rules released at the World Trade Organization (WTO) today fail to repair a deeply flawed negotiating agenda, according to the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP). This latest attempt to save the Doha Round adds nothing new except more loopholes and exemptions to an already complicated text.

“WTO negotiators continue to pursue a Doha Agenda that is unpopular all over the world,” said Carin Smaller, director of IATP’s Geneva Office. “This latest text is not going to reignite passion for a WTO deal. It is time to build a new set of trade rules that are practical and that enable governments to build strong, sustainable food and agriculture systems.”

WTO negotiations are deeply hindered by a weakened Bush Administration, which has lost fast track negotiating authority and is at historically low popularity levels. Additionally, the U.S. Congress has no appetite for trade deals and presidential candidates are treading cautiously on trade.

“The text looks like a bad repair job,” said Smaller. “The Chair of the Agriculture negotiations, Ambassador Falconer, has filled in some of the holes, but the basic design remains fundamentally inadequate. The walls of the house are crumbling down. This latest paint job is not going to fix the problem.”

A poll released yesterday by BBC World Service found that in 22 of 34 countries most people felt that “economic globalization, including trade and investment” was growing too quickly. And 64 percent in the 34 countries felt that the economic benefits and burdens of globalization were not fairly distributed.

A series of economic reports by institutions such as the World Bank, the United Nations, Carnegie Endowment for Peace and Tufts University, have found that the Doha Round will increase inequities between rich and poor, both among countries and within countries.

Read more on the WTO’s agriculture negotiations at IATP’s trade web site: www.tradeobservatory.org

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works globally to promote resilient family farms, healthy communities and ecosystems through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy. www.iatp.org