

Agricultural Trade and Food System Transformation
Virtual WTO Agriculture Symposium

WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2020

OPENING SESSION

10:00 - 11:30

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Now, the Bali and Nairobi Ministerial Conferences only provided short-term solutions and there remains an open call for permanent solutions. I was at the Buenos Aires Ministerial, where there was no advancement on that issue. Hundreds of civil society organizations have supported the call for a permanent solution so that trade better serve food security goals.

II. Framing the Problem

The core debate in agriculture has always been the issue of subsidies, not so much the issue of tariffs. Regional and bilateral agreements are very popular these days. But they only focus on tariffs and market access. From an international farm policy and food security perspective, the WTO remains the only place to address the core issue of subsidies.

The Agreement on Agriculture also provided some theoretical opportunities for some countries to have some more flexibility with their agricultural policies, with things like: Special and Differential Treatment and Special safeguards after tariffication. But these have been proven to be ineffective in addressing food security concerns.

The G-33 has proposed broader Special Safeguard Measures and exceptions for Special Products. And there has been a call for special

But let me broaden out a bit more, before pointing to some productive avenues. Trade policy has primarily focused on economic frameworks and has either ignored or marginalized people's human rights concerns. At the same time, human rights policy has provided a powerful sociopolitical critique of trade but has not offer an institutional alternative to the existing regime. And neither approach has adequately responded to climate change.

My report to the UN General Assembly blends trade and human rights perspectives and provides new principles and an institutional map for how to move forward. Part of moving forward includes talking about transforming food systems; this will have to include institutional changes. Today, the WTO is a historical moment. It has the opportunity to transform itself to respond to contemporary problems.

III. Framing the Solution

I will conclude with some unow to (ame he lution. Really, this is an invitation. I invite governments and others to reach out to me to continue this conversation. I want to invite people to start thinking in newer ways, allowing for new solutions to arise.

I know that he G -33 has been frustrated (81(wi)3(h)2081A66A303081A66)40)40726
challenging things more publicly. Those

I provide more details in my UN report but let me just put out some starting points.

I think the WTO could be a place to develop International Food Agreements. These would be plurilateral agreements that all fall under the umbrella of GATT. These International Food Agreements would be about developing trade policy around two issues: aid and subsidies. The purpose would be to ensure that markets are fair and stable, while also tackling food security concerns. International Food Agreements would be something between the GATT and the Agreement on Agriculture.

Here's what I mean by that

The GATT imagined the world as interconnected domestic markets. Whereas the Agreement on Agriculture set out to construct a single global market. International Food Agreements would be more nuanced. They could focus on one commodity or they could be more ambitious and create regional food markets. The WTO could then provide active support to make sure that when you combine all the International Food Agreements together, they would all create a stable, fair, and coherent international market.

To be clear, these are not the old-style International Commodity Agreements, which focused on supply management. Nor would they be Regional Trade Agreements which focus only on market access and tariff reduction. My report draws a clear institutional map how International Food

Agreements are achievable and how they

IV. Conclusion

Again, this is an invitation to start a fresh conversation around these issues. I encourage everyone to reach out to me and I am happy to collaborate with anyone. COVID-19 has been just a warning shot for what is yet to come. Climate change is here