



AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION®

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Public

Chairman
Committee of Government Representatives on
Civil Society Participation
c/o Tripartite Committee (Ref. Civil Society)
United Nations Economic Commission for
Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
1825 K Street, NW, Suite 1120
Washington, DC 20006

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These comments are being submitted by the American Farm Bureau which represents more than 4,800,000 member families in 50 states and Puerto Rico. Our members produce every type of farm commodity grown in America and depend on access to customers around the world for the sale of over one-third of our production.

This letter is in response to the request for comments from civil society on trade matters relating to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

Regarding general objectives for the FTAA negotiations, the following should be adopted:

- Require compliance with existing WTO commitments of all WTO-member trading partners in the FTAA.
- No signatory should be permitted to protect or exclude any sector, or commodities within that sector, from meeting the terms of the agreement.
- Provide for the continued and regular use of private commodity and trade policy advisory group input into the FTAA negotiation process.

Market Access:

Customs Procedures:

- Develop equivalent customs procedures to facilitate the flow of traded products and minimize market disrupting commercial disputes.

Rules of Origin:

- Establish standardized rules of origin.

Agriculture:

- Achieve tariff reduction or elimination and increased market access for all agricultural products by a date certain.

- Eliminate barriers to trade in agricultural products, including, but not limited to, the elimination of export subsidies and other trade distorting practices in the Western Hemisphere. Examples of other trade distorting measures include: domestic absorption requirements (barring market access until the domestic supply of a commodity is exhausted), price pooling of domestically supplied and exported products, product certification and labeling procedures that discriminate against approved exports, sanitary and phytosanitary measures that are not science-based.
- Require full transparency of state trading enterprises operating in the region.
- Develop principles for the immediate and unrestricted trade of agricultural products produced with genetically modified organisms.
- Institute snap-back provisions that address price depressing import surges in a quick and efficient manner.
- Establish negotiating principles of reciprocity in reducing trade barriers by negotiating on a "quid pro quo" basis.
- Obligate signatory countries to adhere to science-based sanitary and phytosanitary measures in accordance with the WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.
- Harmonize labeling requirements and product certification procedures (including pesticide clearance procedures).
- Ensure that ad valorem policies are not permissible in the FTAA context.
- Adopt agricultural safeguards that would address seasonality and regionality issues (ie. import surges that have devastating effects during specific seasons or in specific regions of a country) and a trigger mechanism that addresses the special concerns of perishable agricultural products generally.


Dispute Resolution:

- Develop expedited dispute resolution procedures and processes for perishable commodities.

Member countries of the FTAA should insist on strict implementation of international trading rules to prevent unfair practices by countries in the hemisphere and to ensure unrestricted access to these important markets. This agreement should be continually evaluated with emphasis on fair trade as well as free trade.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on specific objectives for the FTAA negotiations.

Sincerely,



Richard W. Newpher
Executive Director
Washington Office